

PM announces \$53 billion deal in Vandorf

So, the name might not be too creative but Prime Minister Stephen Harper announced a "historic" 10-year infrastructure deal last week which could enable communities across the country to get those creative juices flowing.

The New Building Canada plan, which picks up where the Building Canada Plan leaves off, earmarks \$53 billion for what is billed as the largest, long-term infrastructure plan in Canadian history.

The plan includes a Community Improvement Fund, which brings Gas Tax funding into the mix, providing over \$32 billion to municipalities for roads, transit, and recreational facilities. \$14 billion will be earmarked for a specific New Building Canada Fund of \$4 billion to "support projects of national significance", and a \$10 billion pot under a Provincial-Territorial Component for projects of a local, regional, or national significance.

"The new plan sets aside \$1 billion exclusively for communities with less than 100,000 people," said Mr. Harper at Thursday's announcement at the Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum in Vandorf, which was attended by local dignitaries including Aurora Mayor Geoffrey Dawe, King Mayor Steve Pellegrini, and Regional Chair Bill Fisch. "In addition to these funds, small communities are also eligible for some other funds, they can also apply for additional infrastructure investments through the Provincial or Territorial infrastructure component and the National Infrastructure Component a well.

"The second component of our plan is the Community Improvement Fund consisting of the incremental GST rebate for municipalities and the Gas Tax Fund. Our government has extended, doubled and indexed it and made it permanent."

According to Mr. Harper, developing infrastructure, from roads to ports, is a priority his government tackled early on in their tenure, infrastructure that Canadian families deal with and rely upon on a day to day basis. Since the launch of the first Building Canada Plan, over 43,000 infrastructure projects from coast to coast have been completed.

"Okay, the name may not be original, but the money, \$70 billion if we count our own Federal Infrastructure Investments is new," said Mr. Harper with a laugh. "We are delighted that the framework of our New Building Canada Plan is complete and the result is provinces, territories and municipalities will now have unprecedented access to predictable, sustainable, federal infrastructure funds for a decade. This will allow those whose job it is to make infrastructure decisions to plan those decisions with assurances over the long term.

"It is our plan to help fiscally grow a stronger, more prosperous Canada."

By Brock Weir