

House of Commons Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities

Opening Remarks Kealy Dedman, P. Eng. MPA President, Canadian Public Works Association May 12, 2015

Mr. Chairman, Committee Members, fellow witnesses, ladies and gentlemen, I am pleased to be with you this afternoon to represent the Canadian Public Works Association. Thank you for inviting us to participate in your examination of federal government investments in federal, provincial and municipal infrastructure over the past twenty years.

Members of the CPWA are often unseen and unheard. But we are ever-present in the lives of most Canadians. When you turn on your kitchen tap and clean water comes out that is us. When you approach an intersection with traffic signals that is us. When the snow is plowed in front of your home or business, it is the public works department of your community at work.

Canadians do not generally know that CPWA members are also an essential part of first responders teams when emergencies and natural disasters such as major floods hit cities and towns across the country. We clear public roadways of snow, ice and other obstacles for police, ambulances and firetrucks to respond to emergency situations. We ensure that water comes out of the hydrants when firefighters are on the scene of a fire.

And so, we have a great interest in all things related to the construction and maintenance of public infrastructure across Canada. Our focus is on what we believe will be an exciting future for public infrastructure in our country.

The New Building Canada Plan (“NBCP”) announced in Budget 2013, and the new Public Transit Fund announced a few weeks ago in Budget 2015, present an excellent opportunity to build, rebuild and refurbish much-needed public infrastructure across the country. We believe that, with this opportunity, comes an obligation to ensure that Canada’s new infrastructure investments are built to endure and are managed effectively.

As we look to the future, our focus is on two policy issues: asset management and sustainable infrastructure.

We think that the single-most important issue to consider and plan for when significant investments are being made in public infrastructure is proper asset management. Extending the useful life of major infrastructure assets by insisting upon proper asset management practices respects the prudent expenditure of public funds. It also keeps community infrastructure safer longer.

A holistic approach to managing municipal infrastructure assets is being practiced in other jurisdictions, such as Australia and New Zealand, and is also making inroads in Canada, particularly in our Western provinces. Canadian municipalities have a growing interest in applying proper asset management principles and practices to the infrastructure they are responsible for planning, building, operating and maintaining.

One of the issues, however, is that municipalities often need resources devoted to building capacity at the local level in order to undertake proper asset management assessment practices.

As you think about the future of public infrastructure investments, we hope you will agree that there is an important role for the Government of Canada to play in promoting asset management and capacity building within municipalities. We believe that dedicated funding would be beneficial.

The second issue I would like to summarize for you this afternoon is sustainable infrastructure. The principles of sustainable development are now considered to be fundamental to how civil engineers and the public can more successfully address the return on investment in infrastructure and meet today's societal needs.

These concerns have led to the development of sustainability rating systems that provide a holistic framework for evaluating and rating the community, environmental and economic benefits of all types and sizes of infrastructure projects. These include not only the roads, bridges, wastewater treatment plants and public parks that municipalities deal with, but also massive infrastructure projects such as pipelines, airports, dams, levees, power transmission lines, and telecommunications towers.

Our association believes in adopting and adapting best practices where possible which is why, in our written submission, we provide an example of a sustainability rating systems that has been developed in the United States. Our American cousins, the American Public Works Association, teamed up with the American Council of Engineering Companies, the American Society of Civil Engineers, and Harvard University's Graduate School of Design to develop the sustainability rating tool called Envision®.

This tool evaluates, grades, and gives recognition to infrastructure projects that use transformational, collaborative approaches to assess the sustainability indicators over the course of a project's life cycle. Used as a planning tool for projects, rating systems such as Envision® can help identify sustainable approaches during planning, design, construction, and operation of infrastructure.

Existing systems such as Envision® can be easily adapted for use in Canada as well. For example, the Grand Bend Area Wastewater Treatment Facility, located in Ontario on the shoreline of Lake Huron, recently earned the Envision® Platinum level award.

In closing Mr. Chairman, here again we see a potential role for the federal government to play. The Government could consider taking a leadership role in supporting the use of sustainability rating tools and systems for evaluating and rating the community, environmental and economic benefits of all types and sizes of infrastructure projects.

Mr. Chairman, I will leave it there and I would be pleased to respond to questions that Committee Members may have. Thank you.



Submission

to the

**House of Commons Standing Committee on
Transport, Infrastructure and Communities**

Examination of Federal Government Investments in Infrastructure

by the

Canadian Public Works Association

May 12, 2015

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The CPWA was founded in 1986 as the national voice of the Canadian public works and infrastructure community from coast to coast to coast. Working in tandem with the American Public Works Association (APWA), CPWA represents 28,000 public works professionals in North America working on both sides of the border to innovate and assure excellence in the public works profession. Our public works professionals from both the public and private sectors plan and manage the roads and bridges, water and wastewater treatment facilities, traffic signals and lighting systems, snow removal, sanitation and mass public transit services representing the backbone of Canadian communities that are sustainable, safe and healthy places to live, work, play and invest.

An exciting opportunity exists to rebuild and refurbish much-needed public infrastructure across the country. The CPWA believes that with this opportunity comes an obligation on the part of public policy makers at all three levels of government to ensure that Canada's new infrastructure investments are built to endure and are managed effectively. To that end, we subscribe to the principles of the Municipal Infrastructure Forum. Moreover, as we look to the future of infrastructure investment in Canada, our focus is on two key policy issues: asset management and sustainable infrastructure.

Principles of the Municipal Infrastructure Forum

1. Secure, Stable Investments
2. Supporting Economic Growth
3. Flexibility: Keeping Municipalities (Large and Small) Strong
4. Balanced Approach with Smart Partnerships
5. Building Municipal Capacity and Resiliency

Asset Management

In light of the importance of the prudent management of public finances and of promoting safe communities, the CPWA believes there is an important role for the Government of Canada to play in promoting asset management and its necessary corollary, capacity building within municipalities.

Sustainable Infrastructure

We believe that the federal government has a role to play in ensuring that the investment of public funds are directed towards public infrastructure projects that have been planned and executed in accordance with sustainability principles. To that end, the Government of Canada could consider supporting the use of a sustainability rating tool which provides municipalities with a holistic framework for evaluating and rating the community, environmental and economic benefits of all types and sizes of infrastructure projects. The Envision® rating tool, for example, is already at work in Canada, making infrastructure projects more sustainable.

As stewards of our nation's community infrastructure assets, the CPWA is pleased to participate in the House of Commons Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities examination of federal government investments in federal, provincial and municipal infrastructure.

INTRODUCTION

The Canadian Public Works Association (“CPWA”) is pleased to present its views to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities (“Committee”) as the Committee examines federal government investments on federal, provincial and municipal infrastructure over the past twenty (20) years. As stewards of our nation’s community infrastructure assets, the CPWA believes it has a responsibility to contribute to the dialogue on important public policy issues and, therefore, we thank the Committee for inviting us to share our perspectives on infrastructure investments.

WHO WE ARE

The CPWA was founded in 1986 as the national voice of the Canadian public works and infrastructure community from coast to coast to coast. Working in tandem with the American Public Works Association (“APWA”), the CPWA represents 28,000 public works professionals in North America working on both sides of the border to innovate and assure excellence in the public works profession.

Our public works professionals from both the public and private sectors plan, design, operate and maintain the roads and bridges, water and wastewater treatment facilities, traffic signals and lighting systems, snow removal, sanitation and public transit services representing the backbone of Canadian communities that are sustainable, safe and healthy places to live, work, play and invest. CPWA members are also an essential part of first responders teams when emergencies and natural disasters such as major floods hit cities and towns across the country. For example, we ensure that public roadways are cleared of snow, ice and other obstacles for police, ambulances and firetrucks to respond to emergency situations and we ensure that the water supply is available when firefighters are on the scene of a fire.

The CPWA provides a forum for public works professionals to exchange information, develop ideas and share skills, knowledge and technologies on issues that are unique to Canada. Over 2,000 Canadian members participate in eight Canadian Chapters, covering all ten provinces and three territories.

INVESTING IN INFRASTRUCTURE – PRINCIPLES

The CPWA is a participant in the Municipal Infrastructure Forum (“MIF”), founded by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. As such, we subscribe to the MIF’s principles for long-term infrastructure investment. We paraphrase these principles as follows:

1. *Secure, Stable Investments* – Certainty and predictability are important to city and community planners.
2. *Supporting Economic Growth* – Infrastructure investments should be geared to keeping pace with the growing needs created by economic and population growth.
3. *Flexibility* – A one-size-fits-all approach does not recognize the different needs that exist in large cities, smaller communities and in different regions. Infrastructure investments should be flexible enough to meet unique challenges faced by municipalities – large and small - across the country.
4. *Balanced Approach with Smart Partnerships* – Private sector involvement in infrastructure investment is a tool to be considered in appropriate circumstances.
5. *Building Municipal Capacity and Resiliency* – It is advantageous for municipalities to have access to tools such as asset management and peer-to-peer best practices to help them plan, build and maintain their infrastructure over the long term.

It is important that public policy makers have principles such as these in mind when considering future investments in public infrastructure.

INVESTING IN INFRASTRUCTURE – ISSUES TO CONSIDER

The New Building Canada Plan (“NBCP”) announced in Budget 2013 presents an excellent opportunity to build, rebuild and refurbish much-needed public infrastructure across the country. The CPWA believes that with this opportunity comes an obligation on the part of public policy makers at all three levels of government to ensure that Canada’s new infrastructure investments are built to endure and are managed effectively. As we look to the future, our focus is on two key policy issues: asset management and sustainable infrastructure.

1) Asset Management

The single-most important issue to consider and plan for when significant sums are being invested in public infrastructure over the next decade and beyond is proper asset management. Extending the useful life of major infrastructure assets by insisting upon proper asset management practices respects the prudent expenditure of public funds and keeps community infrastructure safer longer. While this may be particularly true of NPCP projects, asset management is also vitally important when it comes to the ongoing maintenance of existing public infrastructure.

The Canadian Infrastructure Report Card (“Report Card”) released in 2012 was the first report providing a national assessment and comprehensive analysis of the condition of four primary asset categories of Canada’s municipal infrastructure: drinking-water systems; wastewater networks; storm water networks; and, municipal roads. One of the most notable outcomes of the Report Card was the data illustrating the need for more robust asset management policies and practices in municipalities across Canada. For example, of the 346 municipalities that registered to participate in the survey, only 123 municipalities could provide data usable in the analysis for the four aforementioned asset classes.

Asset management requires a holistic approach to managing community assets. This approach is being practiced in other jurisdictions – the CPWA believe it is important that Canada follow suit. For example, our partner organization, the Institute of Public Works Engineering Australia (“IPWEA”), is an acknowledged leader in the field of asset management. The IPWEA has been holding workshops in several Canadian cities as the issue of asset management moves to the forefront of infrastructure planning and maintenance, demonstrating the growing interest that Canadian municipalities have in applying proper asset management principles and practices to the infrastructure they are responsible for building, operating and maintaining.

Proper asset management leads to the prudent management of public finances and promotes safe and sustainable communities. There is an important role for the Government of Canada to play in promoting asset management and its necessary corollary, capacity building within municipalities. Dedicated funding would be beneficial.

2) Sustainability for Infrastructure

There is a strong and compelling indication that civil engineering infrastructure projects are falling behind the societal and functional expectations of what is needed both for today and into the future. The principles of sustainable development are considered to be fundamental to how civil engineers and the public can more successfully address the return on investment in infrastructure and meet today’s critical societal needs. These concerns have led to the development of sustainability rating systems that provide a holistic framework for evaluating and rating the community, environmental and economic benefits of all types and sizes of infrastructure projects including roads, bridges, pipelines, railways, airports, dams, levees, solid waste landfills, water supplies, wastewater treatment plants, power transmission lines, telecommunications towers and public spaces in our cities, towns and local communities.

In the United States for example, the Institute for Sustainable Infrastructure (ISI) was established by three major associations – the APWA, the American Council of Engineering Companies, and the American Society of Civil Engineers – as a not-for-profit organization dedicated to sustainable infrastructure.

Working jointly with the Zofnass Program for Sustainable Infrastructure at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design, ISI developed the sustainability rating tool called Envision®. The tool evaluates, grades, and gives recognition to infrastructure projects that use transformational, collaborative approaches to assess the sustainability indicators over the course of a project's life cycle. Used as a planning tool for projects, Envision® can help identify sustainable approaches during planning, design, construction, and operation of infrastructure.

Adoption of the Envision® tool in Canada has already occurred making infrastructure projects more sustainable. The Grand Bend Area Wastewater Treatment Facility, located in Ontario on the shoreline of Lake Huron, recently earned the Envision® Platinum level award. For the project, the municipalities of Lambton Shores and South Huron converted one of four existing lagoons into an extended aeration mechanical treatment facility and wetland nature reserve. The facility prevents effluent discharges from adversely impacting surface and groundwater quality and allows for responsible community development. The ISI Envision® framework was used during the design to integrate sustainable features throughout the facility.

We believe that the federal government has a role to play in ensuring that the investment of public funds are directed towards public infrastructure projects that have been planned and executed in accordance with sustainability principles. To that end, the Government of Canada could consider supporting the use of a sustainability rating tool which provides municipalities with a holistic framework for evaluating and rating the community, environmental and economic benefits of all types and sizes of infrastructure projects.

CONCLUSION

The Government of Canada is embarking, along with its provincial/territorial and municipal partners, upon a series of significant investments in much-needed infrastructure in communities across Canada through, for example, the New Building Canada Fund, the Gas Tax Fund and, as announced in the 2015 Budget, the new Public Transit Fund. These investments will help to ensure prosperous and safe communities and contribute to Canada's economic growth in the years ahead. We believe that the Government of Canada should seize the opportunity to build in accountability measures that demonstrate prudent management of public finances and that promote safe and sustainable communities.

Thank you for this opportunity to offer our views.