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Infrastructure

Municipalities look to federal parties for leadership on infrastructure issues

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Canadian municipalities are looking for leadership on issues ranging from public transit to clean drinking water and officials in construction support their call.

“Canadians are looking for leadership on bread and butter issues,” said Jean Perrault, president of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) and mayor of Sherbrooke in a statement. “They want this coming federal election campaign to be about the issues that truly affect them in their daily lives.”

Perrault said issues such as crumbling infrastructure, clean water, safe streets or affordable housing all require practical answers from federal party leaders.

“They (Canadians) want investments in housing affordability so that they and their families can be assured of a roof over their heads,” said Perrault. “And, they want quality infrastructure for their communities so that their local economies remain competitive and their drinking water is safe.”

Frank Zechner, executive director of the Ontario Sewer and Watermain Construction Association, said planning certainty is a must for municipalities so they can tackle their infrastructure and quality of life issues.

“Sooner or later governments need to understand that it is in urban municipalities where most people live,” said Zechner. “Some sort of plan that could be put in place for predictable and sustainable funding for municipalities is needed.”

Funding improvements to items such as water and wastewater systems and roads are needed, but tackling those problems is too much for municipalities on their own, added Zechner. Perrault said that this is why federal leaders need to understand how to help Canadians in their communities.

“Unfortunately, these are the kinds of problems that too often have been pushed onto the backs of local governments and property taxpayers to fix,” explained Perrault. “This election should be different. It should be about federal leadership in the places Canadians live and work.”

FCM stressed that quality infrastructure is needed to so local economies across the country can remain competitive. Andy Manahan, executive director of the **Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario**, echoed the FCM’s call for increased public transit and improved public infrastructure funding.

“We hope all parties have it on their agenda,” said Manahan.

Consistent and predictable improvement in transit and infrastructure will help reduce gridlock, improve the flow of goods and result in better productivity and competitiveness, added Manahan.

Though gas tax sharing has been formalized and the recent Conservative government started a \$33 billion Building Canada fund, FCM has reported that the municipal infrastructure deficit sits at \$123 billion.

“After a generation of cutbacks and offloading, all governments must come together to turn the tide on the municipal fiscal imbalance and secure our economic, social and environmental foundations,” added Perrault.

The Ontario Road Builders’ Association (ORBA) says the wishes of municipalities for not just more funding but strong leadership would benefit everyone.

“Getting more money into municipalities is important but economic stability as well is important,” said Rob Bradford, executive director of ORBA.

“Road builders are business people too.”