

INFRASTRUCTURE

# Time for feds to deliver: MNL

*Ottawa announces new infrastructure trimmings, towns ask for main course*

By PETER WALSH  
THE TELEGRAM

There were smiles, photos, donuts and muffins Wednesday at the announcement of new federal infrastructure money, but Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador President Graham Letto soured the political party a little. Letto criticized the federal government over delays in releasing billions in infrastructure money passed in January's budget.

"With the details of the stimulus package still not released, an application based (system) will mean most municipalities will lose a full construction season," said Letto, who called on the federal government to speed up release of the funds. Letto said Canada has a \$123 billion "infrastructure deficit," including \$3.5 billion for Newfoundland and Labrador.

The federal response to Letto's concern can be summed up as 'it's coming.' Newly-appointed Senator Fabian Manning — who was in Conception Bay South Wednesday representing Prime Minister Stephen Harper's government — called for patience.

"There are a fair amount of projects ready to move now," said Manning, who then switched his comments toward the Ottawa's

announcement that it is doubling the federal Gas Tax Fund. The fund doubled this month from \$1 billion to \$2 billion. That means cities and towns across the country will have more for municipal infrastructure programs. Letto welcomed the news, but said he would like to see the gas tax become permanent. Currently, it is set to end in 2014.

"This commitment ... is welcome news for communities struggling to provide basic services to its residents," said Letto.

The new money brings this province's share of the federal money to \$33 million.

The decision is part of Harper's federal economic package intended to stimulate the economy.

The money is primarily set to go toward water, and sewer, roads, bridges and community energy systems.

Conception Bay South Mayor Woodrow French said C.B.S. has already committed to

spend its share on new ground pipes and paying.

"Clearly the announcement made here to day will benefit residents of C.B.S., said French. "People are going to get good water. They're going to get access to good sewage dumping and to better roads. For us it's a good day."



Conception Bay South Mayor Woodrow French was all smiles Wednesday as he discussed new federal infrastructure money. — Photo by Peter Walsh/The Telegram

Under the program, St. John's will receive almost \$4.5 million, Mount Pearl will receive \$1.3 million, Corner Brook \$900,000 and C.B.S. \$898,000. Hundreds of other smaller towns and communities will also receive more money. For a complete list click [www.buildingcanada-chantierscanada.gc.ca](http://www.buildingcanada-chantierscanada.gc.ca)

"We are spending 12 billion dollars more for infrastructure over the next two year," said Manning.

[pwalsh@thetelegram.com](mailto:pwalsh@thetelegram.com)