



Cities still need a better funding deal

Courtesy of The Daily Commercial News

The construction industry welcomed the move by the federal government to guarantee an annual transfer of money from the Gas Tax Fund to Canadian municipalities.

The money is to be used for infrastructure, and it's sorely needed. There isn't a municipality in the country that isn't strapped for cash, and cities, in particular, are looking for money to build roads and bridges, public transit systems, water and waste facilities, just about everything that comes under the broad heading of infrastructure.

Many city folks are fed up with long commute times, and for good reason. We think of some of the world's largest cities, including New York, Los Angeles and London as having chaotic traffic jams every day, but commuters in Toronto and Montreal often take longer to get to work.

That's according to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, which has asked Ottawa to help commuters on their way to work through a long-term infrastructure spending program that includes targets for performance.

We had a burst of stimulus spending to help lift the country out of recession, but now the government is turning to deficit reduction, and doing it at a time when much of the

rest of the world really isn't doing very well economically.

Still, some economists have been telling us that infrastructure spending is one of the best investments for countries looking for stable, long-term growth.

The guarantee of stable funding from the feds is nice to have, but it alone is not nearly enough. Because, you see, the problem with our infrastructure deficit is not a federal problem. It's a provincial problem.

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In Canada, our cities are creatures of the provinces, as provincial politicians are fond of reminding city mayors. Cities depend on property taxes for the core of their financing, with various payments and allowances coming from the provincial government from time to time as provinces share some of the burden for essential services.

But it's not enough. It hasn't been enough for years, which is why the cities' cry for help sounds so much like an echo chamber.

Let me quote from a letter published recently, from Berry Urbanovic, president of the FCM: The average commuter, he wrote, spends 32 working days sitting in traffic every year, at a cost to the Canadian economy of \$5 billion a year. That drag on our economy needs to be fixed, but Canadian cities don't have the tools for the job.

'Municipalities collect just eight cents of every tax dollar paid in Canada,' he wrote, 'but pay for half of all infrastructure' On top of that, they pay for other things, including two-thirds of police costs, plus public housing, paramedical services and other things.

Massimo Bergamini, an Ottawa based public-affairs expert, worked as a public servant, and for the FCM, before forming his own public-affairs consulting firm. In a recently published essay, he noted that 80 per cent of our population now lives in urban areas. And if those areas are struggling under the financial load imposed on them, the whole country struggles.

So, he argues, the cities need to stop focusing only on federal spending. They need to 'change their song sheet and strategy,' he says. 'What cities need most from Ottawa now is leadership.'

The nation's mayors need to push for a national vision for urban Canada.

He acknowledges that Ottawa can't simply barge into an area of provincial jurisdiction, but it could 'lead a collaborative, intergovernmental process to define what our cities should look like in 25 years.'

For the sake of the country, our cities need a new, better deal. The old system is broken. Fixing it will require leadership from Ottawa. But legislation to frame that better deal can only come from the provinces.



Better federal planning needed for municipality funding: Federation of Canadian Municipalities

In the next two and half years, 40 per cent of core federal investments in cities and communities will expire, says the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM).

Canada needs a smart government to create jobs, protect core services and balance its budget deficit in a tough global economy, said FCM President Berry Urbanovic at the House of Commons finance committee pre-budget hearing.

He said trademarks of a smarter government are better planning, partnerships and programs.

'The success of the economic action plan shows that when governments come together, ready to do their part and find common sense solutions, we can tackle national challenges and deliver better value for taxpayers,' Urbanovic explained.

In response to the global economic crisis, the federal government and municipalities joined together to take action to create jobs and protect Canadian families and businesses.

The FCM said Canada must build on the Economic Action Plan's cooperative model.

With recent investments, the federal government has helped municipalities repair some of the damage sustained during years of underinvestment and downloading.

The federal government's promise to work with municipalities to develop a new long-term infrastructure plan is a chance to improve the declining municipal infrastructure, improve public transit and fight traffic gridlock.

In the past, the FCM and the Canadian Construction Association have lobbied for a strategic long-term infrastructure plan to help tackle Canada's \$123 billion municipal infrastructure deficit.

From 2007 to 2014, the GTF will contribute \$11.8 billion.

Emergency Channel Begins Draining Excess Water from Lake St. Martin, Lake Manitoba

Work Continues to Bring Lake Levels Down, Minimize Risk of Severe Spring Flooding: Premier

An emergency outlet channel began draining flood water from Lake St. Martin and Lake Manitoba today as planned, Premier Selinger has announced.

"Building this channel was an enormous undertaking completed in a very short period of time," said Selinger. "This emergency project will allow us to drain water from Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin throughout the winter to get people back in their homes sooner and minimize the risk of severe spring flooding next year."

The project is designed to lower levels on Lake St. Martin and help lower Lake Manitoba by allowing the Fairford Dam structure to remain open throughout the winter. The 6.5-kilometre-long channel begins at the east end of Lake St. Martin and runs east to Buffalo Creek.

The premier noted plans are now underway for construction of an extended reach of the channel from Buffalo Creek to Lake Winnipeg with the goal of it being operational before the spring melt. This will help ease spring breakup and ice jam-related flooding along the Dauphin River by diverting water directly from Buffalo Creek into Lake Winnipeg. This reach of the channel project was outlined as a possible component in the original project description and is accounted for in the initial cost estimates, the premier said.

"This year's unprecedented flood fight is not over," said Selinger. "We remain committed to providing fair compensation to affected families as we undertake projects to protect everyone from future natural disasters."

Project Background

- » Exploratory work for possible channel locations started July 4.
- » Logistical work such as setting up camps, building an access road and establishing drainage started in early July and additional contractors began work Aug. 15.
- » Actual channel digging started Aug. 29.
- » More than 130 workers have been involved in this construction project. At times, the Aboriginal worker complement was up to 50 per cent.
- » The total excavation project moved about 1.5 million cubic metres of material. Approximately 30,000 more cubic metres of rock were also used.
- » Ditches, dikes and temporary roads have been constructed on either side of the 6.5 kilometre (about four-mile) outlet.
- » The 95 pieces of heavy equipment used included excavators, bulldozers and rock trucks, one dredge, two Amphibex machines, one floating excavator, four barges, four tugs, two helicopters, 15 boats, 10 high-velocity pumps and 30 support vehicles.

Source: Government of Manitoba



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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Friday, November 25, 2011 • 8:00 am – 12:00 noon
Winnipeg Convention Centre — Pan Am Room (2nd Floor)
Keynote Speaker:

Mr. Bob Silver

- » Co-Chair of the Premier’s Economic Advisory Council (PEAC)
- » Chancellor at the University of Winnipeg
- » President of Western Glove Works

Bob will reflect in his role as Chair of PEAC, on the northern visions and economic and social opportunities associated with the broad ‘Churchill, Canada’s Northern Gateway’ Vision.

Awards & Membership Presentations to follow.

\$35.00/person No of tickets: _____



Groundbreaking



CHAIRMAN’S GALA

‘A Night to Remember...Mardi Gras Style!’

Friday, November 25, 2011

- Cocktails: 6:30 pm
- Dinner: 7:30 pm
- Tables of 8 and 10

Silent Auction & Raffle – proceeds supporting Variety, the children’s charity of Manitoba

\$175.00 + GST / person (all inclusive)

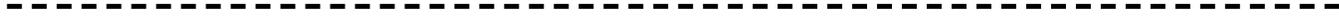
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Animal Spirits and the Economy

By Peter Hall, Vice-President and Chief Economist of Export Development Canada

You ride this elevator every day. But today is different – it is stopped between floors, and you're not happy. Neither are the other seven passengers. One grabs the emergency phone, another presses the alarm button. Nothing. Then without warning, the elevator pitches sideways, first this way, then that. Elevators weren't made to do that. Panic sets in. Passengers scream, one furiously presses buttons, another re-tries the phone, two try to pry the door open, and a brave soul tries to get out the top. Lots of activity, but little reason – a scene that could easily, yet unnecessarily, get everyone hurt.

Today's economy is a lot like this scene. Economies go sideways about as easily as elevators do. We are wired for growth. We can even deal with decline. But a flat economy goes against our DNA. And when the economy flattens and stays that way, we all get very edgy, and "animal spirits" take over.

It gets worse. Sideways economies are particularly vulnerable to shocks, and we have had plenty of those. Eager to leave recession behind, governments everywhere spent masses of money they didn't have. Now saddled with oversized debts, they are losing the confidence of financial markets and regular people, and at the edges, bond rates have rocketed to unthinkable levels. Public sector cutbacks are now a key threat to world growth. But we have to admit, we did this to ourselves.

Then came the curve balls. Lots of events are predictable, but not natural disasters. We've had a litany of them this year, and they have punished the economy. Moreover, few, if any, predicted political upheaval in North Africa and the Middle East, and the resulting surge in oil prices.

This unfortunate confluence of events has the world in a stir. Market volatility has been intense since August. Business and consumer confidence is plummeting to sub-recession levels. Amid the chaos, many are overdoing precaution, while others are making opportunistic bets. Oddly, there is key data that defies the doom. Factory orders are surging everywhere. International trade is shrugging off the summer supply shocks. And beleaguered US consumers are spending



at a surprising clip. There seems to be a disconnect between perception and production, between confidence and consumption.

Recent upbeat data is not the real recovery, but it's a big help in getting us there. In EDC's Fall 2011 Global Export Forecast, the US economy is expected to gain momentum, with growth rising to 3.3 per cent in 2012. It will make up for weakness in Western Europe, and enable emerging markets to again post decent gains. World growth is forecast to rise from 3.7 per cent this year to 4.3 per cent in 2012.

Growing global momentum is good news for a Canadian economy that will depend more on external growth in the next few years. Weaker commodity prices will restrain primary exports, dampening overall growth from this year's 11 per cent gain to 7 per cent in 2012. But price declines will also take the edge off the loonie, giving a boost to manufactured exports. Auto and aerospace exports are forecast to do particularly well, and a partial revival in US housing will help the forestry sector.

The bottom line? Today's elevated risks pose a critical threat to this outlook. Animal spirits won't help. Even so, we have already weathered a lot of shocks. A few more months of similar persistence and the world economy will be much closer to the supply-demand balance essential for true recovery.

Route of the Problem

Courtesy of The Winnipeg Free Press

Routing the second leg of the Southwest Rapid Transit Corridor through undeveloped sections of Fort Garry would be a risky move for Winnipeg, says a visiting U.S. transit expert.

Winnipeg's new Transportation Master Plan calls for two possible means of connecting the first phase of the southwest corridor, which ends at Jubilee Avenue near Pembina Highway, with Bison Drive near the University of Manitoba.

One option would see the future busway or light-rail line run down the west side of Pembina Highway in a relatively straight line. The other would take an L-shaped detour around the Parker, Beaumont and Maybank neighbourhoods, using vacant Parker land and Manitoba Hydro corridors.

Several senior city officials, including Mayor Sam Katz, favour the latter option because any development along the new line in low-density sections of Fort Garry would generate new property-tax revenue that could be used to recoup the cost of building the new route. There is less room for such development along Pembina Highway.

But the L-shaped detour constitutes a high-risk, high-reward option for the city, said Ron Fisher, a transit consultant who administered \$1.6 billion worth of transit-corridor projects a year during his time with the U.S. Federal Transportation Administration.

"Without even looking at the line in question, I can tell you it's a risk. Whenever you run a line through an undeveloped area, it's going to be risky, but there is also the potential for rewards," Fisher said Wednesday at the Fort Garry Hotel, following an address at the University of Manitoba Transport Institute's sustainable public transit conference.

The success of a rapid-transit line typically depends on how well it meets the needs of transit users, not whether it stimulates economic development, Fisher said in his address, entitled *Alternatives Analysis: Choosing a Rapid Transit Mode*.

Proponents of rapid-transit lines tend to overestimate the benefits of proposed routes and underestimate the potential costs, he said. A common mistake is assuming a new rapid-transit line -- whether it's a busway or light-rail corridor -- will spur large increases in transit ridership.

Most of the people who wind up using rapid transit turn out



to be existing transit users, said Fisher, citing studies of 18 U.S. rapid-transit lines.

The mode of transportation did not appear relevant, he added, in terms of increasing ridership or promoting economic development. The factors that dictated success included travel time, reliability and even branding, as the placement of dingy, old buses on brand-new busways can hamper efforts to promote ridership.

"You can't say rail promotes economic development, buses don't. You have to dig deeper," Fisher said in his address.

In recent years, Winnipeg's mayor has asserted light rail would offer more economic benefits to Winnipeg than bus rapid transit, citing research commissioned by the city. The actual conclusion of that research, however, supports Fisher's point.

In a 2009 cost-benefit analysis that compared bus rapid transit to light-rail transit, consulting firm HDR concluded both modes of transportation offer Winnipeg clear financial benefits. That said, the firm concluded BRT is a safer financial bet, while LRT offers more potential in terms of transit-oriented development.

More recently, the city's new Transportation Master Plan maintains building the second phase of the Southwest Rapid Transit Corridor as a busway would cost \$275 million, while upgrading the entire line -- including the first phase -- to light rail would cost \$700 million.

The \$138-million first phase of the corridor, which allows transit buses running between downtown and southwest Winnipeg to bypass Osborne Village and Confusion Corner traffic, will open on April 8.

Eighteen transit routes will use the 3.6-kilometre bus corridor, Winnipeg Transit announced Wednesday.

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November 14-15	COR™ Leadership
November 16	COR™ Principles
November 17-18	COR™ Auditor
November 21-22	Train the Trainer
November 23	WHMIS (1/2 day AM)/ TDG (1/2 Day PM)
November 24	COR™ Auditor Refresher (1/2 day AM)

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