

# Alberta minister concerned about Ottawa's cost-sharing formula for infrastructure funding

**Economic downturn could affect province's ability to match funds, says Brian Mason**

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Alberta Infrastructure Minister Brian Mason is concerned about the federal government's cost-sharing formula for infrastructure funding that is expected to be distributed by Ottawa in the spring.

Under the current formula each level of government — municipal, provincial, federal — picks up one-third of the cost for major infrastructure projects.

The federal government is in a hurry to fast-track \$13 billion in infrastructure funding. With Alberta and Saskatchewan hard hit by plunging oil prices, both provinces could get a quick shot in the arm. Alberta is set to receive \$704 million and Saskatchewan will get \$361 million.

On Tuesday, Mayor Don Iveson expressed concern about the cost-sharing formula, saying "there are real concerns across the country that some provinces may not be in a position to top up, and some municipalities may not be in a position to top up. I'm really glad the government is open at looking at other ways to slice it."

Mason agrees that the formula structure is essential, especially when a large city is dealing with LRT and ring road projects.

"So we are asking the federal government to consult with us in terms of what the criteria for approval of projects are and what the cost-sharing formulas will be."

Mason is glad the federal government is moving fast on infrastructure spending, and has been talking with his Ottawa counterpart Amarjeet Sohi about projects.

"The federal government is going to be moving to deliver Alberta's share of their infrastructure plan sooner rather than later, and we think that's good news."

He expects the money some time in the new fiscal year, which starts in April.

Although the province is consulting with municipalities across Alberta about projects big and small, Mason would not reveal any specific details, saying it's too early in the discussion process.

"We need things that'll support economic activity, and we also need things that will support the delivery of services that Albertans need, like health and education."

Struggling with a deficit projected to hit \$6.1 billion by the end of the fiscal year, Finance Minister Joe Ceci said the NDP government may have to put some campaign promises on hold until oil prices improve.

*With files from The Canadian Press*