

Region readying for federal handouts

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By Graeme McNaughton/The Oshawa Express

With a new Liberal government in Ottawa promising to invest record amounts in infrastructure, Mayor John Henry says the region needs to be ready for that money to come Durham's way.

At a meeting of the region's planning and economic development committee the day after the federal election, Henry called on regional staff to have a list of projects that are ready to get started.

"After what happened in last night's election and with what's happening in the province and with the amount of infrastructure money that's about to come forward...I'd like to know...a number of in-the-bag projects that we have ready to go now," Henry said during the meeting.

Henry then called on the planning and economic development committee, along with the works committee to put together a list of projects in Durham that are ready to go and are just in need of funds, and that a list of priorities be established.

"I'm just hoping that we can have our list prepared, take advantage of the opportunities to advance our municipalities and the region, and considering that we do have a couple new...MPs in the region that are a part of that party, I'd hate to miss out on an opportunity for funding," Henry said.

Henry withdrew his motion when Region Chair Roger Anderson pointed out that the matter would better be dealt with solely with the works department, and that he would raise it at that committee's meeting the following day.

Cliff Curtis, the region's works commissioner, said at the next day's meeting that there are no "ready to go" projects, and that any extra money from Ottawa would be a bonus.

"We certainly have a list, and we'll certainly apply for any money that comes forward. We'd just need to see the details of the program," he said. "Do I have anything on the shelf ready to go? No, but I have a lot of work in progress, but it is fully funded. So any additional money would be over and above what we already have underway."

Anderson added that he hopes any new money from Ottawa is entitled, as opposed to having each municipality have to apply for it.

"I'm hoping that any money from the federal government...comes as entitlement as opposed to application-based. At least that's what they said during the campaign and I'm going to assume that they're going to keep their word," Anderson said. "And if that's the case, we should be ready."

During the recently concluded federal election, Justin Trudeau and the Liberal Party said it would run small federal deficits for the first three years in power in order to fund large infrastructure projects, leading to an additional \$125 billion in infrastructure spending over the next decade.