

Big-city mayors want flexibility on federal infrastructure cash

Winnipeg Mayor Bowman has concerns about money earmarked for transit

By Bartley Kives, [CBC News](#)

Posted: Jun 02, 2016



Winnipeg Mayor Brian Bowman (left) and Edmonton Mayor Don Iveson address reporters during a gathering of big-city mayors in Winnipeg. (Cameron MacIntosh/CBC)

Canada's big-city mayors want the Trudeau government to attach fewer strings to federal money promised for municipal infrastructure projects such as public transit.

At budget time in March, federal Finance Minister Bill Morneau announced \$11 billion in short-term infrastructure cash for Canadian municipalities and another \$49 billion in longer-term funding.

The short-term funding includes \$3 billion for public transit over the next three years, including \$80 million earmarked for Manitoba. Winnipeg Transit later learned that funding may only apply to projects that would be complete by 2018, a condition that would disqualify the \$587-million second phase of the Southwest Transitway from being eligible for additional federal funding, as the bus corridor is not slated to be finished before 2020.

Winnipeg Mayor Brian Bowman, who is hosting a gathering of mayors from 20 of Canada's largest cities at RBC Convention Centre, said he hopes Ottawa will not impose hard deadlines upon the short-term transit funding.

"We'd like to see increased flexibility so that we can have those funds fit the priorities and the timelines we have here in Winnipeg," Bowman told reporters at a news conference early Thursday afternoon.

He wouldn't say whether Winnipeg would like Ottawa to contribute more funds to the second phase of the Southwest Transitway, over and above a previous federal commitment of \$140 million.

"We have to get a better handle on what options are available to us so we can have those discussions," Bowman said.

Another condition attached to the transit funding is it would only apply to "shovel-ready" projects. That, along with the completion deadline, would disqualify Winnipeg's East Transitway, which remains in the early planning phases.

Bowman said it would be premature to discuss the East Transitway. Earlier this week, Winnipeg Transit director Dave Wardrop said it might be possible to consider portions of transitway projects on their own.

Edmonton Mayor Don Iveson said other Canadian cities have questions about Ottawa's infrastructure funding and concerns about flexibility.

Bowman, Iveson and the 18 other big-city mayors gathered in Winnipeg will meet later Thursday afternoon with federal Infrastructure and Communities Minister Amarjeet Sohi. A news conference is slated for 5 p.m.