

Editorial: Investing in our infrastructure



[Montreal Gazette Editorial Board](#)

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Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, right, shakes hands with Quebec Premier Philippe Couillard after signing an infrastructure announcement at a municipal bus depot Tuesday, July 5, 2016 in Montreal. Ryan Remiorz / THE CANADIAN PRESS

Maintaining infrastructure may not sound like the sexiest topic, but it's not hard for any Montrealer who has been stranded by a métro breakdown or had a basement flooded by a broken water main to understand its importance. The new federal-provincial accord that will see \$2.5 billion worth of public investments over the next three years — about \$1.2 billion of it federal money — is indeed something to celebrate.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau campaigned last fall on a promise to give a major boost to infrastructure spending. Tuesday's announcement was part of making good on that promise (though the photo op in a bus garage did evoke a sense of déjà vu, [recalling his announcement in April of \\$775 million](#) for Montreal-area public transit infrastructure, included in the new total).

Under the agreement, \$924 million of federal money will be spent on updates and repairs to public transit throughout Quebec — including new train cars for the Agence métropolitaine de transport — and \$364 million on upgrading drinking-water and sewer pipes, and waste-water

treatment. The provincial and municipal governments will, essentially, match that money. The funding is retroactive to April 1; work can proceed quickly.

All of the projects in this phase involve maintaining, fixing or upgrading existing infrastructure. Consideration of new projects, like extending the métro Blue Line or the Caisse de dépôt's proposed electric commuter rail system, will come in Phase 2, still at least a few months away.

Tuesday's announcement has been hailed by an unusually wide range of groups, from the David Suzuki Foundation, thrilled with the environmental benefits of measures to promote public transit and reduce water pollution, and the Fédération des chambres de commerce du Québec, whose statement emphasized the expected economic impact, including spinoff effects.

Echoing his own campaign themes, Trudeau said the investments will create jobs for the middle class in the short term and help foster sustained economic growth in the years to come. Certainly, the economic and social importance of sound infrastructure cannot be overstated: think of the costs and inconveniences when water is shut off or citizens cannot get to work on time.

Quebec was the second province to sign an infrastructure deal with Ottawa and the first to sign one that covered both transit and water. This just shows what federal-provincial cooperation can do. "Sunny ways" meets "les vraies affaires" is a refreshing change from the quarrels of years past.

Of course, these are our tax dollars they are spending, be it from a taxpayer's left pocket or the right. Next will be to ensure that, in making these important investments, our money is spent wisely and efficiently.