

Canada's infrastructure in dire straits, national report card says

Selina Chignall | Jan 18, 2016 *i*POLITICS

A large chunk of Canada's critical infrastructure is at risk of deteriorating, says the *Canadian Infrastructure Report Card*, released Monday.

Across the country, 120 municipalities assessed the health of their roads, sewers, bridges and other key infrastructure assets. The results of their surveys found nearly 35 per cent of municipal infrastructure was in either fair, poor or very poor condition.

"If one-third (of infrastructure) is at a substandard level, that puts in jeopardy the services its citizens rely upon," said Raymond Louie, the president of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.

The CIRC survey — co-sponsored by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, the Canadian Construction Association, the Canadian Society for Civil Engineering and the Canadian Public Works Association— started in November 2014 and ended in January 2015.

The survey marks the second time the groups have jointly addressed Canada's quality of infrastructure. They undertook this latest survey to get an accurate picture of the country's infrastructure before governments decided to invest in new and existing projects, said Louie.

Louie says the urgency of the infrastructure needs outlined in the report confirms what municipalities have known for some time. "It's part of the reason why we have been pushing as hard as we have at the FCM for further investment into infrastructure," he said.

The Trudeau government has promised \$125 billion of infrastructure spending over 10 years, though the scope and pace of how that spending is laid out in Finance Minister Bill Morneau's first budget will likely be affected by an increasingly dire fiscal picture impacted by the ongoing slump in the value of both the loonie and oil.

And the Canadian Press **reported** on Sunday that Infrastructure Minister Amarjeet Sohi was reconsidering the funding model used for construction projects. Currently, each level of government must cough up one-third of the projects funding, but Sohi said feds might pick up a larger chunk of the tab.

Louie welcomes Sohi's comments on revisiting the current funding model.

“Given that local governments receive eight-to-ten cents of every tax dollar, the traditional concept of equal share fails in this instance. We know we don't have the resources at the local government level, and the amount of need is significant.”