

B.C.'s urban mayors want parties to commit at least \$1 billion annually directly to municipalities for vital capital infrastructure projects

Party platforms fail to provide details on investments in municipal economic and environmental infrastructure and community building

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Today, the B.C. Urban Mayors' Caucus (BCUMC) is calling on the next government to unconditionally allocate at least \$1 billion annually from a share of B.C.'s economic growth directly to local governments so that they can build much-needed infrastructure projects required for 21st century cities.

"Local governments have been asking for almost a decade for the Province to provide stable, predictable and sustainable funding each year so that we can directly invest in our communities' infrastructure needs," said BCUMC Co-Chair and Kelowna Mayor Colin Basran. "Let me be clear, this is not a request for a new tax, rather this is about local governments getting a fair share of B.C.'s existing economic pie for vital municipal infrastructure investments that our communities badly need."

Local governments currently receive eight cents of every tax dollar, yet are responsible for roughly 60 per cent of the infrastructure in the Province. Most infrastructure funding is currently allocated on a grant basis where local governments apply for funding for priority projects.

The BC NDP has committed one per cent of B.C.'s GDP annually to build community priority projects such as hospitals, childcare spaces and public transit. The BC Greens have committed to striking a committee to review relations between local governments and the provincial government. And the BC Liberals have committed to invest an additional \$8 billion in infrastructure improvements over three years. However, no party has yet committed to stable, predictable and direct funding for local government infrastructure projects during this election.

"So far in this election, no single party has made a clear commitment to local government capital funding," said BCUMC Co-Chair and Victoria Mayor Lisa Helps. "Applying for grants on a case-by-case basis for infrastructure projects is like a roll of the dice – sometimes we get grants for high-priority community projects and sometimes we don't. This prevents local governments from saving, investing and planning for the long term."

"Mayors want a specific commitment that the next provincial government will sit down with municipal leaders to negotiate a new deal with B.C.'s local governments that provides at least \$1 billion annually in direct, unconditional funding for municipal capital infrastructure," said Helps.

"With a share of provincial revenues, it's our goal to eliminate the municipal infrastructure deficit within 20 years while maintaining the lowest property tax and debt

levels in Canada,” said Basran. “For example, if the next government shared one point of provincial sales tax, that could provide over \$1 billion annually to fund capital infrastructure projects.”

Municipalities are on the front line future-proofing their communities and building back from the pandemic. The current municipal financial framework is too heavily reliant on property tax, which neither grows with the economy nor distributes costs fairly.

“Our 13 cities alone have identified \$5.9 billion in infrastructure projects over the next five years that will greatly benefit our residents and businesses by creating jobs and growing the economy,” said Helps. “From more efficient water and sewer systems to improved and enhanced parks and green spaces, from new community and cultural facilities to better streets that help reduce congestion and get people out of their vehicles, we can finally move ahead with much-needed infrastructure projects, but only if the next government is willing to provide a fair share of B.C.’s economic growth with local municipalities.”

The BC Urban Mayors’ Caucus is an informal, non-partisan group of mayors from Abbotsford, Burnaby, Coquitlam, Kamloops, Kelowna, Nanaimo, New Westminster, Prince George, Richmond, Saanich, Surrey, Vancouver and Victoria, representing over 55 per cent of the province’s total population. The group came together in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and acts as a unified voice on critical issues facing their communities and the province.

The BC Urban Mayors’ Caucus 2020 Blueprint for British Columbia’s Urban Future outlines four key priorities for urban communities across the province:

- 1) Mental health, substance use and addictions;
- 2) Affordable housing;
- 3) Public transit; and
- 4) A new fiscal framework.

The 2020 BCUMC Blueprint can be found [here](#)

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