

**House of Commons Finance Committee
2025 Pre-Budget Submission**



August 1, 2025

RECOMMENDATIONS

One Canadian Economy Act

- **Recommendation 1:** As the Government of Canada pursues economic growth through infrastructure acceleration, it should treat municipalities not merely as project hosts—but as essential partners in planning and execution, including by ensuring that municipalities have early input on the planning phase of project reviews in the context of “one project, one review” to make use of vital local knowledge and avoid negative local zoning, community, and environmental impacts.
- **Recommendation 2:** Expand federal funding programs to include operations and maintenance activities.

Emergency Management and Disaster Mitigation

- **Recommendation 3:** In establishing and supporting the permanent Public Safety Broadband Network (PSBN) as a nation-building initiative, ensure the provision of communications interoperability to public works officials as first responders, and ensure that public works agencies have access.
- **Recommendation 4:** Renew lapsed funding for all-hazard awareness-raising activities, and ensure public works agencies have access to dependable, predictable funding for the development and implementation of comprehensive, all-hazard emergency preparedness plans, pre-disaster mitigation plans and long-term hazard mitigation measures.
- **Recommendation 5:** Encourage a collective approach to emergency management by including public works agencies, as well as First Nations, Inuit and Métis, in cross-sector task forces and study groups responsible for all-hazards education, training exercises and development of best practices.
- **Recommendation 6:** By providing funding to small cities and rural communities, encourage the development and coordination of timely information and tools, such as spatial data infrastructure (SDI), to enhance and support the emergency management capabilities of public works agencies, as well as First Nations, Inuit and Métis, including coordination of Incident Management Teams.
- **Recommendation 7:** Accelerate timelines for updating Canada’s flood hazard maps to show all potential sources of overland flood (fluvial, pluvial, groundwater, and coastal).

Climate Resilient Infrastructure

- **Recommendation 8:** Continue to encourage investment in public infrastructure projects that are planned and executed using sustainability rating systems such as Envision.
- **Recommendation 9:** Continue to encourage infrastructure investment strategies that recognize the value, and include the management and sustainability, of natural assets.

Water Resilience

- **Recommendation 10:** Continue direct funding to local communities through an increase to the federal Canada Community-Building Fund.
- **Recommendation 11:** Create a permanent federal funding mechanism to support and enhance the cost-effectiveness and sustainability of modern water and wastewater systems in communities of all sizes. “You can’t build another house if you can’t flush the toilet.”
- **Recommendation 12:** Include affordability as a consideration in federal programs to ensure that disadvantaged communities are not denied essential water services.
- **Recommendation 13:** Support programs that assist provincial, territorial, local, First Nation and critical service entities in increasing resilience to natural hazards and with drought-related activities and expand the technology transfer of drought and water conservation strategies.
- **Recommendation 14:** Encourage the development of regional drought preparedness and response plans by water providers in cooperation with federal, provincial, territorial, local, First Nation and critical service entities, and require those plans mitigate the negative economic, social, and environmental impacts caused by a lack of available water.
- **Recommendation 15:** Encourage planning and management efforts that include steps to reduce the vulnerability of future water interruptions, such as floods or drought.

One Canadian Economy Act

Municipal public works professionals are on the front lines of infrastructure delivery and land-use planning, and their early input is critical to the success of the federal government's “one project, one review” framework under Bill C-5, the One Canadian Economy Act. While the legislation seeks to streamline project approvals and attract investment, municipalities are the level of government most familiar with the zoning constraints, utility capacities, environmental risks, and community dynamics that shape whether a project will succeed—or face costly delays. Engaging municipalities from the earliest planning stages ensures that local expertise informs site selection, design, and mitigation measures before irreversible decisions are made. It will also ensure that municipalities can maximize spin-off project benefits associated with major projects. Without this input, federally fast-tracked projects may inadvertently conflict with local development plans, overload water or waste systems, disrupt sensitive ecosystems, or spark community opposition that undermines public trust in the review process.

Embedding municipalities in the early review phase will also improve efficiency and reduce risk.

Public works officials can help federal reviewers quickly assess practical realities such as road access, stormwater management, emergency services capacity, and impacts on other infrastructure assets. This allows for better alignment between federal objectives and local implementation timelines, enabling smoother permitting and faster project delivery. Moreover, it ensures that “shovel-worthy” projects meet both national priorities and local needs, fostering greater coordination across governments and avoiding costly mid-project redesigns or legal challenges. As the Government of Canada pursues economic growth through infrastructure acceleration, it should treat municipalities not merely as project hosts—but as essential partners in planning and execution.

Emergency Management and Disaster Mitigation

Public works agencies operate and maintain critical infrastructure services vital to communities. Public works agencies are also responsible for many aspects of emergency planning and disaster response, including assessing damage to buildings and infrastructure; clearing and disposing of debris; removing snow in blizzard conditions ahead of police and fire services; securing critical facilities and restoring lifeline services; managing traffic and coordinating municipal equipment and manpower; and ensuring a safe public water supply. In 2017, APWA/CPWA announced the creation of a “Public Works First Responder” symbol for use throughout North America to identify public works personnel and acknowledge their role as first responders.

Public Safety Broadband Network

Communication is increasingly recognized as a critical component of operating public infrastructure and public works agencies must be able to depend on reliable interoperable emergency communications systems that connect them during preparedness, response and recovery operations to other first responders, including law enforcement, fire, emergency medical professionals, and other public works agencies. Communications interoperability is particularly critical when emergency responders provide mutual aid to other communities.

The Temporary National Coordination Office (TNCO) [final report](#) includes the TNCO’s recommended approach for the development of a nationwide and interoperable PSBN that meets the needs of the public safety community, and it notes “the transition to a PSBN will be complex and will require all levels of government to support its development. Continued collaboration among all levels of government, industry and end users is essential to develop a network that meets the diverse expectations and interests of stakeholders.”

All-Hazard Awareness-Raising Activities

Budget 2019 proposed to provide \$5.0 million over five years, starting in 2019–20, to Public Safety Canada to develop all-hazard awareness-raising activities that are targeted to specific, at-risk audiences such as low-income Canadians, seniors, people with disabilities, recent immigrants, and Indigenous Peoples. The five years allotted for this funding has run out and needs renewal.

Many public agencies, particularly in small and rural communities, need assistance developing and implementing all-hazard emergency preparedness plans, pre-disaster mitigation plans and long-term hazard mitigation measures. Public works agencies, as well as First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities must be included in education and training efforts; have access to tools and resources, such as climate and weather forecasts, rainfall data and risk models; and have access to new technologies that can assist in emergency response activities.

Flood Mapping

Funding for disaster mitigation and adaptation must be available to communities of all sizes, and rural communities in particular. Small and rural communities have fewer resources for planning and delivering services is more expensive. According to Public Safety Canada, floods are the costliest natural disasters in Canada in terms of property damage. To restrict development in areas of high flood risk, federal, provincial, and territorial governments have designated a number of flood prone areas in Canada.

According to the May 2023 [National Risk Profile](#), “flooding is Canada’s most common and costly disaster.” Given that public works agencies rely on flood hazard maps to plan and manage their infrastructure investments, it is critical that these resources effectively communicate all current flood hazards.

Climate Resilient Infrastructure

Local governments – particularly in rural areas – often have relatively small revenue bases but are responsible for most road transport network maintenance. There is often a disconnect between expenditures on roads and usage, resulting in spending that is inequitable and inefficient. New technologies are enabling the collection of valuable data, which allows governments and operators to better understand user needs, can be used for planning and service delivery, and is opening new revenue streams for transport operators and network users.

Climate Lens

The increased number and severity of natural disasters—particularly the widespread wildfires—resulting from a changing climate puts public infrastructure at risk. Failing public infrastructure disrupts essential services, results in economic loss, and can lead to loss of life – and yet civil engineering infrastructure projects are falling behind societal and functional expectations.

[Infrastructure Canada's Climate Lens](#) recognizes that infrastructure investments can more successfully address environmental pressures and climate change impacts by encouraging the incorporation of climate change considerations into the project development process. Foreseeing the need for such considerations, the APWA/CPWA joined partners in establishing the Institute for Sustainable Infrastructure (ISI) in 2010.

ISI's Envision sustainability rating tool is a holistic framework for evaluating and rating the community, environmental and economic benefits of all types of infrastructure projects and is accepted as a Climate Lens methodology to assess climate change risk and resilience. Envision also recognizes infrastructure projects that use transformational, collaborative approaches to assess sustainability indicators over the course of a project's life cycle.

Natural Assets

Some public works agencies are factoring into their capital and operations plans the value of natural assets that provide core municipal services, such as wetlands that improve water quality and provide protection from storm surges and vegetated spaces that stabilize soil and absorb stormwater. According to a 2018 report published by the Insurance Bureau of Canada (IBC) and several partners, [Combatting Canada's Rising Flood Costs](#), conservation and restoration of natural infrastructure can be a cost-effective way to mitigate material financial losses that would otherwise result from flooding.

Unlike engineered assets that have a defined lifespan, after which they must be repaired or replaced, natural assets may provide services in perpetuity. But they must be protected and recognized for their value, which may increase as the climate changes.

Water Resilience

Public works agencies operate and maintain critical infrastructure services susceptible to the impact of climate change, including the delivery of drinking water supplies and the management of wastewater and stormwater.

Public works agencies and municipal water providers use chemical substances to treat water for public use and automation and connected technologies are part of many water management strategies, which can be vulnerable to cyberattacks. In addition to addressing such issues as phosphorus, flushables, effluent discharge limits, and water quality, public works agencies are facing the pressure that climate change is putting on water and wastewater systems.

According to Canada's [Core Public Infrastructure Survey](#), municipal governments own over three-quarters of every type of potable water asset but less than half reported having an asset management plan. In addition, over one-third of potable water asset owners issued a drinking water advisory in 2016. According to Environment and Climate Change Canada, most boil water advisories are issued because equipment and processes used to treat, store or distribute drinking water break down, require maintenance, or have been affected by environmental conditions. This includes issues such as broken water mains, planned system maintenance, power failures or equipment problems.

Climate change impacts are placing further pressure on water and wastewater systems. According to a 2020 report, [Canada's Future: The Cost of Climate Adaptation at the Local Level](#), avoiding the worst impacts of climate change at the municipal level will cost an estimated \$5.3 billion per year. Drought will result in a loss of potable water amid increased demand, permafrost degradation will lead to the rupture of water lines and storage infrastructure, sea level rise will result in saltwater intrusion, and increases in rainfall and storm surge will lead to the failure of drainage systems. The report also notes that some studies have shown that for every dollar invested in mitigation measures, \$6 is saved in future damages.