



Submission to the Department of Finance

**A Strategic Vision for Canadian Infrastructure:  
Building Resilient and Prosperous  
Communities**

**Submitted by:**

The Association of Consulting Engineering Companies | Canada

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## Recommendations:

**Recommendation 1:** Implement the National Infrastructure Assessment to create a long-term strategy for addressing infrastructure needs in communities across Canada.

**Recommendation 2:** Immediately renew funding for the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program or unveil its successor program by spring 2024.

**Recommendation 3:** Design future infrastructure investment plans to allow for multi-project applications based on sound asset management planning, as well as individual project applications.

## About ACEC

ACEC is the national voice of over 400 companies that provide engineering and other professional services to both public and private sector clients across Canada and the world. Our members, who range from employee-owned small businesses to some of the largest engineering companies in the world, collectively employ over 60,000 Canadians. Consulting engineering firms are Canada's trusted advisors that are at the forefront of designing and building a more prosperous, sustainable Canada. Visit [www.acec.ca](http://www.acec.ca) or contact us at [president@acec.ca](mailto:president@acec.ca) to learn more.

## Introduction

Addressing an increasing housing and infrastructure shortage is putting pressure on all levels of government to find new and innovative solutions that will support Canadians. This challenge is coupled with significant increases in newcomers to Canada, labour shortages and supply chain challenges, and high levels of inflation and financial uncertainty following an unprecedented global pandemic. These are long-term, systemic challenges that require both immediate relief and long-term solutions. Solving them can be addressed by the expertise on the ground.

The Association of Consulting Engineering Companies - Canada (ACEC) represents consulting engineering firms from coast to coast to coast. Our members play an essential role in building a more sustainable, more accessible, more connected Canada. Consulting engineering firms share the federal government's goals of strengthening our communities, reaching net-zero, creating good jobs and opportunities, and growing the economy. As we look at the challenges that we are facing, one thing is very apparent to our members: Canada can do more – and better – when it comes to planning, designing, building, and maintaining our infrastructure assets. We must think bigger and longer-term to address the current housing and infrastructure crisis, and to prevent similar public policy challenges from occurring in the future.

**To that end, we are putting forward three recommendations for the upcoming federal budget. To build the kind of communities that Canadians deserve, we need a long-term nation-wide infrastructure strategy, immediate predictable infrastructure funding, and flexibility in the funding application process.**

### Recommendation #1: Implement the National Infrastructure Assessment

A national infrastructure strategy is more critical than ever.

Delivering infrastructure in a country as vast and complex as Canada requires a long-term, deliberate, and clear-eyed vision. That's why ACEC has been a vocal supporter and advocate for the urgent implementation of the proposed National Infrastructure Assessment (NIA) to facilitate informed and proactive public policy on housing and a wide range of other infrastructure challenges over the long-term, including climate change resilience, trade corridors, energy and resources. The NIA will assist all orders of government in making better investment decisions that are effective, informed, and forward-thinking.

There are four critical pillars needed for an effective National Infrastructure Assessment:

- I. An assessment of the current infrastructure assets and gaps in Canada.
- II. The establishment of long-term goals for what infrastructure needs Canada will have in the future.
- III. A roadmap that outlines the demand and required resources for new infrastructure and infrastructure renewal that will be delivered over the decades ahead with regional specificity.
- IV. Regular review, re-evaluation, and updating of the National Infrastructure Assessment.

Every dollar invested infrastructure in this country will go further and provide greater returns if delivered in the context of a long-term strategy. For instance, building new houses and residential buildings to increase housing supply is critical, but to turn these houses into homes communities

need infrastructure such as roads, transit, electrical grids, water and wastewater. With the NIA, governments would be able to anticipate these issues and prevent any future infrastructure crises.

The NIA will also bring significant environmental benefits. Climate change is a life-cycle challenge that needs coordinated, lifecycle solutions. The NIA will allow for planning and lifecycle efficiencies that enhance our climate resilience and help us move forward on the path to net-zero. It is an overarching strategy will allow policy leaders and decision-makers to consider all infrastructure assets in the context of one another, allowing for coordinated investments across the federal, provincial, and territorial governments, municipalities, and Indigenous communities.

*Establishing a long-term vision for Canada's local, regional, and national infrastructure needs will result in smarter decision-making, allowing us to build prosperous, sustainable communities.*

## **Recommendation #2: Renew funding for the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program**

While a long-term infrastructure vision is critical to Canada's success, there are also immediate needs. Since the intake for the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP) closed on March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2023, there has been a gap between infrastructure funding programs. That's why ACEC recommends the immediate renewal of funding for the ICIP, or alternatively, promptly unveiling its successor program.

The consequences of lapses in infrastructure program funding are significant and disruptive, ultimately delaying the essential nation-building work ahead of us. With recent housing announcements detailing the extensive building of new homes, a funding program such as the ICIP is necessary to build the critical infrastructure to support these new communities. Roads, transit, electrical grids, water and wastewater are all needed to turn houses into homes, and these cannot be built without the necessary funding.

Owners and operators of infrastructure assets need to be able to make informed investment decisions. Similarly, firms that plan, design, and construct infrastructure need to be able to manage supply chains and develop the skilled talent necessary to deliver projects so that they can good jobs for Canadians and growing our economy.

*Renewing the ICIP or establishing a successor program will help support all levels of government in addressing the current infrastructure deficit.*

## **Recommendation #3: Allow for Multi-Project Applications**

Infrastructure assets do not exist in isolation. A community's infrastructure is an ecosystem of interrelated assets that collectively ensure a strong and resilient Canada.

Currently, federal government programs typically accept single-project applications. This is holding Canada back—it's inefficient, doesn't guarantee the best return on investment, and deters innovative big-picture thinking. To address the significant infrastructure deficits across the country, the infrastructure application process must be made more flexible and efficient.

Allowing municipalities and other infrastructure owners the option to apply for investments based on multi-project programs supported by asset management planning will allow for predictable and

coordinated implementation of important infrastructure assets in communities across the country. This approach will also give communities and the entire supply chain the confidence to make not only the necessary capital investments, but also investments in human and technological resources that address long-term needs. Lifecycle planning is a powerful tool in ensuring a better return on investment and addressing challenges like climate change. This should be a feature of future infrastructure investment programs, as well as a fundamental tenet of the NIA.

*Allowing for multi-project applications will help support municipalities achieve the commitments made to secure housing funding and help create dynamic and prosperous communities.*

## **Conclusion**

***A long-term strategic vision. A renewed infrastructure funding program. A more flexible application process.***

ACEC strongly believes that these three recommendations will work together to help give our communities the certainty they need to encourage investment, fight climate change, create jobs, and deliver long-lasting infrastructure to serve Canadians for the foreseeable future.

Let's work together to overcome the real challenges we face, get big things done, and build a better future for everyone.