

Provincial government unveils infrastructure plan

By: [Gabrielle Piché](#)

Posted: 6:00 AM CDT Tuesday, Mar. 14, 2023

The provincial government unveiled a \$4.1 billion, five-year infrastructure plan Monday.

The strategy allocates more than \$2.5 billion to Manitoba highways, including expanding the highway to Ontario to four lanes. Roughly \$280 million is budgeted to turn the Perimeter Highway into a freeway.

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Overall, the plan encompasses more than 800 approved capital projects. It includes funding for water control and northern airports.

Highways consume more than \$2.5 billion in the budget. The province has approved 525 highway projects spanning 1,862 kilometres of upgrades.

Construction on a new interchange at the Perimeter Highway and St. Anne’s Road will cost an estimated \$151 million. It’s the third such project scheduled for the south Perimeter, following intersections at St. Mary’s Road (where construction has begun) and McGillivray Boulevard.

The Progressive Conservatives have budgeted more than \$115 million to upgrade Highway 5 from Highway 23 to the Trans-Canada Highway; \$40 million in construction on Highway 6; and upwards of \$60 million for Highway 75.

The plan outlines six major highway twinning projects and spending of a minimum \$500 million per year on Manitoba highways until 2028.

"In Manitoba, roads are something there's an opportunity to do more for," said Aaron Dolyniuk, the Manitoba Trucking Association's executive director.

The association supports the plan, he said.

"(This is) a big amount of money for something that's much needed, and it's great to have such a proactive approach," Dolyniuk added.

The strategy includes 97 projects to upgrade bridges and other structures. Another 214 projects are water-related, including dam rehabilitations and pump station replacements.

The government has assigned \$600 million to Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin outlet channels.

More than \$75 million is set for northern airport infrastructure, including two new airport terminal buildings in Gods Lake Narrows and Tadoule Lake, and roughly 150,000 square metres of runway fixes.



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One of the construction projects that is part of this investment already underway of the new interchange highway at St. Mary's Rd. and the Perimeter Hwy.

The province has [an interactive map online](#) which shows infrastructure projects' current statuses. It will be updated regularly over the years, according to Pivniuk.

The infrastructure projects will support economic growth, he added.

Every dollar spent on transportation brings returns of \$1.30 to \$1.90 in gross domestic product, said Chris Lorenc, president of the Manitoba Heavy Construction Association.

"Roads move people, roads move products, roads (are) what connects us," he said at a news conference Monday.

The MHCA has advocated for long-term, predictable and incremental spending on transportation infrastructure. The five-year plan fits the bill, Lorenc said.

It also provides stability for construction workers, he added.

The Manitoba Construction Sector Council expects 4,500 construction workers, or 11 per cent of the industry, to retire by 2027. The industry is facing a labour shortage.

Still, workers will be able to complete the tasks ahead, Lorenc said.

"Is (the labour shortage) a challenge? No question," he said. "We're confident we can fill those positions."

Industry leads have been meeting with the province to co-ordinate education and training, Lorenc said.



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"We want to make sure that we're ready for what's to come," Piwniuk added.

The five-year plan was welcome news to Kam Blight, president of the Association of Manitoba Municipalities.

Municipalities are responsible for 60 per cent of public infrastructure but receive less than 10 cents of every tax dollar to build and maintain that infrastructure, Blight said.

“In order to get the job done, municipalities require long-term, predictable funding and partnerships with other orders of government,” he said.

The [83-page plan](#) lays out 116 culvert replacements and more than \$57 million to replace the Symington Yards overpass east of Winnipeg.

The infrastructure plan will be updated annually to add future years' projects.

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