

Province kicks in \$10M for hub upgrades

BY ANGELA HALL, LEADER-POST FEBRUARY 11, 2009

Regina's planned transportation hub is getting a \$10-million infrastructure kick-start from the provincial government.

Highways and Infrastructure Minister Wayne Elhard said the money will help the City of Regina service the area with sewer and water lines.

The Global Transportation Hub, slated for the city's west side, is expected to include Canadian Pacific's relocated rail yards, a Loblaw's distribution centre, and other potential developments.

"I think it's a prudent way to expedite the project and to make sure that it is shovel-ready for the early part of the construction season this year," Elhard said at a news conference.

The money was intended to come from the federal government's Building Canada infrastructure funding, but due to "notorious delays" associated with the program, the province entered an agreement with the city to advance the \$10 million, Elhard said.

"We will collect it back, but it'll have to be applied against a project where we're going to spend \$10 million," he told reporters. "We're not just going to send the bill into the federal government and they're going to send us back. They're going to want to see our \$10 million complementing their \$10 million in another project."

The minister said he's confident the federal government will ultimately come through on its infrastructure commitments.

"They have a lot at stake and if there's reneging on these initiatives or these promises, they pay a pretty big price," Elhard said.

Regina Mayor Pat Fiacco said the \$10 million in funds that will go toward servicing the land right away is a "huge help."

"It's about a \$50-million cost as we move forward on infrastructure, but this certainly makes a big difference right off the bat so that we can get started and get additional development out there," Fiacco said.

The federal government in late 2007 committed up to \$27 million for the project, an amount that the provincial government has committed to matching, but that money has yet to flow.

Elhard promised that details related to road improvements to support the transportation hub will be released soon, he said.

A further \$7.65 million in provincial funding was also announced Tuesday for five other projects, which are cost-shared to varying degrees with the communities.

The bulk of the funding, \$6 million, is going to Swift Current for Highway 1 and 4 interchange improvements. The provincial government is paying for almost 100 per cent of the cost of that specific project, according to a highways official.

Weyburn will see \$450,000 for Highway 39 service road improvements, and Melfort will get \$300,000 for Highway 6 improvements.

Humboldt is getting \$150,000 for Highway 20 intersection improvements, while Lloydminster is getting \$750,000.

"As our urban communities grow and expand we need to ensure congestion is minimized, safety concerns are addressed and efficient access is provided to support economic growth," Elhard said.

The \$17.65 million for the six transportation projects is all part of the \$500 million infrastructure stimulus package announced last week.

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