
MEMORANDUM**LNTC-C 4-2021****Subject: Federal Funding Opportunities for Transit Governance Transition****Date: June 30, 2021****To: Linking Niagara Transit Committee****From: Gina van den Burg, Government & Stakeholder Relations Specialist**

At its meeting of April 28, 2021, Committee members inquired about funding opportunities through federal programs to support the transit governance transition. This memo outlines those opportunities and highlights avenues of inquiry that can be made to attract additional funds. These apply to the transition phase and costs of the new transit commission, and also to the future capital needs of an expanded system.

Staff continue to monitor and actively advocate to federal and provincial policy-makers for transit funding that supports the implementation of Regional transit governance reforms. Specifically, communications are continuing with federal and provincial partners regarding the wider application of the transit-dedicated Phase 1- 3 Safe Restart Agreement (SRA) funding to include support for Niagara's Full Commission Transit Model. This would enable Niagara to utilize all unused/remaining Phase 1 and 2 SRA funds for transit governance transition costs, plus extend the Phase 3 eligibility period to December 21, 2022.

Conversations remain ongoing between senior levels of government related to the details of the bi-lateral agreements for this COVID-19 funding program. These discussions also include advocacy by provincial and national transit associations seeking similar positions to retain unused funds.

Federal Consultations on new Funding Programs

In relation to new federal transit funding, presently a number of consultations are underway that offer Niagara Region the opportunity to influence the design of new public transit and infrastructure programs. Infrastructure Canada is undertaking consultations on the design of a \$3 billion investment program that will provide permanent public transit funding beginning in 2026-2027. In addition, it is seeking input on an overarching National Infrastructure Assessment Consultation intended to inform

the next broad-based infrastructure funding program that may subsidize components of the transition to a new transit governance model.

Regional Advocacy for Eligible Funding

Niagara Region is pursuing a variety of advocacy approaches to ensure the Federal government is considering Niagara's transit needs. The Regional Chair conveyed the request for expanded eligibility for transit funding during a recent delegation to the Federal Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities. Further, the Regional Chair will be meeting with local MPs on June 29, 2021 to discuss the government's funding programs under development, and to assist in identifying existing funding opportunities that may support Niagara's transit governance reform initiative. On the administrative side, staff are leveraging its relationship with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) and its direct influence with the Federal government. Staff are closely collaborating with FCM to help shape future federal transit programs. The need for funding support for transit governance is a request that has been clearly communicated.

Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP)

In May, the federal government announcement the third funding intake of the ICIP program, with approximately \$8.3 billion in federal funding directed for public transit. Projects will be assessed using an outcomes-based approach and applications will be accepted on an ongoing basis up to March 28, 2024.

To be eligible, a project must advance at least one of the following transit improvement outcomes:

- improved capacity of public transit infrastructure;
- improved quality and/or safety of existing or future transit systems;
- improved access to a public transit system; and,
- improved capacity and/or quality of pathways and/or active transportation infrastructure.

Staff will apply for this funding for capital start-up costs of the Regional Transit Commission as well as to support future transit growth and capacity improvements under the Commission. With such a long intake window, this will allow for opportunities for the new Commission to pursue projects outside of any existing intentions carried forward by the current transit agencies.

Exploring additional funding opportunities

Staff will also be increasing its capacity to monitor and identify various other funding opportunities using a recently accessed government grant inventory. This will help identify smaller grants which municipalities may have not pursued previously. These smaller grants have the potential to offset select costs for implementing the new Regional transit governance model; and, they may qualify elements of this initiative under broader categories such as innovation, service improvements, connecting communities, or supporting disadvantaged groups.

As new funding opportunities evolve that qualify Niagara Region's Full Commission Transit Model, a subsequent update will be provided to the LNTC.

Respectfully submitted and signed by,

Gina van den Burg, M.A, MPA
Government & Stakeholder Relations Specialist