



## INTERVIEW between CCA President Michael Atkinson and Prime Minister Stephen Harper

Saskatoon, Thursday March 12, 2015

**MA:** *Since 2006, your government has championed infrastructure modernization, expansion of trade opportunities, as well as the retooling of Canadian industry through enhanced tax incentives. Given the importance of adequate infrastructure to Canada's trade performance, how will your government ensure that infrastructure remains adequate to support the timely movement of goods and services enabling Canadian businesses to take advantage of the many free-trade agreements your government has signed?*



Prime Minister Stephen Harper and CCA President Michael Atkinson in March in Saskatoon.

**SH:** Well, it's part of the whole trade package. We have signed a number of important free-trade agreements around the globe, which will create new and significant opportunities for Canadian businesses. Much of the focus has been on the high demand for Canadian raw materials, but we are also pleased to see a slight rebound in demand for manufactured products, which our government has helped retool through a number of strategic investments in both secondary and tertiary industries. All of these investments were made with a view to improving our overall competitiveness.

The reality is that the movement of goods to markets will always be an issue in Canada due to our huge geography. That is why, since 2007, we have introduced two significant infrastructure modernization plans under the Building Canada Plans. The first was introduced in 2007 and was a \$33 billion investment. That program lapsed in 2014 and was replaced by the New Building Canada Plan, which commits a further \$53 billion to infrastructure development over the next 10 years. This new plan will make massive investments in not just small communities, but also into the development of infrastructure assets that support our trade competitiveness—things like highways, ports, airports and even in some cases, private infrastructure like rail. This is similar to what we did to develop the Asia Pacific Gateway project that created a new link to Pacific markets and has helped increase our trade volumes with Asian countries. In total, when combined with investments in federal infrastructure, our government has committed over \$75 billion over the next 10 years to the modernization of our nation's infrastructure.

**MA:** *Along those same lines, you have mentioned in the past the importance of collaboration between all levels of government to achieve success in this area, but from your government's perspective, what do you feel are the true benchmarks of success?*



**MA:** *And that leads right into my next question. Providing long-term funding commitments, like making the Gas Tax Transfer permanent, helps bring greater certainty to the municipal infrastructure budgeting process, but can you speak a little bit more about how your government looks to encourage more private sector investment in infrastructure?*



**SH:** I'd say the first thing is getting projects built. That may sound odd, but I feel Canadians get incredibly frustrated by governments that announce and re-announce funding for a project, but that project never seems to get completed. To date, as a result of the Building Canada Plans, we have seen approximately 43,000 projects completed across the country.

Look, there will always be federal money earmarked for local core and recreational infrastructure. After all, that is why we made the Gas Tax Transfer program permanent. But what we want is—despite all the political pressures for those types of local projects—that we do not forget to make the big investments in roads, bypasses, tunnels and ports that actually move goods to market and improve our global competitiveness. So, from my perspective, getting collaboration between governments is important to ensure that these types of investments are not neglected, and in that regard, as I've said, I believe we have a pretty good record.

What we need more of is private sector participation to help accelerate this process. We've gotten some already but we're working on getting more.

**SH:** Well look, what we are trying to do is create a greater role for the private sector in the development of infrastructure to take advantage of their expertise and to co-share the risks inherent in the construction of any large-scale project. The late Jim Flaherty created PPP Canada, which is a federal Crown Corporation set up to develop federal expertise in this area. PPP Canada works with provincial and municipal governments, as well as the private sector, to create synergies and allow larger, more complex projects to proceed in a timely manner. It has been up and running for some years now and we have 24 major projects that it has delivered or is in the process of delivering. Again, as I said earlier, we believe this public-private risk-sharing model is particularly useful for large and complex projects as it limits the taxpayer's exposure to construction and long-term maintenance risks, while at the same time delivering the assets we need in an efficient and timely manner.

Now I know some in the industry feel these efforts are still embryonic, but when I sit around the table at international meetings, it's clear to me that Canada is actually fairly well out in front of the rest of the world, which in the longer term, could translate into export opportunities for Canadian firms engaged in these projects, particularly as this model of infrastructure construction begins to take hold around the world.



**MA:** *Turning to labour, apprenticeship training and reforming our immigration system to make it more responsive to employer needs have been key priorities for your government. Going forward, what other initiatives is the government looking at to ensure that employers have access to the skilled labour they require?*



**SH:** Well, since the great recession, our focus has been primarily on job creation, but going forward, the greatest challenge we'll face is the development of the next generation of skilled workers, particularly for sectors such as yours. But as you know, these shortages are not confined to just the skilled trades, they exist elsewhere such as in the sciences, maths and other technical fields.

So how are we trying to deal with that?

Well, at the federal level, our tools are somewhat limited. Where we have a big say is not on the training front—which is largely a provincial responsibility—but with respect to immigration. And in this area, we have introduced a series of reforms that better align our recruitment efforts with the labour force demands in Canada. We call it Express Entry, and what it does is accelerate the identification and processing of skilled immigrants, which we believe will transform the system from one that has been mostly passive to one more in tune with the current and future needs of the country. It is a very competitive market out there as many Western countries are experiencing similar labour shortages, so we must be more proactive in our efforts in order to ensure that we continue to attract our share of the skilled workers Canada will need to remain economically competitive.

In addition to these efforts, we have also introduced a number of measures since 2006 to help promote greater domestic training, particularly for those professions in greatest demand, such as the apprenticeable trades. To that end, we have introduced the Apprenticeship Job Creation Tax Credit for businesses hiring apprentices, the Apprenticeship Incentive Grant and the Apprenticeship Completion Grant for students pursuing a Red Seal trade, as well as access to new study loans for apprentices and additional write-offs for their tools.

These are just some of the ways we directly support labour force development. The other key component is through our direct annual transfers made to the provinces to support their post-secondary educational and job retraining programs. Some of that funding we have insisted should be utilized to better bridge training with labour market needs, which is what we are doing through the Canada Job Grant. Requiring the provinces to better link training to marketplace demands will ensure that we are training people for actual jobs, as opposed to just educating people.

Look, we have a high quality and affordable post-secondary educational system, which is accessible to all Canadians. But the fact is that the education system is producing surpluses of particular skills in certain occupations and shortages in others, including the skilled trades. We know this for a fact. It's undeniable, which is why we've brought employers to the table and are ensuring that federal funding to the provinces for job training better reflects marketplace demand. Today, as I visit college campuses across Canada, we find first-hand proof that these efforts are working as evidenced by the growing number of high school students choosing careers in the trades. The truth is, we are getting greater and greater cooperation from the provinces, and as we go forward, I believe more of them will embrace this approach.



**MA:** *I'm pleased you touched on colleges. As you know, we were strong supporters of the Knowledge Infrastructure Program, which helped many of our aging community colleges modernize their facilities and expand their training capacity. Did you feel the program was a success?*



**SH:** Right, speaking of the Knowledge Infrastructure Program (KIP) there are two important things to know about it.

First of all, it was part of the big \$62 billion stimulus program we introduced to prevent the slide of our economy into recession. Within that package of measures and programs, KIP was unique in that it supported infrastructure development at academic institutions. Facilities applying for funding were required to match federal contributions with their own funds or a collection of public and private sector contributions. As a result, that program actually rolled out much quicker than any single other stimulus program, even though the other stimulus programs didn't take long either.

The second important element was that federal funding went to support the development of physical infrastructure at both college and university campuses. From our perspective, this was critical as it helped many colleges improve their training infrastructure, often permitting the colleges to expand their training capacity. Since it is often at the college level where more market oriented training actually occurs, having college participation in this program was essential for us and they've been great partners.







## INTERVIEWS between CCA President Michael Atkinson and the Opposition Leaders

### CCA President Michael Atkinson and Tom Mulcair, Leader of the New Democratic Party of Canada

Ottawa, June 18, 2015

**MA:** *Given the importance of adequate infrastructure to Canada's trade performance, how would your government ensure that infrastructure remains able to support the timely movement of goods and services enabling Canadian businesses to take advantage of international trade as much as possible?*



Michael Atkinson and Tom Mulcair

**MA:** *What role do provincial and municipal governments play? How would your government work with other levels of government to further build and enhance our infrastructure?*

**TM:** International trade is one of the cornerstones of Canada's economic growth and future prosperity. In 2015, over 60% of our gross domestic product is directly related to trade.

However, it is obvious that Canada can and must do better. Our current account went from a surplus of \$19 billion in 2006 to a deficit of \$62 billion in 2014, and March, April, and May 2015 were the three worst months of trade deficit in Canada's history.

We need safe and modern infrastructure to turn this situation around and allow Canadian importers and exporters to make the most of the opportunities available to them. We know that Canada's competitiveness and our businesses depend on the rapid movement of people and goods. As a result, our ports, airports, roads and railways are strategic economic levers whose quality has a major impact on our country's trade performance.

An NDP government will ensure that our roads, bridges and vital infrastructure are taken care of. We intend to begin by giving municipalities an extra cent of the gas tax, which will represent a \$1.5 billion investment by the end of our first term in office and will contribute to the long-term funding of our infrastructure.

Our plan for public transit, in which we plan to invest \$1.3 billion over the next 20 years, will reduce traffic congestion, help Canadians get to work within a reasonable amount of time and allow goods to move more quickly.

**TM:** Provincial and municipal governments have an absolutely essential role to play when it comes to planning, prioritizing and constructing core infrastructure across Canada. For far too long the federal government has downloaded costs, delayed investments, failed to meet with Premiers, and has allowed Canada's infrastructure deficit to balloon to hundreds of billions of dollars. In fact, municipalities own 60% of our public infrastructure, yet only collect 8 cents of every tax dollar. This isn't sustainable and we need a better approach.

My NDP Government will be a reliable, federal partner to invest in core local, provincial and national infrastructure that will drive our economy in the 21st Century. We have made this a priority and have already announced some concrete proposals to ensure that our roads, bridges, water systems and public transit are there when we need them. We'll increase infrastructure transfers of the existing Gas Tax Fund by \$1.5 billion to reach a total of \$3.7 billion annually in stable, long-term investments in local infrastructure priorities. This will create 23,000 jobs and add \$2 billion annually to Canada's GDP by building and maintaining the infrastructure network that brings Canadians to work and delivers goods to markets all across Canada.

To tackle gridlock and cut commute times, we will invest \$1.3 billion annually in predictable, stable, and transparent funding for public transit across Canada. This will create 31,000 jobs in manufacturing, construction and transit operations, and will further improve the productivity in Canada's urban regions.

We understand that for Canada to succeed in the future we need a federal government willing to invest in the infrastructure of the future. This will require collaboration, respect for decisions taken at other levels of government, and fully-costed plans to tackle the current infrastructure deficit holding back our communities.

**MA:** *How would your government encourage more private sector investment in infrastructure?*



**TM:** You know, I've taken a very pragmatic approach when it comes to private sector investment in infrastructure. The private sector has an important role to play in managing infrastructure investment across the country – whether it is investing in railways, airports, development at port authorities, mining sites, or as contractors building new infrastructure.

The NDP is committed to getting the best value for money for publicly funded projects, and we are open to finding creative ways to involve the private sector, as long as the public will benefit, and we follow the highest standards of transparency and accountability when issuing contracts.

We have been critical of the Conservative Government's approach to force municipalities to use public-private partnerships against their will. Infrastructure Canada has admitted that this approach adds delays of 6-18 months to review every large infrastructure project, and many small municipalities are shut out of funding altogether when P3's are the only option considered. We need a flexible approach, and we would allow municipalities and provinces to select the financing mechanism that works for them. This will ensure that infrastructure gets built efficiently, responsibly, while respecting the choices of other levels of government.

There is room for the federal government to make better use of public-private partnerships, but we should not be ideological in either our support or opposition to them. They should be measured based on clear criteria, in full transparency, to ensure that the public is getting the best value for money. We need an approach that addresses Canada's massive infrastructure deficit with a variety of tools and policy options.

**MA:** *Turning to labour, apprenticeship training – reforming our immigration system to make it more responsive to employer needs are key priorities for our members. What would your government do to ensure that employers have access to the skilled labour they require?*

**TM:** Under the Conservatives, too many Canadians do not have access to training programs because they are shut off from EI benefits, which serve as a gatekeeper for training. We will expand access to EI and to EI-Part II funded training programs that will help Canadians develop the skills they need to take available jobs. We will also offer policies to ensure that post-secondary education is accessible and tackle the skyrocketing student debt loads that prevent too many students from pursuing tertiary education.





**MA:** *What other thoughts do you have on the role of infrastructure in today's economy?*

We will speed up immigration processing, so that employers are able to bring in workers as permanent residents without dealing with the uncertainty of waiting for two or three years for applications to be processed.

We will initiate an independent review of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program and fix it once and for all, so that employers have clear rules and obligations when they are dealing with genuine, temporary labour shortages, without needing to deal with changing rules and requirements every six months.

And we will provide pathways to citizenship for all temporary foreign workers, so that when there are genuine labour shortages, employers can keep their trained and experienced workers instead of needing to bring in new workers every four years.

**TM:** Quality, efficient, safe and modern infrastructure is vital for Canada to remain competitive with our international partners, and to continue to provide Canadians with the quality of life and services that they require.

You know, I often say that small businesses are the backbone of the Canadian economy. They create 80% of new jobs in Canada, and any government needs to be mindful of how to create the conditions for the success of our job creators. This is why we have proposed to reduce the small business tax rate from 11% to 9% to provide immediate and permanent help for our small businesses.

Well, maintaining quality infrastructure is also essential to help those entrepreneurs, shops, and contractors continue to do their work, produce and sell goods and services, attract customers, and hire Canadians. As they get their products to market, and contribute to economic growth, the last thing they need is to face gridlock, crumbling roads and unsafe bridges. We can do better as a country, and the NDP has firm proposals on the table to do just that.

## CCA President Michael Atkinson and Justin Trudeau, Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada

Ottawa, June 10, 2015

**MA:** *Given the importance of adequate infrastructure to Canada's trade performance, how would your government ensure that infrastructure remains able to support the timely movement of goods and services enabling Canadian businesses to take advantage of international trade as much as possible?*

**JT:** Increasing our export capacity is vital to helping middle class wage growth, because we know that export-intensive industries pay wages nearly 50 percent higher than non-export oriented industries. For that reason, getting Canadian goods to market is one of the most important jobs of any Prime Minister.

Ensuring Canada has world class infrastructure is key to succeeding in this regard. That means not only fast, efficient, and secure borders, ports, and airports, but also that the necessary infrastructure is in place to help us get our goods to these departure points in the first place.

**MA:** *What role do provincial and municipal governments play? How would your government work with other levels of government to further build and enhance our infrastructure?*

**JT:** Municipal governments own more than half of Canada's infrastructure, so the federal government must partner with them, and with the provinces, to fix our country's growing infrastructure deficit.

There are several things to keep in mind when developing a new partnership on infrastructure. First, the funding must be long-term

and stable so that municipalities can effectively plan their future investments. Second, the program design must be flexible so that infrastructure solutions can be generated at the local level and not just tailored to meet Ottawa's criteria.

As I recently told the Federation of Canadian Municipalities at their 2015 Annual Conference and Trade Show in Edmonton, "It's time for a new agreement between our municipalities, provinces and the federal government. It's time for a new revenue source, dedicated and delivered to local governments."

**MA:** *How would your government encourage more private sector investment in infrastructure?*



Justin Trudeau and Michael Atkinson

**JT:** Though private sector investment in public infrastructure has a limited history in Canada, it could be an effective way to help build the infrastructure we need. Where it makes sense, we must ensure that it is carefully considered. With that said, it is also important to recognize that the private sector isn't suited to every type of infrastructure project, and that cities and/or provinces must be consulted on the use of this funding model.

Where we should start is by finding a way to get Canada's pension plans to start investing in Canada's infrastructure. Many already invest billions of dollars in infrastructure projects internationally. This is positive for the pensioners whose pensions receive a steady stream of investment returns, but we could also be benefiting from new and improved infrastructure here at home.

One of the keys to unlocking that potential is to ensure that there is an iron clad wall between a pension investment board and any elected body. Even the perception that a project was approved due to political direction would be highly detrimental to ever getting pension plans to invest in Canadian infrastructure in the future.

**MA:** *Turning to labour, apprenticeship training – reforming our immigration system to make it more responsive to employer needs are key priorities for our members. What would your government do to ensure that employers have access to the skilled labour they require?*



**JT:** The most important thing we can do to ensure that Canadians are ready for the jobs of tomorrow is to ensure they are trained for them. The federal government has a major role to play in helping motivated people who want to learn new skills afford to do so. This is especially important for Canadians who have already started families and who have a much harder time foregoing a paycheck to improve their skills through education and training.

The federal government must also do a better job identifying future labour market demand so that Canadians can make informed choices about what skills they want to learn.

On the question of immigration, we must aggressively court skilled immigrants who, now more than ever, are being sought after by our competitor countries. Identifying the kinds of skills we need from immigrants is an important step, but it must not come at the cost of things that also encourage or dissuade potential immigrants. For instance, the likelihood of successful family reunification plays a large role in the decision-making process of many skilled immigrants. We need to make sure they know Canada will welcome their families.

Furthermore, we need to return the Temporary Foreign Worker (TFW) program to its original intent. That is, allowing employers to temporarily hire a foreign worker when absolutely no Canadian can be found to do the job. We also need to ensure that there are more pathways to citizenship for TFWs who have proven they can succeed in Canada and want to stay.

**MA:** *What other thoughts do you have on the role of infrastructure in today's economy?*

**JT:** Infrastructure is crucial, not only for the immediate job creation it provides, and the productivity boost and increased business investment that come with it, but equally for the role it plays in increasing Canadians' quality of life—something that is increasingly important from a business perspective. More and more, I have employers telling me that their employees want to live and work in



livable communities. Modern and well-maintained public infrastructure plays a huge role in making sure that employers are able to attract workers and their families to their communities.

## CCA President Michael Atkinson and Elizabeth May, Leader of the Green Party of Canada

Ottawa, June 18, 2015

**MA:** *Given the importance of adequate infrastructure to Canada's trade performance, how would your government ensure that infrastructure remains able to support the timely movement of goods and services enabling Canadian businesses to take advantage of international trade as much as possible?*



Michael Atkinson and Elizabeth May

**EM:** Our global economic competitiveness is slipping because our foundations are weak. Canada faces an infrastructure deficit that threatens our economic stability. Due to neglect, our massive municipal infrastructure deficit is now estimated by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities at \$123 billion. The Harper Conservatives' policies fall far short of adequately addressing the massive financing and funding challenge that confront projects that need attention now. Nearly 92% of the Conservatives' multi-billion dollar infrastructure fund remains unspent. It is far from clear whether provinces and municipalities can fully and expeditiously access the funds they need for infrastructure, let alone how they might do so. Nor is it clear what kind of projects would be eligible for funding. For example, the Harper cabinet made the allocation of \$600 million to Toronto for the Scarborough subway in secret—not through a transparent, publicly accountable process.

How can this infrastructure deficit be eliminated in a responsible way? We need to look to innovative funding mechanisms that are accountable and available to all Canadians. We have two challenges—funding and financing. Access to funding is certainly preferable to access to financing for debt—even at low interest rates.

The Green Party supports a transfer of one point of GST revenues to local governments for transit expansion and for repairs and improvements to streets, parks, water systems, schools, and community centres. This amounts to roughly \$6.4 billion a year on top of existing transfers based on gas tax revenues.

The Green Party believes that additional financing for improvements and repairs can best be supplied by an infrastructure bank—an iBank owned by Canadians—that leverages the ability of the federal government to provide provinces and municipalities with the funds they require at the lowest possible cost while offering private investors opportunities for profitable long-term investments. This type of system would most effectively address the infrastructure deficit. In the interim, the federal government must be held accountable for this pressing national priority and must not leave an unmanageable infrastructure deficit to our children and grandchildren.

One useful model for a federal iBank is the institution proposed by former Deputy Finance Minister, Scott Clark, and former head of the Fiscal Policy Branch, Peter deVries, modeled on the Export Development Corporation. The iBank would build its capital by the federal government's borrowing on its behalf at a much more favourable rate than provinces and municipalities received. The government could issue long term debt for an initial capitalization of, say, \$50 billion. Currently federal 30-year bonds yield 2 to 2.3 percent interest; provinces have to pay at least a full point more. The iBank would provide lower interest rates than provinces and municipalities can currently access. Provinces and municipalities could then borrow from the iBank for a designated range of projects: community brownfield remediation; water and waste treatment facilities; sports, cultural and recreational facilities; mass transit promotion; cycling and pedestrian promotion; and community housing options promotion. As long as the iBank recouped its borrowing and administrative costs, there would be no incremental impact on the federal government's budgetary balance. In another scenario, the government could even consider providing the funds to the provinces and municipalities interest-free as

soft loans and subsidize the borrowers with a minimal effect on the federal budget balance.

Building and maintaining a world-class infrastructure will bring about enormous economic and employment benefits. This will require bold action from our national leaders and Green MPs will hold all parties in Parliament accountable for providing leadership on infrastructure issues.

**MA: What role do provincial and municipal governments play? How would your government work with other levels of government to further build and enhance our infrastructure?**



**EM:** Canada needs to think like a country again. Greens are proposing a new way to do business, bringing all orders of government around the same table. Our proposed Council of Canadian Governments will provide a consultative process to develop shared plans and priorities. The council, based on an Australian model, will be chaired by the Prime Minister and include all premiers, representatives of local governments - as selected by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities - as well as leaders from First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples. Greens recognize that regardless of how it is financed, infrastructure requires long-term planning, and all governments must collaborate to come up with workable approaches. The Council's role would be to initiate, develop, and monitor the implementation of policy reforms that are of national significance and require action by all Canadian governments.

On infrastructure issues, the Council would work collaboratively to coordinate intra-jurisdictional policies. Government plays an important role in deciding what infrastructure is needed and where, including systems that promote environmental sustainability by building on world-class innovations in clean energy and technology. Canada is the only country in the OECD without any national transportation strategy. Over two-thirds of our carbon dioxide emissions come from burning fossil fuels for transportation, manufacturing, construction, and electricity generation. Whereas municipalities have taken the lead on piecemeal approaches to infrastructure issues in the absence of federal leadership, the Green Party is committed to backing municipal programs with real investment. The Green Party undertakes a commitment to fund the following six areas immediately to a total of \$3 billion (\$500 million per fund per year):

- Community Brownfield Remediation to provide assistance in cleaning up toxic and brownfield sites;
- Water and Waste Treatment Facilities to upgrade water treatment, sewage treatment, and recycling facilities to make them efficient, safe, and sustainable;
- Sports, Cultural, and Recreational Facilities to support the development of green recreational and cultural facilities and refurbish existing facilities;
- Mass Transit Promotion to improve and expand urban mass transit infrastructure and inter-modal connections, as well as car sharing initiatives;
- Cycling and Pedestrian Promotion to support pedestrian and cycling infrastructure and smart-growth developments that transform urban areas and towns into walkable communities linked by transit to reduce the need for owning and using cars; and,
- Community Housing Options Promotion to support a national housing program to build energy efficient co-operatives and affordable housing units where there is a shortage of such housing options.

Looking beyond the areas mentioned above, the Council would provide a much needed forum for municipal and provincial consultation. When this nation's founders created the institutions of our Confederation, fewer than one in ten Canadians lived in cities. Today, eight in ten Canadians live in urban areas. The Green Party believes we must fundamentally re-examine the place of the municipal order within Confederation and do far more to engage the provinces in policy-making.



**MA: How would your government encourage more private sector investment in infrastructure?**

**EM:** Private sector investment will play a crucial role in eliminating Canada's infrastructure deficit. The Green Party believes that a federal iBank set up as an independent, autonomous Crown Corporation would be a useful institution to foster an attractive environment for both private and public investment. It could operate much like the World Bank and other international regionally-based development banks, directly lending money or guaranteeing loans to viable startup projects that would be financially sustainable over time. In this way, crucial infrastructure such as toll roads, energy plants that collect user fees and ports that charge fees to handle incoming or outgoing goods could be easily financed.

An iBank can leverage the federal government's expansive access to credit at the lowest possible interest rates on behalf of all municipalities. This strategy builds on the successful stand-alone Federation of Canadian Municipalities funds created in the late 1990's—the Green Municipal Fund and Partners in Climate Protection. An iBank structured this way could mobilize large amounts of private capital from pension funds, private equity funds, sovereign funds, and other pools to invest in a wide range of much-needed projects. The iBank could match the massive public infrastructure needs with private investors on a case-by-case basis in order to make much greater progress towards more efficient building of advanced energy, transportation, clean water and information platforms. Because it would play such a vital role, the iBank could even create economies of scale, particularly in the cost of high-quality civil engineering services for major infrastructure projects. Private investors are normally reluctant to invest in infrastructure assets which involve huge upfront fixed costs and a long average lifespan, but with the assurance from a public agency of recovering their initial investment over time, many would find infrastructure an attractive investment.

Only government can assure adequate protection for the private investor through multi-year contracts and predictable regulatory regimes. A government has to make credible commitments not to expropriate the assets once they are built, and it must permit the private owner to recover the initial fixed costs as promised.

**MA: Turning to labour, apprenticeship training—reforming our immigration system to make it more responsive to employer needs are key priorities for our members. What would your government do to ensure that employers have access to the skilled labour they require?**

**EM:** Canada must act to meet the evolving challenges of a globalized economy. Changes to our immigration system must reflect the needs of our economy, but must also respect the civil liberties of new Canadians and stay true to our identity as a just, fair and open country.

The Green Party would eliminate the Temporary Foreign Worker Program and increase immigration where labour shortages are established. Green MPs would push for the elimination of valuation of foreign credentials for immigration purposes except in those cases where such credentials are recognized in Canada or a clear and expeditious path to Canadian accreditation is established. We must set realistic criteria for new Canadians based on existing job opportunities for immigrants to Canada. To this end, we would also allocate greater funding for training in official languages (ESL and FSL) for new Canadians through earmarked transfers to the provinces for public school and free night school programs. And we must remember that while we take steps to make a welcoming economic environment for new Canadians, we must equally work to ensure that we foster social cohesion and civil society development across Canadian communities. Greens would work with municipalities and provinces to improve the integration of new Canadians into the multicultural fabric of our country. We would support communities by assisting cultural organizations to obtain charitable status, reverse the Harper administration's policies to place barriers on family reunification and combat the rhetoric employed by the Harper Conservatives to justify policies that threaten the civil liberties of refugees and new immigrants. Our national tradition of welcoming newcomers and embracing social and ethnic differences gives us a unique opportunity to exert a positive influence on the rest of the world.





Reforming our immigration system is only one of the ways to ensure employers have access to the skilled labour they require. We must also improve Canada's poor record of on-the-job training. Our productivity growth rate, our ability to "work smart," and our level of innovation in the workplace have fallen below those of our competitors. We need to provide incentives for employers to train workers and to invest in productivity improvements for the long term in order to maintain our competitiveness. We also need to provide sufficient income support to enable workers to manage their cost of living while in training. A very small federal Apprenticeship Incentive and Completion Grant did increase the number of persons enrolled in apprenticeship training by an average of 7.2% a year between 2000 and 2011, but only half of those enrolled actually completed their course. The Green Party's proposed Guaranteed Livable Income would help to take the burden of Canadians working hard to learn new skills. As a further challenge to on-the-job training, most apprenticeships occur in small- or medium-sized businesses and are vulnerable to economic downturn when apprentices are the first people to be laid off.

Germany's extensive apprenticeship system and similar initiatives in the Nordic countries, Austria, Italy, the Netherlands, France, and Switzerland have helped to shield these nations from the job shortages associated with the European economic crisis. Apprenticeships are integrated into formal education and students receive a wide range of vocational training in high school. On-the-job training is blended with classroom training. These countries all provide tax credits for enterprises that increase training year-over-year. The Green Party supports adopting a requirement, as in Quebec, that businesses above a certain size invest at least 1% of their annual payroll in training or pay a levy of the equivalent amount. The Green Party also believes that a worthwhile model for encouraging investment in workers is the Workplace Development

Board system used in the United States. Regional boards lead sector-by-sector collaboration across businesses, industry, labour unions, educational institutions, community and residents' organizations, community-based employment services, and governments. They can vastly expand on-the-job training by achieving economies of scale. Such coordination can deliver great results, especially in identifying employers who are committed to investing in their workers and those who need support for ongoing training and career advancement.

**MA:** *What other thoughts do you have on the role of infrastructure in today's economy?*

**EM:** We have moved the deficit off the books of Canada and applied it to our built infrastructure. Crumbling bridges and highways, inadequate water treatment and an antique railway system do not support a modern, vibrant 21st century economy for Canada. An ambitious programme to eliminate the infrastructure deficit will result in tens of thousands of jobs across Canada. The challenge of infrastructure investment is even more critical as we face a rapidly changing climate. The changes in our rainfall patterns, in snow loads and in extreme weather events of all kinds place new and potentially devastating pressures on existing infrastructure. We must address the infrastructure deficit as part of both greenhouse gas reductions (climate mitigation) as well as coping with climate impacts we can no longer avoid (climate adaptation).