

April 14, 2020

Right Honourable Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0G2

Submitted Via Email: Justin.Trudeau@parl.gc.ca

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau:

Re: COVID-19 Recovery -- Stimulus Spending on Infrastructure

We would like to thank your government for the considerable efforts taken to date to respond to the unprecedented challenges facing individuals and businesses throughout Canada as we all cope with the COVID-19 epidemic. The substantial measures your government has taken to provide Canadians with temporary financial support will help keep many individuals and businesses solvent during the current COVID-19 crisis period.

As we all look ahead toward recovery, we encourage your government to begin laying the foundation for stimulus spending on critical national, provincial and local infrastructure priorities.

Now is not too soon to begin the planning and intergovernmental work required to get infrastructure projects “shovel ready”. Providing federal funding when the recovery period begins – supplemented with provincial and municipal contributions – presents a unique opportunity to address many long-standing infrastructure ‘gaps’ and ‘deficits’ throughout Canada. From a financial perspective it also makes sense with interest rates near all-time lows, provided there are multi-year efforts to contain further debt once the economic recovery has firmly taken hold.

Laying the groundwork *now* for infrastructure stimulus spending for the COVID-19 recovery period will provide the critical lead-time for your officials and provincial and municipal counterparts to secure any required project permits and regulatory approvals and to complete legal obligations to consult and accommodate Indigenous Nations (where applicable).

As your government contemplates stimulus funding, we urge you and your colleagues to advance federal government tenders and maintain open, fair and transparent procurement processes based on achieving the best value at lowest reasonable cost for taxpayers without preference to non-union, non-affiliated union or building trades union contractors.

In terms of priorities for your government’s attention, we suggest the following areas to provide short-term family-supporting jobs, support for communities across the country throughout the recovery period, and productivity enhancing infrastructure to enhance Canada’s competitiveness and productivity for the long-term:

- investments in major port infrastructure development on Canada’s West Coast, East Coast, and Saint Lawrence River and Great Lakes Gateways tied to road and rail networks to improve supply chain efficiency and Canada’s capacity to get exports to global markets;
- investments in targeted airport infrastructure in partnership with local airport authorities (where applicable), provincial governments and municipalities (where applicable) to improve passenger movements and experience, and to improve air cargo capabilities where there is a clear business case to do so; and,
- investments in urban transit infrastructure in recognition that much of Canada’s population growth is occurring in Canada’s major cities and that affordable, livable and environmentally sustainable housing options go hand-in-hand with expanded transportation access.

Prime Minister, we understand the immediacy and urgency of current COVID-19 crisis measures to “bend” and “plank” the case curve. This must remain our number one national priority. However, we also encourage you, your Cabinet colleagues and relevant senior public servants to begin efforts *now* to lay the groundwork for stimulus spending that is open to all contractors to bid and that enables Canada’s economic recovery and establishes a solid foundation for a more productive and prosperous future in all regions of the country.

Thank you again for your government’s ongoing efforts to lead Canadians through the current unprecedented crisis. Working together we will overcome the fallout from COVID-19, and build a stronger and more resilient Canada.

Sincerely,



Walter Pamic
Chair, Merit Canada
Board of Directors



Chris Gardner
President,
Independent Contractors
and Businesses Association



Paul Dube
President,
Merit Nova Scotia



Yvette Milner
President,
Merit Manitoba



Karen Low
President,
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Michael Gallardo
President and CEO,
Merit Ontario

Cc:

Honourable Chrystia Freeland, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs

Honourable Catherine McKenna, Minister of Infrastructure and Communities

Honourable Bill Morneau, Minister of Finance

Honourable Carla Qualtrough, Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and
Disability Inclusion

Honourable Marc Garneau, Minister of Transport

Honourable Bernadette Jordan, Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard

Honourable Dan Vandal, Minister of Northern Affairs