

Response to *Building the Canada We Want in 2050*

Engagement Paper on the National Infrastructure Assessment

June 30, 2021

1. Assessing infrastructure needs and establishing a long-term vision.

At Merit National, we strongly support long-term stability and predictability for infrastructure investments. A vision for infrastructure planning should reflect Canada's values of fairness and sustainability. It is crucial for all Canadians to be represented and included when establishing a long-term infrastructure vision. Inclusion should be expressed through support and opportunities for businesses and individuals, allowing them to benefit from infrastructure spending through open competition and fairness principles in the investment and bidding processes.

Merit supports:

- Assessing existing service demands and makes a plan that reflects those realities.
- Recognizing that Canada is large and geographically diverse, Canada's vision should acknowledge that each province and territory has unique geographical challenges and opportunities.
- Supporting each province and territory to be self-sustainable based on its resource sectors and population.
- Creating an infrastructure vision that considers clean energy solutions in tandem with Canada's ageing infrastructure.
- Providing opportunities for indirect benefits to flow from infrastructure spending, including health and wellness benefits for the construction industry workers and their families.

2. Improving coordination among infrastructure owners and funders.

Merit National believes that innovation and value are created through open communication and collaboration between the public and private sectors. By implementing business-friendly policies, the federal government can support private industry to innovate and implement long-term, sustainable solutions that benefit communities and generate greater economic and training opportunities for workers.

Merit supports the ongoing collaborative process and relationship between infrastructure owners and funders through public-private partnerships. Though these partnerships typically take longer to form and implement, the nature of these agreements helps to establish long-term relationships based on cooperation, long-term sustainability, and mutual understanding.

When designing a federal approach, it is critical to create flexibility for each region and its people to address and implement solutions that fit their unique needs. Ongoing flexibility and adaptability are integral to establish positive and sustainable outcomes. Through government rules and programs, the federal government will play an important role when supporting the provinces, territories, and municipalities to determine the best investments for their jurisdiction.

Merit supports:

- A Canadian solution that supports each jurisdiction to determine solutions and projects that reflect their geographic and social reality.
- Greater government programming and support to promote the skilled trades as a profession and viable way to earn a living.
- A national apprenticeship and certification approach that supports consistent access to education and provides workers with the ability to move easily between the provinces and territories.
- Promote spin-off benefits from infrastructure investment, including ensuring that construction industry workers and their families have access to health, dental, and wellness benefits.

3. Determining the best ways to fund and finance infrastructure.

Implementing public-private partnerships continues to be an effective model to fund and finance infrastructure projects. The model creates space for the private sector to implement new eco-friendly technologies while planning for, and reducing, long-term capital costs.

Merit supports:

- Funding projects that reflect the scope and quality of the materials from the beginning – reducing the need for frequent upgrades and incremental improvements.
- Funding based on long-term partnerships between private and public bodies with the goal of reducing the long-term cost and disruption of infrastructure projects.
- Citizen-driven funding that limits user-pay models, ensuring Canada remains affordable for citizens and workers.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact our advocacy team at advocacy@meritalberta.com or call 780.455.5999