

Cashing in

New federal money means City of Charlottetown can now complete its second water source project

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The City of Charlottetown finally has the money it needs to finish its much-needed second water source.

An announcement was held in Summerside on Wednesday where details of the first phase of the federal government's 10-year Investing in Canada plan were released.

It means almost \$33 million is being spent in this phase with more than \$16 million coming from the feds, while the province is contributing \$8.2 million for 20 of the 23 community infrastructure projects approved.

Municipalities would cover the remaining 25 per cent cost of the project in their jurisdiction.

The funding will help Charlottetown in a number of water and wastewater projects that will cost \$18.5 million.

Three of the projects will see the second water source in Miltonvale finished. When it's hooked up it will take some of the pressure off the Winter River-Tracadie Bay Watershed, currently Charlottetown's only source of water.

"It means that we're going to be resolving a lot of problems that have been hanging over the city for some time," said Coun. Eddie Rice, chairman of the Water and Sewer Utility. "It means that we will have a second water supply, and this should solve many of the concerns of many people."

The water should be flowing from Miltonvale toward the middle of 2017.

The city's share of the \$16 million cost is \$4 million, and it already has \$3 million set aside in a reserve account.

"It means if the project was to be completed in 2016 we would have to borrow \$1 million on capital debt," said Mayor Clifford Lee. "When you think of it, we're gaining a \$16-million asset and the net debt to the municipality is \$1 million. That is good planning and management."

The federal money will also help pay for a \$2.5 million sewer lift station on Fitzroy Street that completes the sanitary water, storm water separation project. It means no more overflows into the Hillsborough River.

Also part of the federal announcement, Charlottetown, Stratford and Cornwall are getting \$770,000 that will help pay for 10 used buses that will replace an aging fleet. Charlottetown's share is \$100,000.

Lee said he would like to see a review of the transit system, explaining that Charlottetown's annual \$900,000 subsidy isn't sustainable.

Mike Cassidy, who operates T3 Transit, said the 10 buses are six years old each and in perfect shape for a service that set yet another ridership record (39,600 passenger fares) in July, beating the previous record of 38,600 set in October 2015.

However, Cassidy said the buses are only a temporary solution. He wants to see a seven-year budget laid out for 10 brand new buses. One new bus costs between \$400,000 and \$500,000.