

## Infrastructure

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### 1. What is infrastructure work? Semantics.

When Montreal-Westerners speak of infrastructure renewal most have in mind some of our crumbling roads and complete road refurbishment, and not piecemeal sidewalk reconstruction or road patches. In recent years, however, Council has embraced a broader definition of infrastructure renewal encompassing spending on municipal buildings and even vehicles and equipment. **This has allowed the Town to claim that infrastructure spending has been maintained because of its investments in things such as the new rec center.** While it's true that just about everything can be considered as "infrastructure" to the Town's operations, this has led to confusion when residents question Council about infrastructure spending.

Infrastructure categories in the official government **Rapports Financier** – where the Town accounts for its spending -- **identify only road work above and below ground as true infrastructure work**; that is, water, sewer, storm drains, road surface, and sidewalks. Municipal buildings, vehicles and equipment are an entirely separate categories within **Capital Spending**.

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### 2. Completed infrastructure projects.

In the list below **blue numbers are total costs**, **brown-orange are costs per meter** with distances measured on Google Earth (it was not clear exactly what was done for some earlier projects), **green numbers are percentage of cost from grants**, taken from a Town report. (There appears to be a typo in the Town's information as Banstead, Radcliffe, Ainslie, and Campbell appears in both 2010 and 2011.)

2024	<b>No major infrastructure done.</b>		
2023	<b>No major infrastructure done.</b>		
2022	<b>No major infrastructure done.</b>		
2021	Fenwick	\$2,734,860	\$9,116 (300 m) (High cost due to catchment basin??)
2020	<b>No major infrastructure planned</b> according to February 2020 Informer. Not a Covid problem.		
2019	Crestwood & Wolseley	\$3,140,196+	\$5,271 (601 m)
2018	Percival	\$1,798,479	\$4,720 (360 m)
2017	Brock & Ballantyne N. (to Curzon)	\$3,148,767	\$4,663 (654 m)
2016	Strathearn North	\$969,113	\$4,330 (194 m) (Grant: 59.8%)
2015	Place Rugby	\$1,386,649	\$3,883 (216 m) (Grant: 73.3%)
2014	Brock South & Brynmor	\$2,083,167	(Grant: 35.2%)
2013	Sheraton & Radcliffe	\$3,302,180	(Grant: 27.3%)
2012	Brock North: Fielding to Northview	\$1,023,326	\$3,092 (331 m) (Grant: 26.4%)
2011	Banstead, Radcliffe, Ainslie, Campbell	\$3,255,658	(Grant: 64.7%)
2010	Banstead, Radcliffe, Ainslie, Campbell	\$483,033	(Grant: 43.5%)
2009	Strathearn, Easton, Broughton, Curzon, Ballantyne, Courtney	\$5,564,657	(Grant: 60.9%)

For additional information see [details of road renewal projects since 2009](#).

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### 3. Recent infrastructure spending.

The issues of recent infrastructure spending and availability of grants arose at the **January, 2024 Council meeting, (March 2024 Informer page 18)**: A resident complained "about the lack of attention the Town appears to be paying to maintaining streets and sidewalks and asked if the Town is actually earmarking funds for repairs or just waiting for funds to come in. **Councillor Ulin** replied that the Town is constantly looking for grants and has been spending about **\$1.5M** every year over the past ten years in addition to the grant money that has been received for these repairs. This year alone, there is **\$125K** in the budget for sidewalk repairs.

[Here's a different take on this issue:](#)

### Road renewal has ground to a halt.

Although the average value for road renewal of \$1.5M per year over the 10 years from 2014 through 2023 is accurate, it conceals what's happened in the past five years (2020 through 2024) when only a single project – Fenwick in 2021 – was completed. In the same period the Town built up the accumulated surplus for no foreseeable reason other than to save for the new rec center so this money was not available for infrastructure work. However, the rec center is a done deal, and we are where we are. On a positive note, the tax increases that enabled the accumulated surplus to grow created average annual yearly surpluses of **\$685,888** over the four years from 2020 to 2023. These tax increases remain in place so future surpluses will hopefully be directed at road renewal, though there will be pressure to pay down the rec center debt. [See recent annual surpluses.](#)

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## 4. Availability of grants

At the same meeting and in reply to the question raised in item 3, **Councillor Feeney** echoed Councillor Ulin's remarks regarding the Town's ongoing search for grant money and pointed out that it makes the best use of taxpayers' dollars because a grant can cover anywhere from 30 to 60 percent of the cost of this work. she added that tens of millions of dollars have been invested in the Town's infrastructure in the past 10 to 15 years and a grant of **\$2.4M** has already been received to be used over the next 3 years. **However, although the search for grants will continue, they seem to be less available**, perhaps both the provincial and federal governments have a lot of debt and fiscal commitments. The pace of repairs may therefore become slower as it makes sense to do the work when it can be substantially subsidized."

[Here's a different take on this issue:](#)

### Availability of the gas tax grants.

The **\$2.4M** grant described by **Councillor Feeney** for the next three years probably originates in the joint federal and provincial gas tax program known in Quebec as TECQ grants. The [screenshot at the end of this file](#) appeared on the **Union des Municipalites du Quebec (UMQ)** website dated March 25, 2021 announcing that **\$2.2B** (yes, billion!) was available for Quebec municipalities "in the next year" as part of the 2019 to 2023 gas tax grant program. Is it possible that Montreal West missed out on these funds for 2022 and 2023 projects?

See the **UMQ** announcement:

<https://umq.qc.ca/publication/fonds-de-la-taxe-sur-lesse-une-bonification-qui-arrive-a-point-nomme-selon-lumq/>

Another round of TECQ grants is available based on the comments of **Mayor Masella** at the **May 27, 2024 Council meeting** (video 48:55) where he referenced availability of federal and provincial gas tax grants noting that a lot of TECQ grants had "already been planned for 2024 in the different municipalities." See meeting video at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mlVmCS1OsNI>

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## 5. The infrastructure priority list.

Residents, particularly those living on some of our worst streets and those of us who have to drive over them, have been asking for years that the priority list for infrastructure renewal be made public. The Town revises the list annually as new information is received, such as underground videos, recent water main breaks, lead in pipes, sinkholes. "Roads in need of repair are put on a yearly list that the provincial government reviews and decides which areas qualify for grants." (**September, 2021 Council meeting** – November, 2021, Informer, page 22)

### It almost happened!!

**Yes to publishing:** At the **February, 2023 council meeting** (Informer, April 2023) **Councillor Ulin** agreed with a request and "added that the list could be published in the Informer, accompanied by an explanation of how the streets are selected".

**No to publishing:** However, **Councillor Ulin** reversed her position at the **June 2023 meeting** (video 44:36): We "haven't done it principally because these streets change all the time, any time we do an inspection of the pipes underneath ..... It's not something (publish the list) we're likely to do in the future because what happens is people think their street is going to be done next year and then we do the evaluation again and it turns out that street isn't going to get done for another three years and people are upset and angry about that." See video: <https://www.youtube.com/live/xmuMCubQoMA>

**[Editor's Note:** If the list has never been published, why does council think that people would get upset and angry? Can't council trust us with this information? Surely people would understand if their street was bumped if council presented reasons.)

**Our worst streets:** Brock North between Curzon & Fielding, Brock S. & Ballantyne S. between Avon and the tracks, Strathearn N between Curzon and Nelson, and Percival between Milner and Nelson.

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## 6. Potholes: patch versus repair.

A question about potholes at the **June, 2022 Council meeting** (September, 2022, Informer) received the reply: The Town has a lot of "vintage" roads and sidewalks and the Public Works staff spends a large portion of every summer on repairs to potholes, sidewalks, manhole and catch basin repairs, tree safety maintenance, cleaning of public buildings, and setting up of public events. The size of the blue-collar team is limited and they are everywhere, all the time, doing all kinds of essential jobs, many of which aren't even seen. Although outsourcing projects like streets and sidewalks is sometimes done, repairs are extremely expensive so the Town has to undertake as many of these jobs as possible in order to keep overall costs low for residents which means a balancing act is always required."

### **Rearrange the scheduling of the work**

As the timetable for road patches has been slipping with work recently completed in the first week of October, **could public works management schedule the patches for early May so that our cars don't get banged around all summer?**

### **Real repairs instead of short-lived patches**

Unfortunately, most "repairs" are simple patches that often protrude 1 – 1.5 cm above the surrounding road surface and therefore are ground off by snowplows over winter. Many patches end up being redone year after year. **Could Public Works management consider doing proper repairs for a few problem areas each year?** True, repairs take much longer, but also last for a longer time. The following video describes proper repairs:

<https://www.bing.com/videos/riverview/relatedvideo?q=road+patches+versus+repairs&mid=BB8C81BAC1AB5086CE56BB8C81BAC1AB5086CE56&FORM=VIRE>

*While the technique described in the video would be too expensive for some of our concrete roads such as Brock North, there are many asphalt roads in poor condition where it can be applied.*

**Potholes on railway crossing.** The potholes in the section of Westminster crossing the tracks can only be repaired by CP personnel. (December, 2021, Informer -- **October, 2021 Council meeting**)

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## **The CMQ press release for grants available in 2022 and 2023.**



POLITICAL ISSUES SERVICES EVENTS AWARDS AND RECOGNITION PL

Montreal, March 25, 2021 – The Union des municipalités du Québec (UMQ) welcomes the increase to \$2.2 billion for the next year in the transfer of the Gas Tax Fund to municipalities, announced today by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, the Honourable Chrystia Freeland, and the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, the Honourable Catherine McKenna.

"This enhancement comes at the right time, in a context where the end of the crisis is upon us. It will accelerate the start of our municipal projects and create jobs in our regions. The message sent today by the Government of Canada is clear: we want a quick recovery throughout Quebec. I would like to thank Ministers Freeland and McKenna for their valuable collaboration and sensitivity to the needs of municipalities," said UMQ President and Mayor of Sainte-Julie, Suzanne Roy.

"Municipalities are responsible for 60% of public infrastructure in Quebec. The needs are growing year after year. The increase in the transfer will allow us to upgrade and maintain our equipment. This is great news! My colleagues from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and I will continue our representations to the federal government to ensure that the amounts are quickly sent to municipalities," added Normand Dyotte, UMQ representative on the Board of Directors of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) and Mayor of Candiac.

In Quebec, these amounts will be paid under the [2019-2023 Gas Tax and Quebec Contribution Program \(TECQ\)](#), administered by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MAMH). The TECQ allows municipalities to carry out work on their drinking water, wastewater and local road infrastructure. Municipalities can also use this assistance for the construction or renovation of municipal cultural, community, sports and recreational facilities.

<https://umq.qc.ca/publication/fonds-de-la-taxe-sur-lesence-une-bonification-qui-arrive-a-point-nomme-selon-lumq/>

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