


Gosse: Liberals need to explain why they cut paving budget

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(Sydney, NS) NDP Sydney-Whitney Pier MLA Gordie Gosse says Transportation Minister Geoff MacLellan needs to be honest with Nova Scotians about why the Liberals cut the paving budget.

In a recent interview with the Cape Breton Post, Minister MacLellan said a \$10 million total decrease in the Liberals' first paving plan was because the federal contribution "was reduced from the overall capital budget." (<http://www.capebretonpost.com/News/Local/2014-01-23/article-3587834/Bridging-the-gap/1> (<http://www.capebretonpost.com/News/Local/2014-01-23/article-3587834/Bridging-the-gap/1>)) However the story points out that in reality federal funding increased by \$5.5 million while provincial funding was cut by \$15.5 million.

According to the 5-Year Highway Improvement Plan, in 2013-2014 the province received \$20 million from the federal Building Canada Fund and this upcoming year it will receive \$25.5 million. Meanwhile provincial funding for highway projects has decreased from \$224,800,000 in 2013-2014 to \$209,300,000 in 2014 – 2015.

Gosse says the Liberals aren't being accountable to Nova Scotians by giving an incorrect explanation. He wants to know why.

"The federal government didn't decide to spend less money on Nova Scotia roads but the provincial Liberal government did," said Gosse. "The Minister shouldn't try to deflect from the real question. He needs to step up to the plate and tell the public why his Liberal government has decided to cut highway improvements by over \$15 million."

The Nova Scotia 5-year Highway Improvement Plan is released annually and outlines funding from the province, the federal government and municipalities as certain projects are cost shared. The 2014-2015 version is the first for Stephen McNeil's Liberal government. It contains the least provincial funding for paving projects since the plan was introduced in 2010-2011.