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## City projects to go ahead, despite shortfall

By **RENATO GANDIA**, CALGARY SUN

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The city faces a \$400-million shortfall for infrastructure cash over three years following recent provincial budget cuts, but approved and tendered projects will move ahead, the mayor says.

Mayor Dave Bronconnier said the city has awarded about \$1.5 billion worth of infrastructure projects because administration and council believed cash would flow from the province under the Municipal Sustainability Initiative program.

"If the city backs away from those commitments it will cost taxpayers about \$100 million," said Bronconnier.

The province signed an agreement with municipalities to pay for \$11.3-billion infrastructure over 10 years, \$3.3 billion of which to Calgary.

The province reduced this year's allocation for Calgary, which Bronconnier said put some projects in peril.

Among the projects that have already been awarded are a northeast community centre, a leisure centre, water treatment upgrades, LRT expansions, and bus acquisitions.

Bronconnier said it doesn't make financial sense to cancel contracts that have already been awarded including the \$1-billion West LRT construction.

"That is short-sighted, that is not, I believe, what Calgarians are looking for the local government to do," said the mayor.

He dismissed comments that the city went too fast in signing contracts given that after the agreement was signed with the province, global recession hit.

The province pre-approved the infrastructure projects before Calgary signed them, he said.

Ald. Diane Colley-Urquhart said the province has left Calgary stranded.

"It has left us in a significant predicament and we can't reverse those contracts," she said.

But she said she's hopeful the city and the province will come to a reasonable agreement on what to do over the next three years.

The mayor's office have requested a meeting with the premier but nothing has been set yet when that would happen.

Council and administration will now work on reprioritizing projects that have not been signed.

City officials have been working for the last 10 days on a list of projects that may be shelved, but the mayor told reporters Monday he's not ready to identify which projects are in jeopardy.

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