

# Trudeau's radical minister wants to ban road building

*Margaret Bird - May 2024*

In a recent statement, Environment Minister Steven Guilbeault said the federal government will stop investing in new road infrastructure — a comment that immediately drew attacks from the Opposition Conservatives and some premiers who said the climate-activist-turned-politician is out of touch.

The minister said federal money, spent on asphalt and concrete for roads in the past, is “better invested into projects that will help fight climate change and adapt to its impacts.”

This news greatly shocked many politicians, especially in British Columbia. The BC Construction Association and BC Road Builders and Heavy Construction Association said such investments are critical, ensuring the flow of goods and people. BCCA President Chris Atchison said, “when you’re investing in roads, you’re also investing in the workforce, men and women, the companies that build those roads, and the families and communities that rely on them.”

“So this hesitation on projects that are underway right now...is a knee-jerk reaction that belies a bigger problem,” he said. “We need to plan and commit 20-30 years in advance and remove the ambiguity that is essential for communities, and our economy.”

Maybe, if Trudeau's government hadn't given so much of the taxpayers' money away to other countries, there would be no need for any financial knee-jerk reactions today.

A thought now comes to mind here: Ancient Rome once ruled the world and they built excellent roads, long before cars were ever dreamt of, so why was it important to build roads back then? They certainly weren't thinking of 15-minute cities, or that there was even a climate problem if the weather changed on a routine 100-year cycle basis as it always had done. No, they were way ahead of their time compared to the inept way that governments operate these days.

Constantine the Great, was the ruling Emperor of the Roman Empire when the very first Roman road was completed – the famed Appian Way, constructed in 312 B.C. to serve as a supply route between republican Rome and its allies in Capua during the Second Samnite War (326-304 BC). Roman roads ranged from small local roads to broad, long-distance highways built to connect cities, major towns and military bases.

Ancient Romans travelled by carriage, chariot walking, riding horses, or riding on a litter (a portable bed or couch, open or enclosed, that is mounted on two poles and carried at each end on the shoulders of porters or by animals). Roman soldiers used carts pulled by oxen, or they walked or travelled by boat. Chariots were used for travel when there was no need to carry a lot of weight, and were sometimes used by the military. Transportation to other cities, and the modes of transportation, were paramount back then, so why not now?

The eight ways roads helped Rome to rule the Ancient World: they were the key to Rome's military might; they were incredibly efficient; they were expertly engineered; they were easy to navigate; they included a sophisticated network of post houses and roadside inns; they were well-protected and patrolled, and they allowed Romans to fully map their growing Empire. As the legions blazed a trail through Europe, the Romans built new highways. These routes aided in the everyday maintenance of the Empire. Even the most isolated parts of the Roman world could expect to be swiftly supplied or reinforced in the event of an emergency.

Since Roman roads were designed with speed of travel in mind, they often followed a remarkably straight trail across the countryside. Land surveyors, began the building process by using sighting poles to painstakingly chart the most direct route from one destination to another.

Roman builders used whatever materials were at hand to construct their roads, but their design always employed multiple layers for durability and flatness. Crews began by digging shallow, three-foot trenches and erecting small retaining walls along either side of the proposed route. The bottom section of the road was usually made of leveled earth and mortar or sand topped with small stones. This was followed by foundation layers of crushed rocks or gravel cemented with lime mortar. Finally, the surface layer was constructed using neatly arranged blocks made from gravel, pebbles, iron ore or hardened volcanic lava. Roads were built with a crown and adjacent ditches to ensure easy water drainage, and in some rainy regions they were even nestled on raised berms known as “aggers” to prevent flooding. They thought of everything but, never once, did they ever consider stopping investment in transportation infrastructure and new roads. Our modern day ‘shave and pave’ short cut had definitely not even been considered back then. Along with road signs and mile markers, Roman roads were also lined with state-run hotels and

way stations located every 10 miles along most routes. These simple posthouses consisted of stables where government travellers could trade their winded horse or donkey for a fresh mount. By stopping off at multiple posthouses, couriers could move as far as 60 miles in a single day. Also, to combat the activities of thieves and highwaymen, most Roman roads were patrolled by special detachments of imperial army troops.

If only such a legacy could posthumously challenge our governments today to spend more wisely, prioritize more carefully, and keep building all the new roads that we need to keep our nation progressively united towards a better future. Minister Steven Guilbeault, and Emperor Constantine the Great, were definitely NOT related.