

Environmental assessment delays hurting Ontario economy

VAUGHAN, ONT. (CNW: Dec. 8, 2016) – In light of the Ontario Auditor General’s recent critical “Value for Money” audit, meaningful reform is desperately needed to streamline the costly and time-consuming Municipal Class Environmental Assessment (MCEA) process, says Andy Manahan, executive director of the Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario (RCCAO).

That will be one of the messages that Manahan will deliver about the Ontario construction industry’s infrastructure priorities during a presentation today to an all-party committee at Queen’s Park.

Municipal infrastructure projects that typically require an MCEA include: new local roads, widening existing roads, cycling lanes, bridge replacements, culverts, combined sewer storage and overflow systems, and new or altered traffic intersections.

RCCAO has raised the red flag on this issue for eight years by commissioning a series of independent research reports, including the 2014 report [“Are Ontario’s Municipal Class Environmental Assessments Worth the Added Time and Costs?”](#) which was referred to by the Auditor General. Looking at 28 MCEA projects, it found:

- **Cost:** A Class EA report’s price has tripled in many cases, rising to about \$386,500, up from \$113,300 [four years previously](#).
- **Time:** It took 26.7 months to go through the process, seven months longer than it took [four years previously](#).
- **Duplication:** Some projects can have two public consultation processes – one through the Planning Act and the second through the MCEA process, extending construction timelines unnecessarily.

As a result, RCCAO is teaming up with the Municipal Engineers Association to prepare a section 61 Environmental Bill of Rights application to be submitted to Ontario’s Environmental Commissioner for consideration.

“This is more than just an accounting exercise: this requires a serious change in political direction,” Manahan says. “We urge all MPPs to support meaningful EA reform, particularly for municipal projects subject to the Class EA process. It should be noted that delays in many projects also impact the provincial government through its funding of many municipal projects. This is an urgent matter that requires the attention of the Wynne government.”

Manahan will present at 5:30 p.m. today in Queen’s Park’s committee room 151 to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs during pre-budget consultations for 2017.



WHAT IS RCCAO?

This labour-management construction coalition has advocated for infrastructure investment for 11 years, commissioning 41 independent, solutions-based reports to help inform decision-makers.

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