

Editorial

# Mixing it up—policy, process and people— and an open invitation

Glenn Miller

**M**ixing it up—policy, process and people—and an open invitation. Articles in this issue deal extensively with the provisions of the recently adopted *Green Energy and Economy Act*. (See the District pages, Steve Rowe's Environment column, and the Opinion piece below.) For all of the positives, there are lingering concerns that the process for approving renewables will complicate rather than simplify implementation. Waiting in the wings is another important piece of the puzzle—waste. Look for new legislative measures on this file in the fall. Dealing with energy and waste as discrete items reveals that Ontario still has a way to go in terms of integrated thinking.

Also in this issue, Paul Bedford opens up the topic of mixed use—challenging planners to get behind the concept instead of merely lipsynching the words. We therefore challenge readers to send us your most imaginative ideas for mixing it up. See Paul's column for details.

As previously noted in this space, rapid change to the fundamentals of Ontario's economy is challenging politicians, policy makers and investors to find the balance between protecting what we have and investing in a different future. For those responsible for infrastructure, renewal remains an urgent priority, but no less so than investing wisely

in the assets that support development—not necessarily growth—of the economy. For cities losing touch with the economic mainstream, serious questions remain. An article in this issue cites positive results from Portland, just as we are getting reports from the UK suggesting that revitalization efforts banking on “the creative economy” may be going down a blind alley.

Finally, Philippa Campsie's column sets out the terms of engagement—and, we hope, endearment—for what the Ontario Planning Journal means to our readers—members in all categories, as well as the many non-OPPI members and CIP members from across Canada who subscribe. This is your magazine to express yourselves as professionals. Let us know what is on your mind.

*Glenn Miller, FCIP, RPP, is editor of the Ontario Planning Journal and vice president, education and research with the Canadian Urban Institute in Toronto. He is also a director of the Canadian Brownfields Network—the 10th annual Canadian Brownfields conference is in Vancouver in October. He can be reached at [editor@ontarioplanning.com](mailto:editor@ontarioplanning.com). This editorial has been shrunk in the interests of saving space.*

Opinion

## Ontario Should Streamline Approvals for Municipal Class EA Infrastructure Projects

Andy Manahan

**I**nfrastucture investment as a way to jumpstart the economy and bolster city-building efforts has been widely touted by many countries around the globe. In Canada, for example, the C.D. Howe Institute assessed the fiscal sustainability and effectiveness of the 2009 federal budget and concluded that of all the measures in the two-year, \$40-billion stimulus package, one of the most likely to have a lasting positive impact on economic growth is public infrastructure investment.

Although Ottawa and Queen's Park have made several infrastructure announcements, there remain many regulatory hurdles to getting shovels in the ground. Municipal leaders across Canada recently met in Whistler, B.C., and agreed that red tape hindered the delivery of infrastructure projects when they are needed the most. Ways must be found to streamline approval processes and get funding allotments released faster. Consultants for the Residential and Civil Construction Alliance

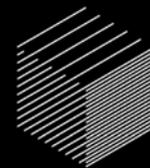
of Ontario (RCCAO) offer potential solutions in a report titled “Environmental Assessment Reform – A Tool for Economic Recovery.”

The Premier's office hosted a multi-ministry briefing in April at which RCCAO presented the case for EA reform. The top rec-

ommendation presented was that the Province should adopt a “Priority Infrastructure Projects” regulation. Any infrastructure project that would normally fall under the Municipal Class EA or the GO Transit Class EA would be eligible to follow this new streamlined process regulation if the

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project could be demonstrated to be in conformity with the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe and/or an Official Plan that is in conformity with the Growth Plan and the Provincial Policy Statement. Projects eligible for streamlining would not include controversial ones such as nuclear plants.

The following type of projects could be reclassified under the Municipal Class EA:

- Streetscaping with a value of \$2.2 million or greater
- Construction of localized operational improvements at intersections
- Installation of traffic control devices such as signage or signalization
- Establishment of a roadside park or picnic area
- Reconstruction of a water crossing where it is not for the same purpose, use of capacity or at the same location (greater than \$2.2 million)
- Establishment of new patrol yards or maintenance facilities (greater than \$2.2 million)
- Construction of a new sewage holding tank
- Replacement of a water intake pipe for a surface water source
- Construction of new shoreline works, such as off-shore breakwaters, shore-connected breakwaters, groynes or sea walls
- Construction of localized transit operational improvements.

The streamlined process would be as follows:

The project would be exempt from evaluating "Alternative Solutions," since the planning process that a municipality went through to bring its plans into conformity with the PPS and the Growth Plan would be deemed to have fulfilled that requirement.

The proponents would be required to assess the negative impacts of the infrastructure project, identify appropriate mitigation measures and undertake consultation. Proponents would also be required to make available any information or documentation done for any pre-planning work undertaken which led them to select the infrastructure project.

Proponents would be required to complete an Environmental Project Report (EPR) to document the results of the assessment and consultation process within a regulated timeline of six months.

The same rights of objection and Ministerial review process as the transit process would apply.

At this stage, only municipalities in the Greater Golden Horseshoe fall under the PTG legislation, but this region requires considerable capital work to deal with future growth projections.

RCCAO's report includes several other recommendations. First, eliminate duplicative federal and provincial EA processes. Projects that satisfy provincial EA requirements often have to be "reassessed" under the federal Act, with no apparent benefit to the environment or taxpayers. The goal should be to have one approval process for one project. Work has begun on this initiative.

Second, require greater coordination between EA and land use planning processes. Environmental issues are better integrated into current municipal land use planning documents. Over the past few years, the Province has introduced a much stronger system of growth and environmental planning through legislation such as Places to Grow and the Greenbelt. Municipalities in the Greater Golden Horseshoe are now required to conform by updating their Official Plans or risk having infrastructure funding held back. Thus, where a piece of infrastructure is shown in a provincial growth management plan, recognition should be given to the broader planning exercises already undertaken by the Province or Metrolinx.

Third, reduce unnecessary delays. Provincial legislation requires the Minister of the Environment to decide whether a Municipal Class EA project (such as transportation, water, or sewer projects) should be

bumped up to a full EA. Although the Minister rarely grants these requests, the process results in delays for many projects. MOE's Director should be given the power to dismiss requests for projects that have already gone through extensive public consultations.

The report has been presented to Energy and Infrastructure Minister George Smitherman. RCCAO believes that Province should either adopt a special regulation or issue a Declaration Order for stimulus projects, comparable to the regulation approved in 2008 imposing a six-month window for the approvals process for transit projects. Ontario needs to mandate a time limit on approvals for all economic stimulus projects. Dealing with Municipal Class EA projects in the manner described would represent progress in achieving a more streamlined and rational process.

*Andy Manahan is Executive Director for the Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario. Go to [www.rccao.com](http://www.rccao.com) to download the report.*

#### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

If you have any comments, send your letters to:  
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