

# DAILY COMMERCIAL NEWS

## AND CONSTRUCTION RECORD

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Ontario Transportation Minister outlines investments in highways, bridges

VINCE VERSACE

staff writer

Ongoing improvements to Ontario's transportation network and infrastructure are essential beyond just adding kilometres of paved roads, says the province's transportation minister.

"This investment and incremental maintenance and renewal cannot just be in reaction to an economic event, it has to be what we do as a matter of course," said transportation minister Kathleen Wynne.

"We are experiencing a transformation in transportation in Ontario through the investment in transit in renewal of bridges, highways and roads <0x2026> all those critical measures are part of this transformation. By doing that we are building powerful economic muscle."

Wynne recently spoke at a Canadian Club of Toronto luncheon discussing how the province is moving the Ontario economy and connecting its communities through transportation investment. The luncheon was sponsored by the Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario (RCCAO) and the Ontario Road Builders' Association (ORBA).

When the provincial Liberals came into office in 2003 they faced reversing 30 years of decline in Ontario's infrastructure stock, Wynne said. In the 1980s, the per capita investment for infrastructure was minus \$75 and deterioration was "allowed to creep in," she said. By the 1990s, that investment was up to \$25 per capita. From 2004 to 2009, that amount increased to \$225 per capita.

"Our success does not depend just on those numbers but also our ability to build strong relationships with businesses and communities, with the construction industry, municipal governments," said Wynne.

Ontario is now faced with increasing growth in areas like the 905 and Greater Toronto Area, placing further stress on an already congested system. Considering that \$610 million of goods cross the shared Ontario-United States daily, provincial and national competitiveness is at stake.

Wynne noted that the cost for continued congestion is \$6 billion to the province alone.

"That is something we cannot continue to pay."

Last year, the province spent a record \$2.8 billion on the design, repair and expansion of 120 provincial bridges and thousands of kilometres of road rehabilitation, helping to create or sustain 17,500 jobs.

Wynne pointed to the Windsor-Essex Parkway and the future expansion of Highway 407 east to Hwy. 35/115 as opportunities for the government to expand its use of alternative financing and procurement (AFP) models for projects.

"The AFP model allows the government to leverage those tax dollars, it allows the government to have more flexibility and it shares interest and risk with the private sector," said Wynne. "It is a really important way to make tax dollars work."

RCCAO's executive director Andy Manahan also believes there is more to be done using a model such as AFP to address Ontario's aging infrastructure.

"We are very encouraged to hear that the AFP approach is a method they are looking at seriously when it comes to infrastructure," he said. "We think there are possibilities and they are studying it very carefully."

The increased investment in Ontario's roads and bridges Wynne mentioned is hard to dispute, said Rob Bradford, ORBA's executive director. "You cannot argue it," he said. "We have seen some tremendous regular increases in infrastructure investments over the last five years or so."