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Federal agency aims to boost Ontario investment

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Ottawa's Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario (FedDev Ontario) will provide the drive needed for additional investment in the region, the Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario believes.

"A co-ordinated and focused effort will help to develop solutions to assist hard-hit manufacturers," said Andy Manahan, executive director of RCCAO. "From our perspective as a construction alliance, transportation infrastructure investment will be useful for manufacturers to get their products to market."

FedDev Ontario will support restructuring, community and business development, innovation and commercialization initiatives and other tools to promote economic diversification across the region. It will build on investments already being implemented through Canada's Economic Action Plan created by the federal Tories.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper launched the agency at a Kitchener work site on Aug. 13. During the announcement, the federal government also highlighted recent investments in the Kitchener region, such as a partnership with the province to expand Highway 8.

"The global recession has created challenges in every region of our country, including Southern Ontario," Harper said in a statement. "This is a region with distinct needs, and the people of Southern Ontario deserve economic programs delivered in ways specifically tailored to their own priorities. FedDev Ontario is one more tool to ensure that workers and businesses in Southern Ontario have the resources they need to succeed."

The Prime Minister also announced his intention to have Minister of State (Science and Technology) Gary Goodyear assume responsibility for FedDev Ontario and that B.A. (Bruce) Archibald has been appointed agency president. Goodyear will soon start a tour of Southern Ontario to consult with workers, businesses and community leaders about the agency and the work ahead for the region. Communities and not just industries across the region will benefit from certain pressing needs being addressed, said Manahan.

"More work needs to be done on facilitating cross-border trade such as the development of a mid-Peninsula corridor," explains Manahan. "Also, investment in transit will help to alleviate congestion on our highways which will increase truck traffic through urban regions in southern Ontario."

FedDev Ontario will be Canada's fifth regional development organization. A sixth regional development organization for Canada's North is also planned.