

December 30, 2011

What awaits the Ontario construction industry in 2012?

KELLY LAPOINTE

staff writer

All eyes are on the horizon to see what 2012 will bring for the Ontario construction industry.

The implementation of the province's Building Together infrastructure plan will be a large focus, say industry stakeholders.

All three provincial parties have agreed to [\\$35 billion in infrastructure funding over three years](#), but Don Drummond's review on government spending, expected early in January, will put pressure on government to curb spending.

"The results will demand that government will cut back on spending. We obviously have to look at that pressure on infrastructure to make sure that government continues to invest in infrastructure and the levels that they've committed to do so," said David Frame, [Ontario General Contractors Association \(OGCA\)](#) government relations director.

Building Together is a framework document that doesn't contain specific detail about which sectors should benefit from spending, pointed out Andy Manahan, [Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario \(RCCAO\)](#) executive director.

Manahan said he will be submitting a letter to all 107 MPPs in an effort to promote a more analytical approach to setting priorities.

"I suggested that we need to work together with the federal government, the province, municipalities and the construction industry, to really sit down together and figure out how best to proceed," he said.

The [RCCAO's recent report, "Public Infrastructure Investment in Ontario: The Importance of Staying the Course" by RiskAnalytica](#), highlighted how government infrastructure spending impacts overall economic growth.

The first few months of 2012 will be very telling, said Karen Renkema, [Ontario Road Builders' Association \(ORBA\)](#) government relations director.

Renkema pointed to the next provincial budget and the Ontario College of Trade's ratio reviews and compulsory certifications as important issues.

Policies such as considering the bundling of projects within Infrastructure Ontario will also play a big role, she added.

"Some of those major policy decisions perhaps are eliminating fairness for all contractors to get involved in Infrastructure Ontario work and government work," said Renkema.

"I think those types of policy decisions are founded essentially on the belief of saving money, but perhaps not

necessarily a demonstrated ability to spend less on infrastructure to get more value for the dollar.”

Ian Cunningham, President of the [Council of Ontario Construction Associations \(COCA\)](#), said Ontario’s minority Ontario government will change the way the association interacts with ministers.

“Now the critics and members of the opposition play a much more important role,” he said.

“It will be incumbent on anybody trying to shape some legislative or regulatory change to deal with a much wider net of people at Queen’s Park.”

Cunningham also expects to see more forward movement on the occupational health and safety file, led by Ontario’s Chief Prevention Officer George Gritziotis.

“George has been on a steep learning curve and I think we’ll see some significant advancement in Ontario’s prevention system around mid-year next year,” he said.

Cunningham also is eagerly awaiting the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board’s funding review led by Harry Arthurs and he hopes to see it in early 2012.