

# DAILY COMMERCIAL NEWS

## AND CONSTRUCTION RECORD

June 16, 2009

Infrastructure

Aging systems in Ontario hurt sustainability: report

VINCE VERSACE

staff writer

Ontario must start making the link between infrastructure rehabilitation and sustainability because impending repairs to its aging water system have potential financial and energy savings, a new report says.

“It is pretty clear that governments have heard the message that infrastructure investment is critical and we need to catch up,” says Andy Manahan, executive director of the Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario (RCCAO).

“We are trying to make sure those investments are strategic and a rigorous plan can be in place.”

“Incorporating Sustainability in ROI Infrastructure,” a RCCAO recently commissioned report, recommends that the province should begin to incorporate new ways to evaluate return on investments in infrastructure projects and “to include more quantitative, formal and creative analysis of sustainability impacts and benefits.”

“Evidence shows that investing in rehabilitation and enhanced project specifications can have positive benefits in terms of waste reduction and enhanced energy use,” finds the report.

Toronto alone spends \$2 million per month to energize its water distribution system and for the entire province that monthly price tag hits close to \$5 million, the report concludes.

For some systems, up to 50 per cent of energy use may be reduced by confronting and controlling the various sources of energy inefficiency. In Ontario, even if a 30 per cent energy savings is achieved, it can total a \$1.5 million per month in energy savings.

As watertight pipes deteriorate, this leads to higher water losses causing higher water pumping levels. Through this diminished performance water distribution pumping costs rise and more energy is used.

This all ultimately results in a faster rate of obsolescence for both pumps and pipes. Considering the province is looking at new avenues of power generation, there are energy savings to be found right now.

“The connection we are trying to make is if you deal with the water infrastructure issue then you reduce your energy consumption significantly,” says Manahan.

Among the report’s recommendations is creating a fund for expediting the renewal of energy-wasting facilities. This would help renew outdated facilities and improve energy saving and environmental impacts.

The report indicates that a minimum of \$61 million could have been saved if maintenance and expenditures hadn’t been deferred over the last 10 years.

It also urges new financing tools to help consumers.

“Ontario could lump all its next 10-year investments in repairs now and realize at least an additional \$150 million in

returns in addition to the regular returns realized in public utility investments, i.e. shutting the dripping energy leaks faster is more beneficial than the piecemeal approach,” the report notes.