

# DAILY COMMERCIAL NEWS

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## AND CONSTRUCTION RECORD

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Mar. 25, 2008

Construction industry looks to Ontario budget for infrastructure funding details

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Construction industry leaders will be looking for infrastructure dollar details from the provincial Liberals in today's provincial budget.

"We want to know how money will flow through from their additional \$60 billion commitment [in ReNew Ontario]," says Frank Zechner, executive director of Ontario Sewer and Watermain Construction Association.

Some construction association officials will be in the lockup at Queen's Park as Dwight Duncan, finance minister of Ontario delivers the province's 2008 budget.

Few details about how funding from the Liberals' commitment of \$60 billion to ReNew Ontario will be spent over the next 10 years have been available so far. The additional funding was announced earlier this year, just months after the province added another \$150 million to its original \$300-million Municipal Infrastructure Investment Initiative.

Clive Thurston, president of the Ontario General Contractors Association, says details about infrastructure funding are crucial for both the industry and Ontario.

"There is a lot of work to be done and we really have not touched the infrastructure backlog of work," says Thurston.

David Frame, president of the Council of Ontario Construction Associations points to budget submissions COCA made to the province in February that asked Ontario to recommit to a \$30 billion infrastructure investment outlined in its 2005 budget.

"Nothing has changed from that submission — we would like to see that recommitment and more details," says Frame.

Zechner admits he would like to see a significant amount of any announced infrastructure funds pointed towards sewer and watermain but details are his biggest concern.

“We do not expect the lion’s share of funding — there are a lot of needs in bridges and roads as well — but we expect to be in there for something,” explains Zechner.

Ontario’s ailing manufacturing industry has left the construction industry as the province’s main economic driver and hopefully the budget will recognize that, note both Thurston and Andy Manahan, executive director of the Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario.

“I hope the province can keep things as stable as possible,” notes Thurston.

“At a time when manufacturing is in dire straits, construction is the engine driving the province and we cannot afford to have that sputter.”

Manahan says additional infrastructure investment will help continue driving the province’s economy.

“Hopefully there is a recognition of how important the continued investment of infrastructure is to everyone,” says Manahan.