

BROACHING THE SUBJECT

Road tolls around the world

The **Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario** once again broached the controversial topic of road tolls as a means to pay for much needed transportation infrastructure in the GTA at a one-day conference that invited global experts to weigh in on the topic.

“Despite the political sensitivity around issues like road pricing, I think there’s going to be a continuation of these sorts of dialogues, but what we’re really looking for is leadership from Queen’s Park to say we need to get on with the job,” construction alliance executive director **Andy Manahan** told *NRU*.

When the Transportation Futures Forum conference was first organized, it was supposed to “support” the Metrolinx investment strategy that would be coming out around the same time, Manahan said. The first draft came out in September but did not address any funding options—even though road tolls, a parking space tax and congestion charges were discussed as potential revenue sources during development of the regional transportation plan. The final plan and investment strategy are expected in a few weeks.

Since the issue of road tolls is timely, about 120 professionals from various provincial ministries and environmental organizations gathered to hear presentations about how France, Holland, Germany, London and the state of Oregon in the U.S. have handled it.

Nicolas Mery of France’s newly merged Ministry of Ecology, Energy, Sustainable Development and Territory Planning explained the history of his country’s foray into highway tolls. More than 11,000 kilometres of highways line France and 8,500 kilometres are managed by private parties and tolled.

Over the years, the country has changed the way it negotiates contractual agreements with its 14 operators to try and ensure the “highest quality of service” for resident drivers but there is still work to do, Mery said. So far, while the price is determined and fixed in the contracts and revenue pays for extensions of road and maintenance, none of the road toll money has been put into public transit or cycling infrastructure.

Co-host of the conference, **Marty Collier** of **Healthy Transport Consulting** said that despite the potential benefits, road pricing “does raise important questions ranging from social equity and privacy concerns to governance and financing issues.”