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Provincial Election

Coalition keeps tabs on infrastructure promises of Ontario's political parties

Non-partisan group hopes to raise core infrastructure's profile

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The election platforms for all parties in October's provincial election are 'fair game' for the newly formed Infrastructure Investment Coalition, says a coalition member.

"We are taking a non-partisan approach and are non-partisan," explains Andy Manahan, Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario (RCCAO) executive director.

"We formed this coalition as a way to raise the profile of core infrastructure and its needs."

The IIC consists of the RCCAO, Labourers' International Union of North America (LIUNA), Greater Toronto Sewer and Watermain Contractors Association (GTSWCA) and the Building Industry and Land Development Association (BILD).



Andy Manahan

The coalition's founding contract is for a six-month term, but it could continue beyond that.

"We will respond to every platform. We also want to focus on the federal government as well since it has the deepest pockets," adds Manahan.

The IIC considers road, water, sewer and transit infrastructure as core infrastructure which needs to be addressed in Ontario's infrastructure debt.

In 2004 the Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Renewal stated more than \$100 million is needed to be invested, over the next 30 years, in Ontario's public infrastructure.

"Asset management, dedicated funding, a streamlined and expedited approval process, alternative financing models for construction and increased government focus on core infrastructure are key ways to address core infrastructure," explains Manahan.

The Ontario Liberal Party's election platform promise to invest \$60 billion over 10 years for public transportation, roads, bridges, and water systems was applauded by the IIC.

"You only need to look down many streets in your community to witness deteriorating roads with pot holes or buses and streetcars, jammed to capacity, to realize this funding commitment is greatly needed," notes Manahan.

If elected, the Progressive Conservatives propose approximately two cents of the gas tax (\$300 million) would go to support roads and bridges in rural and northern municipalities. A further \$800 million annually in gas tax money would go to municipal and regional transit.

"We are supportive of this dedicated type of funding, it is more predictable" says Manahan.

"We are certainly hoping to hear more (infrastructure) details during the Progressive Conservative campaign."

The New Democratic Party's platform currently has no details regarding core infrastructure which the IIC can review, adds Manahan.

The IIC could attract new members as it moves forward, says Manahan. The coalition also encourages all three levels of government to work together to ease Ontario's current infrastructure deficit.

"It is also important to invest in the things we do not see quite as readily, such as leaky water pipes, which not only increase operating costs but can cause sink holes, flooded basements, or worse, a shortage of water to a fire hydrant or high-rise sprinkler when needed," adds Frank Zechner, IIC member and GTSWCA executive director.