

April 24, 2023

Hon. Ernie Hardeman, Chair
c/o Vanessa Kattar
Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs
99 Wellesley Street West, Room 1405
Whitney Block Toronto, ON M7A 1A2

Submitted electronically

RE: Bill 85, Building a Strong Ontario Act (Budget Measures), 2023

The Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario (RCCAO) is pleased to provide comments to the Standing Committee regarding Bill 85, *Building a Strong Ontario Act*.

RCCAO is an alliance of key labour and management stakeholders derived from the residential and civil construction sectors. RCCAO's goal is to work in cooperation with government and related stakeholders to offer realistic solutions to a variety of challenges facing the construction industry and which also have wider societal benefits.

Our membership includes the Greater Toronto Sewer and Watermain Contractors Association; Heavy Construction Association of Toronto; International Union of Operating Engineers, Local 793; Joint Residential Construction Association, LiUNA Local 183; Ontario Formwork Association; and Toronto and Area Road Builders Association.

RCCAO welcomes the Government of Ontario's continued investment in critical infrastructure contained in the 2023 budget, which builds on the serious progress made to expand Ontario's transportation network and supports the province's rapidly growing population.

The budget includes necessary and crucial long-term investments to advance the planning and construction of highway expansion and rehabilitation projects throughout the province. Building Highway 413, the Bradford Bypass, and other highway improvements will enable the faster movement of people and goods across the province, adding new critical infrastructure to the fastest-growing regions.

The funding allocated for public transit infrastructure, including the Ontario Line and Scarborough Subway extension, will help grow transit-oriented communities in the most densely populated region. These investments into building critical infrastructure today are laying the foundation for Ontario's continued economic development and prosperity of tomorrow.

RCCAO is also pleased to see significant investment to recruit and train a new generation of builders, including significant investment into the Skills Development Fund. Renewal of Ontario's skilled and construction trades workforce is necessary for long-term economic competitiveness.

As part of these efforts, RCCAO wants applauds the collaboration between Minister McNaughton and Minister Fraser on an agreement to double the number of economic immigrants to Ontario to over 18,000 in 2025. This is an important complement to the training and recruitment efforts already underway across the province to renew Ontario's skilled trades

and construction workforce. By alleviating the labour shortage and increasing the industry's capacity to build, all Ontarians will benefit from industry's ability to build faster and get infrastructure and housing projects done. RCCAO also commends the Government of Ontario for allocating additional funds for the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program to reflect the doubling of allocations.

While progress on provincially controlled infrastructure is welcomed, RCCAO implores the Governments of Ontario, in partnership with the Government of Canada, to provide funding support to municipalities to address budgetary shortfalls caused by the COVID pandemic. Without concerted support from the Federal and provincial governments, municipal capital and state-of-good repair projects are at risk of being delayed or cancelled.

It is commendable that this year's budget makes meaningful multi-year investments into the Homelessness Prevention Program, which will help municipalities address affordable and supportive housing. Cities like Toronto need additional help addressing the significant operating pressures resulting from the pandemic.

Such ramifications would have negative consequences for workers and would add significant strains to critical infrastructure that already operates with a backlog in state-of-good-repair work. Assurances of funding support would allow tenders and projects to proceed, rather than risk losses during construction season.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide comments to the Standing Committee and look forward to continuing our engagement with the Government of Ontario as it works to address the infrastructure needs of the province.

Sincerely,



Nadia Todorova
Executive Director

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