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Draft Ontario soil practices use U.K. experience

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Draft industry best management practices (BMP) for excess construction soils in Ontario are based on an organization with similar goals in the United Kingdom, says an industry stakeholder.

The experiences from [Contaminated Land: Applications In Real Environments \(CLAIRE\)](#) shaped the way the **Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario's (RCCAO)** soils steering committee developed their draft BMPs as a way to fill in the gaps when it comes to excess soil management regulations in Ontario.

"They were recognizing this was a problem 10 years ago," said RCCAO executive director Andy Manahan.

"They actually have training modules and everything else right now so they're ahead of us for sure."

A CLAIRE representative will be in Toronto in late September to make presentations to the steering committee and to a larger construction industry audience as well. Manahan said the Ontario Ministry of Environment (MOE) will also be invited so they can directly hear the potential of how to do things differently.

"At some point we're going to need those regulatory changes, but this is a non-regulatory approach, so it's a different way of looking at it."

In the spring, the MOE released a BMP for public comment. This draft guide is primarily for large commercial projects but there is recognition that specific solutions for "civil construction and other development activities" will be required.

A report released by the RCCAO in July, entitled [Eglinton LRT Project: Estimated Costs and Impacts of Addressing Excess Construction Soils](#), found that due to rising costs and greater restrictions, up to 15 per cent of the costs of infrastructure projects will have to be dedicated to the disposal of excavated soil.

With the amount of infrastructure projects currently going on in Ontario, the quantity of excess construction soils is likely to increase in the coming years, says the report commissioned by the RCCAO.

Some municipalities are already introducing restrictions or bans on the importation of fill and soil from outside their boundaries, which can lead to increased costs and negative environmental impacts as excess soils will have to be transported greater distances.

The RCCAO says that there are better approaches than "dig and dump" available, especially considering that most of the soils from construction sites like municipal roads and right of ways are relatively clean compared to those found in old industrial areas.

"Construction soils need to be diverted from landfills and governments need to work with our sector in searching for solutions," says the RCCAO.

"A municipal or provincial owner, for example, could improve procurement practices to ensure that sole

responsibility for determining what to do with excess soils is not simply contracted out.”

The RCCAO has run a series of ads which call for improved soil management practices and Manahan said these are meant to keep the issues in the spotlight.