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Construction Industry Roundtable

Infrastructure Investment Must be Sustained; Governments Need to Ensure a More Coordinated, Integrated Approach

Embedding Sensible Processes Fundamental to Economic Growth

TORONTO -- (Thursday, October 8, 2009) -- Key stakeholders from Ontario's construction, engineering, labour and management industries gathered today in Toronto to assess current Federal/Provincial infrastructure investments and the status and roll-out of stimulus spending.

Participants in the meeting included members of Canadian labour, trade unions, management and representatives of Federal, Provincial and Municipal governments.

The meeting began with a keynote address by George Smitherman, Minister of Energy and Infrastructure, Government of Ontario who spoke about the province's substantial investment in infrastructure projects in both the short and long term.

"Infrastructure investment is not just about spending for the moment and creating short term employment," says Minister Smitherman. "Ontario's substantial commitment to infrastructure is about embedding sensible processes that will be fundamental to the continued economic growth of our province."

"Today's purpose was not to look in a rear view mirror and complain about previous roll-outs of infrastructure, says Andy Manahan, Executive Director, RCCAO. "The goal is to start working together as an industry to improve processes for the future."

The roundtable discussions focused on five priority issues:

- Feedback on the roll-out of infrastructure and related stimulus spending;
- Current infrastructure projects and investments;
- Process to identify long-term priority projects and their links to other regional and economic development initiatives;
- Streamlined approval of municipal Class EA projects based on conformity to Official Plans;
- Ongoing asset management.

The breakout groups concluded with some key recommendations and feedback which will be formally released next week. Among them:

- **Fundamental to Ontario's Continued Growth:** Investment in infrastructure is an important economic tool;
- **A Master Plan:** There must be a coordinated strategy;
- **Vision and Value:** Stimulus should be considered a "long term asset", not just an expense;

- **Beyond the Buildings:** There needs to be more of a focus on the lifecycle costs of keeping buildings and infrastructure in a good state of repair;
- **Moving Forward:** The need to clearly distinguish between “shovel ready” and long term “priority” projects;
- **Best Practices:** The need to look at countries such as Australia, Finland and Singapore for benchmarking;
- **Streamlining:** Eliminate duplication on the Federal and Provincial Environmental Assessment processes.

A full briefing will be distributed to government and media next week.

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