

## RCCAO urges municipalities to recycle asphalt for road projects

Recycling asphalt and aggregates for road projects may be environmentally friendly but paving the way to increase use of recycled materials is not something the city wants to lead for fear it could be a costly endeavor.

Elaine Della-Mattia - July 28, 2020



Asphalt resurfacing equipment. WD

The **Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario (RCCAO)** wants to see more municipalities recycle asphalt and aggregates for road building and lessen the impact on landfills.

But municipalities may not be willing to be the guinea pigs on infrastructure projects that are costing millions of dollars to taxpayers.

Don Elliott, the city's director of engineering services, said the City of Sault Ste. Marie follows the Ministry of Transportation policies in its road building materials.

"If the MTO allows a certain percentage of recycled materials in granular or new asphalt, we allow that," he said. "We follow the standards set from other jurisdictions. We don't want to try something on our own and have a deficient product as a result."

Recycled materials are currently used in some new asphalt and granular A products, including crushed gravel used to prepare roadways, Elliott said.

“Certainly anytime we can recycle, there is a savings from not using new product or reducing your annual extraction,” he said.

But that has to be weighed against other factors, including final performance grades and costs.

Recycled products is often used in Sault Ste. Marie in low use parking lots and driving pads, including those at the city’s landfill, he said.

“It appears that asphalt doesn’t last as long as it once did,” Elliott said.

No one has the scientific reasons for that – whether it is as a result of regional climates, different materials, or just simply increased road use.

Elliott said industry specifications changed for asphalt several years ago after recycled oils used in asphalt cement did result in durability and performance issues. Recycled oils are no longer used in asphalt cement.

“Asphalt is very expensive and getting more expensive. We are interested in adding longevity but certainly not trying something new in our Northern environment,” he said.

Trying something new can also prove to be expensive as contractors will have to use a different composition of products, which is weighed towards the cost of the final product.

“For that reason we tend to follow the MTO percentages for concentration and allow our contractors some flexibility that way,” he said.

Advocates say there are many benefits to recycling aggregates but many engineers are still choosing to use virgin materials in the road building projects.

The Toronto Area Road Builders Association recently commissioned an independent research firm to examine aggregate recycling policies of municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area and southern Ontario. The report does not address policies of Northern Ontario municipalities.

That report concluded that while some municipalities were using recycled aggregates in their roadwork, the majority of used asphalt was being discarded in landfills, creating millions of tonnes of waste.

The report notes that there are a number of environmental benefits to recycle the materials and a lot of room for growth and improvement by municipalities to change policies and use more recycled materials.

Currently about 20 per cent of the aggregates used in MTO projects – whether for granular base and fills or new hot mix asphalt – are recycled asphalt and concrete materials.