

# Ontario construction industry leaders call for sustainable, cost-effective building practices

By [Robin MacLennan, Editor, Ontario Construction News](#) - January 20, 2025

coalition of Ontario's civil infrastructure leaders has launched a campaign to urge policymakers to adopt more sustainable and cost-effective building practices for public infrastructure projects. Specifically, the group is advocating for the increased use of recycled crushed aggregates (RCA) in construction to help municipalities save money, reduce waste, and achieve their sustainability goals.

The group's call to action highlights the significant benefits of incorporating RCA, a material made from reclaimed concrete and asphalt, into critical infrastructure projects like roads, bridges, highways, and tunnels. According to their findings, mandating just 20 percent RCA in public construction projects could save local governments over \$260 million annually while cutting greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to removing 15 million cars from the road each year.

The coalition behind the RCA campaign includes nine leading industry organizations:

- Concrete Ontario
- Good Roads
- Greater Toronto Sewer and Watermain Construction Association (GTSWCA)
- Heavy Civil Association of Toronto (HCAAT)
- Ontario Road Builders Association (ORBA)
- Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario (RCCAO)
- Ontario Sand, Stone, and Gravel Association (OSSGA)
- Ontario Society of Professional Engineers (OSPE)
- Toronto and Area Road Builders Association (TARBA)

"Recycled aggregates are cost-effective, sustainable, and high-performing," said Raly Chakarova, executive director of the Toronto and Area Road Builders Association (TARBA). "By utilizing more recycled materials, municipalities can deliver more from their capital plans while helping to achieve net-zero targets and protect our environment."

The push for RCA is particularly timely as municipalities face growing infrastructure backlogs and rising construction costs. By incorporating RCA, municipalities can reduce the need for virgin materials, preserve non-renewable resources, and help mitigate traffic congestion caused by transporting heavy construction materials.

Proven to be as high-performing as primary aggregates, RCA has already been successfully used in major infrastructure projects across Ontario, including 400-series highways, Pearson International Airport, and Greater Toronto Area transit projects. Worldwide, governments are incentivizing RCA use to foster a shift toward more sustainable construction materials.

The coalition, which includes nine major industry organizations, is calling for both municipal and provincial action to accelerate the use of RCA. Their recommendations include:

- **Municipal Level:** Include RCA in tender specifications for construction projects, mandate a minimum RCA requirement for all public infrastructure, and harmonize municipal RCA standards with provincial guidelines.
- **Provincial Level:** Offer financial incentives for municipalities using RCA in public infrastructure projects, prohibit “primary-only” requirements in tenders, and mandate a minimum of 20 percent RCA in aggregates used for provincial, regional, and municipal projects.

“Using RCA in the construction of roads, bridges, and other infrastructure not only reduces waste but also conserves natural resources,” said Scott Butler, Executive Director of Good Roads. “This is a sustainable approach that provides real benefits for taxpayers, including cost savings and reduced emissions.”

Fast facts about RCA usage in Ontario:

- **Recyclability:** Asphalt and concrete are 100% recyclable.
- **Aggregate Consumption:** Ontario uses 180 million tonnes of aggregates annually, with over 50 percent used in roads, bridges, and tunnels. However, less than seven percent of aggregates currently come from recycled sources.
- **Environmental Impact:** Recycling 10,000 tonnes of aggregate instead of using newly extracted materials saves 137 car emissions per month, 21,000 pounds of coal, and supports the planting of 315 tree seedlings over 10 years.

Several industry leaders expressed their support for RCA’s expanded use.

“Incorporating recycled aggregates into municipal infrastructure projects reduces construction waste, conserves resources, and helps lower greenhouse gas emissions,” said Patrick McManus, Executive Director of the Greater Toronto Sewer and Watermain Contractors Association.

The coalition is also gaining support from engineering groups, with Sandro Perruzza, CEO of the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers (OSPE), noting, “Advances in material science have shown that RCA is a viable alternative to traditional materials. By using it, we can build a more sustainable, low-carbon future for Ontario.”

As Ontario looks to the future, this coalition of construction industry leaders is calling on all levels of government to embrace RCA as part of a broader strategy to build sustainable, cost-effective, and high-performing infrastructure.