

# DAILY COMMERCIAL NEWS

## AND CONSTRUCTION RECORD

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Construction roundtable urges integrated infrastructure investment plan

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A co-ordinated and integrated infrastructure investment plan and incorporation of lifecycle costing are among the important messages for government generated by a construction industry roundtable.

Key stakeholders from Ontario's construction, engineering, labour and management industries were joined by representatives from various provincial ministries for the roundtable.

The Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario (RCCAO) organized the roundtable, which assessed government economic stimulus measures and current infrastructure investment both provincially and federally.

"It helps as an industry to hear directly about some of the nuances of issues when you have government and industry sitting together for a period of time," said Andy Manahan, executive director, RCCAO. "It really helps to develop an understanding of the issues we face together and complexities we have to address."

The roundtable discussions focused on five priority issues: feedback on the roll-out of infrastructure and related stimulus spending; current infrastructure projects and investments; processes to identify long-term priority projects and their links to other regional and economic development initiatives; streamlined approval of municipal class environmental assessments based on conformity to official plans and ongoing asset management.

"What we are discovering is that infrastructure investment and relations to government is quite complex and becoming more complex over time," said Manahan.

"It helps to bring labour and management together to work on these things to find real solutions with these pressing problems."

A 10-year master plan by the province that is co-ordinated by all levels of government, developed in partnership with construction industry, was a common recommendation by various breakout groups at the roundtable.

A need to have the construction industry recognized as a "significant player" and to have the province work with the industry to develop an industry-specific competitiveness strategy was also recommended.

Some industry stakeholders noted that the construction industry is larger than the automotive sector and that the health of construction is important to Ontario's economic success, sustainable growth and quality of life.

Among the roundtable's final recommendations and messages were:

- The importance of investment in infrastructure as an economic tool.
- The need for a master plan or co-ordinated strategy for infrastructure investment.

- Stimulus should be considered a “long term asset” and not just an expense
- The need for a focus on the lifecycle costs of maintaining buildings and infrastructure in a good state of repair.
- Creating a clear distinction between “shovel ready” and long term priority projects
- Eliminating duplication of EA processes by federal and provincial governments