

# DAILY COMMERCIAL NEWS

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## AND CONSTRUCTION RECORD

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Another Tory minority government means little will change for construction industry, association officials say

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The return of a Tory minority government to Ottawa does not bring much of anything new for construction, say some industry officials.

“Things have not changed that much,” says Michael Atkinson, president of the Canadian Construction Association (CCA).

“From a lobbying perspective, in a minority government, you do have to focus more on the opposition parties and committees are more important too.”

Prime Minister Stephen Harper and his Conservative party returned to power after securing 143 seats in the recent federal election.

The Conservatives fell short of the 155 seats needed for a majority government as they notched their second consecutive minority government. The Liberals are the official opposition with 76 seats, followed by the Bloc Québécois with 50, the NDP at 37 and two independents.

“They may have rearranged the deck chairs a little bit but it is essentially more of the same,” says Jeff Morrison, president and chief operating officer of the Association of Canadian Engineering Companies (ACEC).

Atkinson says the CCA will want to hear more from the Tories in their throne speech to see what issues they plan to address and how they may affect construction.

The Conservatives did not propose anything major or new, during their campaign, in the areas of infrastructure, immigration and skill development.

One item the Conservatives did unveil, which assists construction, is a \$2,000 completion bonus to apprentices who finish an apprenticeship program in a nationally recognized trade.

This plan complements prior Tory initiatives such as the taxable \$1,000 Apprenticeship Incentive Grant and the Tradesperson's Tools Deduction of \$500 for expenditures over \$1,000 for tools required for employment.

"The incentives for apprentice completion are a good thing," says Atkinson. "Whatever can promote apprenticeships is great."

The fact the Conservatives did not unveil anything new for infrastructure was a concern for the ACEC, says Morrison.

"There were no new commitments for infrastructure, they (Conservatives) essentially went back to heralding the \$33 billion Building Canada fund," says Morrison. "We will have to remind them there is still work to do and they cannot [rest] on their laurels."

Considering the current fears and forecasts for Canadian and global economies, continued infrastructure investment to promote activity will be important for the Conservatives to consider, adds Atkinson.

"Our thrust will be to illustrate the importance of sustaining (infrastructure) programs they started and perhaps even accelerate some programs" says Atkinson.

The Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario also regards infrastructure investment as a key tool to help municipalities and industry remain active and healthy.

"We are of the mind that no matter who won the election, increased and predictable infrastructure funding is important, in the current economic context, to keep Canada competitive," says Andy Manahan, executive director of the RCCAO.