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ONTARIO BUDGET – EMPLOYMENT

PROVINCE COULD GET 10,000 PEOPLE BACK TO WORK BY STREAMLINING THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT PROCESS

TORONTO (March 23, 2010) – Work for thousands of construction employees could be created this year in Ontario with a simple regulatory fix by the province, says the Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario (RCCAO).

The alliance, composed of management and labour groups in the construction industry, is hoping the upcoming provincial Budget will address this issue. “The government is intent on growing the economy and creating jobs. By allowing us to get shovels into the ground more quickly, we can add some 10,000 full time equivalent jobs,” says RCCAO Executive Director Andy Manahan.

The problem? The current environmental assessment process is too cumbersome, expensive and time-consuming. According to a study commissioned by RCCAO, the current EA process delays municipal infrastructure projects by an average of almost 20 months. No other Canadian province imposes such onerous EA requirements.

The solution? Eliminate the duplication and streamline the EA process for basic infrastructure work. “We’re talking about making the approvals process simpler and faster for projects that are add-ons and improvements, projects such as road extensions and widenings, bridge replacements and alterations or expansions of sewer and water systems,” explains Manahan.

Among its recommendations, RCCAO is calling for:

- Encouraging greater cooperation between Queen’s Park and Ottawa. Approvals under one set of regulations should obviate the need for further review by the other level of government.

- Eliminating the requirement to undertake further study of alternatives when there has already been full review and public scrutiny through the *Planning Act* processes, the *Places to Grow* and *Greenbelt* legislation, and debate over municipal capital budgets.
- Eliminating 'bump-up' requests for formal government review (Part II Order Requests) that are frivolous or vexatious.
- Creating a Municipal Class EA Regulation to fast track basic infrastructure projects in the same manner as the Transit EA has streamlined approvals for transit projects.

"The province has an enormous opportunity here to get thousands of people in our industry back to work," says Manahan. "We've asked the government to consider our proposals, and we hope they will implement these reforms."

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**Robert Stephens
PR POST
416-777-0368**