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Infrastructure

Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario seeks plan for Simcoe services

Regional co-ordination to aid municipalities

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The use of regional servicing boards for water and wastewater planning in the Simcoe area should be among the tools considered in the region's growth plan, says a construction stakeholder group.

"Whether it is done with some smaller municipalities coming together or it is watershed-based alignment, something like that could be more effective," said Andy Manahan, executive director of the Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario (RCCAO).

"This would be valuable in the Simcoe area, which has many small municipal governments with limited planning and financing capacity."

The RCCAO recently submitted a variety of recommendations to the province, which is attempting to outline a strategic growth vision for the Simcoe area. The province's vision paper proposes to focus population and employment growth in five areas; Barrie, Collingwood, Orillia, Alliston and Bradford, with Barrie serving as the anchor urban node.

A servicing board that covers a larger area would be able to address more efficient water and wastewater servicing solutions that are not slowed down by political boundaries.

"A project in a small municipality might then be more efficiently serviced through expansion of the adjacent system from Barrie or Orillia," Manahan noted. "A regional board would be better able to implement this expansion solution."

The clarification of boundaries and regulations and consultation with key planners and stakeholders, who have a hand in developing the area, is essential, added RCCAO. Where growth in the area is desired, infrastructure investments must be "timely and sufficient" to ensure that growth is stimulated.

"Intensification depends on transportation access, sewer and water capacity to enable and attract residents and business to higher density neighbourhoods," said Manahan.

A clearer sense of boundaries, planning and the regulatory landscape would help construction industry stakeholders in their ability to meet growth needs in the Simcoe area.

"There would be more certainty," he said. "When you know where growth is going to be directed, then you can go ahead make plans and deal with municipalities that have a greater certainty. That would be of benefit to the larger construction industry and those who are employed by it."

The province plans to have a Simcoe area transportation study done that conforms with its Places to Grow:

Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

RCCAO supports undertaking a transportation study, stating it would address infrastructural needs in the Simcoe area and allow for the province “to identify necessary work which may not have been determined earlier.”