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## **NEW RCCAO STUDY: ONTARIO'S ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT PROCESS TAKING BIG BITE OUT OF PROVINCIAL ECONOMY**

**TORONTO (March 2, 2010)** – A new study released today estimates that the environmental assessment process in Ontario delays municipal infrastructure projects by an average of almost 20 months.

Based on the approximately 140 such projects a year, this delay costs taxpayers an additional and unnecessary \$232 million and holds back the creation of some 10,000 full time equivalent jobs annually.

As well, a significant portion of the intended federal and provincial stimulus funding for 'shovels in the ground' work has been blunted as municipalities cannot proceed with many needed projects without spending additional funds on time-consuming and expensive EA requirements. Further, many municipalities have not even bothered to apply for infrastructure funding because meeting the tight deadline of March 2011 for construction completion is further compounded by the lengthy EA process.

These costs, delays and lost opportunities are unique to Ontario as other Canadian provinces have minimal or no EA requirements for basic infrastructure projects such as road extensions and widenings, bridge replacements and alterations or expansions of sewer and water systems.

"Ontario's infrastructure is aging, and we should be doing everything we can to ensure that the available tax dollars are being spent wisely. The costs of the Municipal Class EA process far exceed its benefits," says Andy Manahan, Executive Director of the Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario (RCCAO) which commissioned the independent study.

Prepared by Frank Zechner, a lawyer practicing environmental and construction law, the study calls for the streamlining of the province's EA rules. "Particularly now that senior levels of government are facing high deficits, it is critical that we look for ways to stretch our infrastructure funding dollars," he notes.

*Are Ontario's Municipal Class Environmental Assessments Worth the Added Time and Costs?* comes to the conclusion that, while various reform measures have been implemented over a number of years, many opportunities still exist to make the EA process more efficient.

Key recommendations in the study include:

- Reduce the timeframe related to 'bump-up' requests. The study suggests that part of the motive for property owners making these Part II order requests is to get a higher price during the land expropriation process.
- Create 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.
- Eliminate the requirement to undertake a further study and review of alternatives for basic infrastructure, especially where there has already been public scrutiny through the *Planning Act* processes, the *Places to Grow* and *Greenbelt* legislation, and public debate over municipal capital budgets.
- Establish protocols with federal agencies such as Transport Canada, in relation to bridge replacement EAs, as to which agency will have the final say on issues such as appropriate clearance distances between bridges and navigable waters.
- Expand the recognition of prior *Planning Act* consultations for certain short distance road extensions so that they would be characterized as a Schedule A+ project.

The RCCAO is an alliance composed of management and labour groups in the construction industry. Its goal is to work in cooperation with governments and related stakeholders to offer realistic solutions to a variety of challenges facing the sector.

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The full report is available at [www.rccao.com](http://www.rccao.com)

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