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Proposed Ontario water conservation act aimed at boosting efficiency

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Proposed provincial water conservation legislation will deliver efficiency results and construction project opportunities, says the Ontario Sewer and Watermain Construction Association (OSWCA).

“It is a move in the right direction because it encourages municipalities to increase efficiencies in their system,” said Joe Accardi, executive director at OSWCA.

“Essentially, there will have to be some key construction jobs required that consultants, suppliers and contractors can work on.”

Ontario’s proposed Water Opportunities and Water Conservation Act is designed to encourage the creation and export of innovative clean water technology, promote water conservation and drive economic development and job creation.

Up to 50 per cent of energy used by municipalities to power their water systems could be reduced by addressing various sources of energy inefficiency, according to a recent Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario report.

A number of municipalities had water leakage rates of 25 per cent, the report revealed.

Through the proposed act, Ontario would strengthen sustainable municipal water planning to help address energy inefficiency and leakage rates, the province stated. The province would help municipalities identify and plan for long-term infrastructure needs. This plan would include moving towards “a measures and targets” approach to demonstrate progress.

“The province would like a performance plan (that) outlines how many kilometers of pipe is in a municipality’s system, what the leakage rates are and what the energy costs are to operate the system,” said Accardi. “They essentially want municipalities to start conserving water by reducing leakage rates which means new construction methods.”

Toronto spends \$2 million per month to energize its water distribution system, a figure that hits close to \$5 million for the whole province, the RCCAO report noted. To help start addressing the health and conservation efficiency of its system Toronto recently launched its automated water meter program.

The city aims to install or replace the meter in every home and business in Toronto — about 465,000 meters — over the next six years. The plan initially targets businesses and the 72,000 households who pay a flat rate for water and don’t currently have a meter. Toronto officials said the meters will help gauge the health of the city’s water system.

Bill Gauley of Veritec Consulting Inc. said in a statement that requiring municipalities to develop water-efficiency strategic plans, before expanding infrastructure, and supporting changes to the Building Code which result in higher efficiency levels, will have a positive impact.

“The old adage ‘if you don’t measure it, you can’t manage it’ is especially true as it relates to advancing water efficiency,” Gauley said.