

Caplan brings infrastructure expertise to ORBA

by Angela Gismondi Nov 21, 2017

David Caplan is “a familiar face” and a “champion for infrastructure” who will bring knowledge and understanding to the roadbuilding sector as he takes on the role of chief operating officer (COO) for the Ontario Road Builders’ Association (ORBA), state several industry stakeholders.

As Ontario's first infrastructure minister, Caplan's accomplishments include leading the development of Renew Ontario, a \$30-billion investment plan in the province's infrastructure; introducing new finance delivery models such as Alternative Financing and Procurement into Ontario; and creating Infrastructure Ontario, indicates a release issued by ORBA. Caplan will officially start his new role Dec. 4.

"David has always understood the need for infrastructure," stated Giovanni Cautillo, executive director of the Ontario Sewer and Watermain Construction Association (OSWCA). "When he was in government, he was a staunch advocate for the full-cost pricing of infrastructure to ensure sustainability. The OSWCA tapped into his passion during his time at Global Public Affairs, where David was instrumental to the successful launch of our 2016 OSWCA water study, Bringing Sustainability to Ontario's Water Systems: A Quarter-Century of Progress, with much left to do."

While ORBA is not a member of the **Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario (RCCAO)**, executive director Andy Manahan said he will be working with Caplan through the Construction and Design Alliance of Ontario on a number of files including Infrastructure Ontario, Metrolinx and the Ministry of Transportation.

"He has always been a champion for infrastructure,"

Andy Manahan
RCCAO

"It's a bit of a surprise but an enlightened announcement to have a former minister have such a high profile position in the industry," said Manahan.

Caplan peer reviewed a report on Infrastructure Ontario written by former deputy minister and founding CEO of Metrolinx Michael Fenn, which was commissioned by the RCCAO recently, added Manahan.

"He has always been a champion for infrastructure," he said.

While some are suggesting as a former member of the Liberal Party Caplan would do well with the current government but not as well if a new government is elected next year, Manahan said he disagrees with that position.

"First of all, both opposition parties recognize the importance of road and related infrastructure so I don't think the fact that a former Liberal cabinet minister is there is going to result in any dissuading in the importance of infrastructure," Manahan explained. "No matter what happens next June, if there is a new party...I think David has been out of cabinet long enough that he certainly wouldn't have the same baggage that others would."

Ian Cunningham, president of the Council of Ontario Construction Associations, said Caplan is an ideal choice for COO of ORBA.

"He knows his way around Queen's Park as well as anyone, he has a track record of working collaboratively with others, he has friends in all parties, he is highly respected by construction industry stakeholders and he knows ORBA's files well," said Cunningham. "Given his history of achievement in both the private sector and in government, I have every confidence David will hit the ground running and lead ORBA to new high levels of success."

Ontario General Contractors Association president Clive Thurston said Caplan has a great deal of respect for the industry and, in turn, is well respected by industry stakeholders.

"When we worked with him back in those very early days of setting up Infrastructure Ontario, it was a real pleasure," said Thurston. "He has a great understanding of working together, breaking down silos. I absolutely couldn't think of a greater person to get to work with again."

"I think he's going to do a great job for ORBA. He really is a consensus builder and has a love for our industry that is surprising in a politician."

Caplan takes over from former COO Geoff Wilkinson.