



## **No longer dirt cheap**

### **Excavated soil from construction a growing problem in Ontario; Lack of provincial guidelines drives up cost of disposal**

**TORONTO (July 12, 2012)** – Ontario taxpayers and consumers will be paying significantly more, up to 15% more in some cases, for roads, sewers, water systems, public transit and other infrastructure because of the rising costs associated with the disposal of excavated soil.

According to a new study released today by the Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario (RCCAO), millions of cubic metres of soil will have to be trucked from construction projects to disposal sites in Ontario over the next decade or two. The infrastructure needs of the growing population and economy will require this expansion.

The construction of the first phase of the Metrolinx Eglinton Crosstown LRT Project alone, for example, will generate some 1,500,000 cubic metres of excavated soil. The study estimates that it could cost \$100 million or more to transport and dispose of these soils depending on the future availability of sites. Another project, the City of Toronto's own water and sewer capital program, will produce more than 800,000 cubic metres between now and the end of the decade.

But the problem is, where to put this growing mountain of earth? Long gone are the days when trucks could simply take it to the Leslie Street Spit. Some municipalities are now restricting or banning the importation of soils from outside their jurisdictions because of uncertainties in applying the Ontario Ministry of the Environment's stringent regulations governing soil quality and placement.

MOE's regulations were intended to encourage the clean-up of Brownfield and other contaminated sites, but unfortunately are being misapplied to the handling of non-contaminated excess construction soils. Even though most of these excavated soils are relatively clean, municipalities and private companies are choosing to discontinue accepting soils due to bylaw restrictions or other regulatory liability concerns.

The result? Fewer disposal sites available, trucks hauling excavated soil greater distances, more congestion on the roads, increased emissions, and higher transportation costs.

“Construction firms are paying millions of dollars each year to move relatively clean soil from construction sites to remote placement sites. Of course, these ever-increasing costs get reflected in contractors’ prices to owners, which are then passed on to taxpayers/consumers,” notes the study which was prepared by consultant and environmental lawyer Frank Zechner.

Zechner says these unnecessary and added costs represent “a significant erosion of taxpayers’ dollars that would otherwise be available for badly-needed infrastructure improvements.”

Andy Manahan, Executive Director of RCCAO, says the Alliance members and others in the construction industry have been warning the province about this issue for years. RCCAO has established a committee to develop industry-specific best practices for managing excavated soil.

“We hope we can work with the government in developing clear, consistent, pragmatic rules for managing excavated soils in Ontario,” says Manahan. “This represents a significant opportunity to reduce construction costs and stretch public infrastructure dollars.”

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 study is available at [www.rccao.com](http://www.rccao.com)  
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