



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**RCCAO:
Unless EA Red Tape Eliminated
Economic Stimulus Projects Will Face Unacceptable Delays**

TORONTO (February 23, 2009) – An alliance of management and labour groups in the Ontario construction industry is calling for the streamlining of ‘burdensome’ environmental assessment (EA) legislation in order to quickly ramp up infrastructure projects needed to stimulate the economy.

These projects can generate a much-needed boost during the current downturn, providing immediate local employment, income and taxes. But while the industry is ready to respond immediately, complex and inefficient EA legislation at the provincial and federal levels is a major stumbling block.

“Unless the red tape is eliminated, there will be unacceptable delays of many months and even years for these projects to come on stream,” said Andy Manahan, Executive Director of the Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario (RCCAO).

“Unless the EA process is reformed, don’t expect infrastructure spending to provide a shot in the arm to the economy. We simply won’t get shovels into the ground quickly enough to have any meaningful impact on the recession.”

RCCAO has released a white paper – *Environmental Assessment Reform: A Tool for Economic Recovery* – which provides recommendations to eliminate bottlenecks and time-consuming duplication inherent in current EA processes. To facilitate the deployment of public funding to stimulus packages, the paper urges Ontario to immediately initiate a Declaration Order to simplify Environmental Approval requirements – much as it has done for various transit, energy and waste management projects.

Manahan will be available to discuss the report at a media briefing today:

**WHEN: Monday, February 23, 2009
Noon**

**WHERE: Royal York Hotel
Toronto Room**

The white paper also calls for greater cooperation between Queen’s Park and Ottawa. Currently, projects that have satisfied provincial EA requirements often need to be ‘reassessed’ under the federal Act – with no apparent additional benefit to the environment or taxpayers.

As well, the province should revise the Class EA process with a view to eliminating requests for formal government review (Part II Order Requests) that are frivolous or vexatious. “All too often, this avenue is used to serve the interests of individuals or an ideology, at the expense of broader public interests,” Manahan noted.

“Clearly, there is a public interest in both the rapid deployment of government resources on infrastructure investments and sound environmental scrutiny of these projects. The two objectives do not have to be mutually exclusive,” said Manahan.

In another report also commissioned by RCCAO – *Benchmarking Infrastructure Funding in Ontario: Towards Sustainable Policies* – the Alliance puts forward a number of recommendations that would make government more open and accountable for the proper management of infrastructure assets.

Included in these recommendations are:

- Increasing the responsibility, role and resources of the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure (MEI) to become the Infrastructure Czar for Ontario.
- Creating a multi-stakeholder infrastructure council and think tanks to support the efforts of MEI in taking on this expanded role.
- Establishing long-term funding commitments for infrastructure renewal, and leveraging this funding to encourage municipal adoption of best practices in asset management.
- Comparing Ontario to some of its international counterparts to measure infrastructure performance.

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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For further information, contact:

Andy Manahan
Executive Director, RCCAO
cell: 416-904-7013

Robert Stephens
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416-777-0368