



# COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS

## *Leveraging Infrastructure Investments in Ontario*

*An Outcome Statement from the OCSI Infrastructure Forum on May 26, 2016*

On May 26, 2016, industry leaders from 19 organizations within Ontario's municipal and public works sectors, and their partners in the private sector, met in Toronto to discuss the role that infrastructure plays in supporting the economic development critical to Ontario's continued success. This was the third forum held in the Ontario Coalition for Sustainable Infrastructure's (OCSI) ongoing series of "Courageous Conversations" and it fostered collaboration and discussion on the most pressing challenges facing municipalities in Ontario. The outcome of the day was six main messages under the theme "How to Secure the Future".

### **BIG THINGS HAPPENING IN ONTARIO**

The program opened with a panel of three speakers who focused on the "BIG Things" happening in Ontario and shared their insights into policies governing water, stormwater and soil, and how these will impact the resilience of Ontario's infrastructure to future environmental threats and changes in use.

**Christine Zimmer, MSc(Eng), P.Eng., Senior Manager of Water Infrastructure and Climate Change at Credit Valley Conservation**, challenged delegates to define the costs, considerations and solutions when presenting the business case of water infrastructure investment to Commissioners and Councillors.

**Krystyn Tully, co-founder of Lake Ontario Waterkeeper**, outlined the essential elements of the plan towards swimmable and clean shorelines in communities on the Great Lakes.

**J. P. Marini, President and Owner of Terra Nova Environmental Services Inc.**, delineated the trade-offs inherent to new regulations of the quality and transportation of soil and other fill materials, explaining the possible approaches favored by both the public and policy makers.



Christine Zimmer



Krystyn Tully



J.P. Marini



Mike P. Moffatt



Allan O'Dette



Adam Vaughan

### **PROVOKING PROGRESS**

After the panel, three provocateurs presented thought-provoking remarks and challenged the leaders in attendance to consider the opportunities presented by infrastructure investment and the threats to the future security of existing assets.

**Mike P. Moffatt, the Chief Economist of the Mowat Centre**, challenged delegates to consider the global market impact that Ontario's environmental initiatives have on the marketability of our products to foreign consumers.

**Allan O'Dette, President and CEO of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce**, emphasized the importance of framing investment in infrastructure as a sustainable balance between fiscal considerations, environmental impacts and societal benefits.

**Adam Vaughan, MP (Spadina - Fort York), Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Intergovernmental Affairs)**, examined the role of municipalities in strategically investing in infrastructure and challenged stakeholders in attendance to think of the policy process as a system involving multiple levels of policy makers.





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### KEYS TO LEVERAGE INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENTS AND SECURE THE FUTURE

The courageous conversations generated six main messages based on the provocateurs' challenge questions and issues raised by delegates. The outcome addresses how to leverage infrastructure investments for growth in Ontario and secure the future.

#### **#1 Infrastructure investment is key to resiliency**

Infrastructure is a key tool in climate change adaptation and it is the municipal asset most affected by extreme climate events. Investments in infrastructure are a strategic way to prepare communities for future climate events, while at the same time creating spaces and services which allow neighbourhoods to foster community.



#### **#2 Multiple levels of government can be both a barrier and an opportunity**

Cooperation and coordination between decision makers in municipal, regional, provincial and federal governments are essential drivers for innovation in infrastructure projects. Different levels of government allow for multiple avenues of funding and political initiative; having policy decisions and funding regimes in alignment helps ensure infrastructure development takes place in an effective and timely manner.



#### **#3 Replacement and assessment of infrastructure should be done based on risk; planning based on forecasts**

With the increasing impacts of climate change and the associated risk of extreme weather events, decisions that are based on past events are less valid. A risk-based approach to assessing existing infrastructure and planning for replacement should consider infrastructure needs in the future. Predictions solely based on past events do not account for the environmental and demographic changes which are occurring in communities.

#### **#4 Infrastructure planning needs to be ahead of the population's demands**

Already it has been observed that people in municipalities surrounding the Great Lakes are returning to the waterfront for recreational use. Water quality issues affecting these natural resources must be addressed ahead of the expected use. This applies across infrastructure projects as demographic and environmental change shifts the demands we put on infrastructure. A comprehensive understanding of these future changes is necessary; however, equally important is the will of decision makers to implement a planning paradigm which aims to be predictive of these changes.

#### **#5 Improve municipal procurement to consider life cycle costing and allow for innovation**

The established status quo in municipalities of selecting infrastructure projects based on capital cost alone does not consider the entire life-cycle expense associated with a project. Comprehensive life cycle costing that considers the long term operation and maintenance costs of a project must be part of the procurement process. Municipal leaders should set incentives to promote innovation in how infrastructure is designed and delivered.

#### **#6 Decisions must include input from the public**

Public consultation is a direct form of democracy that can be integrated into infrastructure project decision making processes. In addition, it offers the opportunity to foster buy-in at the community level. Community members' knowledge of local context can also be an important contribution. Limiting decision making to municipal council can blind project decisions to potential barriers and opportunities.