



For Immediate Release

Highways, bridges and other infrastructure no longer required to be independently tested or inspected under Ontario's new construction contracting arrangements

Herb Gray Parkway just one example

October 3, 2013 – Under new contracting arrangements being entered into by the Ontario Government, some construction, repair and maintenance projects involving highways and other infrastructure are now being done without requirements for any independent testing or inspection of their quality or safety.

“This is a big mistake – a serious and potentially dangerous mistake,” says Derwyn Reuber, Executive Director of the Canadian Council of Independent Laboratories (CCIL).

The province no longer requires rigorous independent testing or inspection under some of these new procurement agreements such as design-build and performance-based contracts. There is no independent oversight of the design, materials or construction methods used.

And without independent verification, there is no assurance that the materials and construction meet standards.

“This lack of oversight will likely result in increased costs for taxpayers as relatively new infrastructure has to be replaced or repaired,” notes Reuber. “It could also endanger the public as there are now fewer checks against structural failures and unsafe construction and designs.”

A case in point is the Herb Gray Parkway in Windsor. An independent expert review committee has now released its interim report, recommending that hundreds of girders be replaced, monitored or repaired because of concerns over safety and durability.

“If there had been independent inspection and testing on behalf of the ultimate owner of this project, the potential problem would have been identified much earlier. This would have saved a significant amount of money for taxpayers and avoided long delays in completing the Parkway,” says Reuber.

The interim report on the Herb Gray Parkway makes the point: “It is indispensable to have independent inspections and competent scrutiny of the Quality Assurance program.”

CCIL urges the Ontario Government to require all public infrastructure projects to be subject to independent quality control and quality assurance testing and inspection. To ensure independence, these services should be retained by, and the findings reported directly to, government.

“Considering the scale of today’s infrastructure, and the many lives that depend on it, independent testing is a very small price to pay for ensuring standards are met and public safety is protected,” Reuber adds.

Independent quality assurance testing typically costs in the range of 0.5% to 1.0% of the cost of the project.

CCIL represents the independent, private-sector laboratories in Canada. Because CCIL members are independent, they have no vested interest in the outcome of their testing. They are able to conduct investigations and render reports objectively and without bias.

In Ontario, members operate more than 160 independent laboratory facilities. Many of these laboratories provide testing services for construction materials and inspection services in fabrication shops and on construction sites, as well as material consultation services.

CCIL member services are vitally important in helping to protect the public from structural collapses, building failures, dangerous and unsafe construction methods, and many other threats.

– 30 –

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