



The Hon. Rod Phillips  
Minister of Finance  
Chair of the Cabinet Committee on Economic Recovery  
7 Queen's Park Cres,  
Toronto, ON M7A 1Y7

April 20, 2020

Dear Minister:

The Ontario Stone, Sand & Gravel Association (OSSGA) is writing today to thank you for your support in protecting Ontarians from COVID-19 while balancing the needs of the Province's economic recovery. This is an unprecedented event and your leadership is appreciated and to be commended during these difficult days.

OSSGA is a not-for-profit industry association representing over 260 sand, gravel, and crushed stone producers and suppliers of valuable industry products and services. Collectively, our members supply the substantial majority of the approximately 164 million tonnes of aggregate consumed annually in the province to build and maintain Ontario's infrastructure needs. OSSGA works in partnership with government and the public to promote a safe and competitive aggregate industry contributing to the creation of strong communities in the province.

As I am sure you recognize, the construction industry is the foundation of our economy. Not only does it build and maintain our province's infrastructure, hospitals, affordable housing and almost all public work projects, but it fuels millions in needed economic activity and creates hundreds of high-paying jobs throughout the supply-chain. The construction sector can play an instrumental role in Ontario's economic recovery if certain actions are taken now.

### **1. Municipalities must not stop or delay infrastructure projects**

It is critical that cities, towns, counties, and municipalities have the assurance that their funding will be in place so that they feel confident to continue with both the tendering and inspection process. OSSGA has already seen delays in tendering for future projects, and delays in inspections for on-going projects, as municipalities worry about revenue shortfalls.

**Recommendation 1:** To forestall a major downturn in the construction sector, the Province of Ontario must immediately provide financial assurance to the municipalities and direct them to continue to award, inspect and build infrastructure.

The construction season in Ontario is short. It is vitally important that the municipal and provincial tendering processes continue in their normal timeframes to ensure projects that are ready to be awarded can begin construction this season. Once started, projects must not be side-lined because of a lack of inspections or permits (whether municipal or

provincial). The government must act now. With no tendering and with no inspections, there will be no construction, regardless of whether it is essential or not.

## **2. Construction sector should be reopened**

As the government continues to respond to the public health and economic impacts of this virus, we urge you to recognize that, in addition to the aggregate, concrete, asphalt and cement industries, a greater portion of the construction sector should be opened and made exempt from current or future mandatory quarantines. The construction sector, where physical distancing can be accommodated, provides an important opportunity to begin the phasing-in of getting Ontarians back to work. For example, there are many aspects of residential and ICI work, where workers are no closer than crews currently working on the 400-highway series.

We understand and wholly support the need for public health and safety. It is our top priority. There is no greater mission than protecting the thousands of hard-working men and women who work in the construction industry and provide for their families and surrounding communities. That is why we are taking great measures to protect our workforce, require physical distancing to prevent the spread of COVID-19, and keep our sites sanitary by strictly following OHS guidelines and other safety precautions.

**Recommendation 2:** That construction projects, including infrastructure and certain aspects of ICI and residential housing that can maintain physical distancing, be re-opened.

As stated above, the construction industry is the foundation of the economy. It is important that we maintain the construction sector's ability to continue to function to help ensure a robust economic recovery in the weeks ahead. To do this, first we must keep the funnel of construction projects alive by ensuring the tendering process continues. Second, we must take advantage of the physical distancing opportunities available in this sector to begin to get Ontarians back to work.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our comments and we would be happy to meet with you further to discuss.

Yours sincerely,



Norman Cheesman  
Executive Director

Copy: The Hon. Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario  
The Hon. Steve Clark, Minister of Municipal Affairs  
The Hon. Vic Fedeli, Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade  
The Hon. Laurie Scott, Minister of Infrastructure