Harmonization of Municipal Road Construction Standards

AORS Webinar

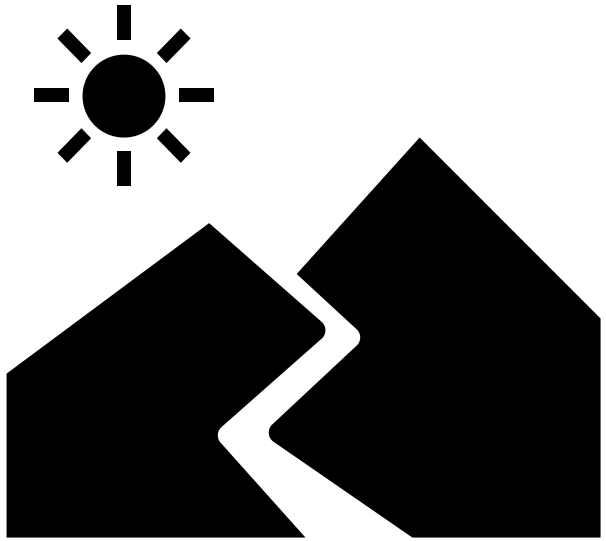
National Public Works Week

May 22, 2026

Ministry of Transportation

Ontario

Purpose of Today's Session



1. Provide an update on the status of the municipal road standards harmonization initiative.
2. Identify key components of a proposed future regulation.
3. Present proposed program governance structure to identify opportunities for participation.
4. Identify next steps and timing.

Why Harmonization?

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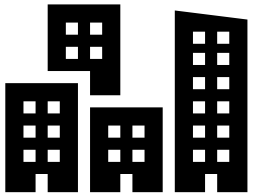
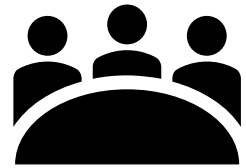


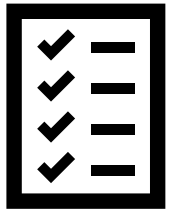
Municipalities set their own road construction standards

The Ontario Provincial Standards for Municipal Roads and Public Works (OPSS.MUNI) offer a common framework; however, municipalities use them in different ways. Stakeholders have noted these differences can create inefficiencies.

Ontario has committed to harmonizing municipal road construction standards

Through the Spring 2025 *Protect Ontario by Building Faster and Smarter Act,* the Province announced its intent to develop consistent road construction standards across Ontario and engage municipalities and industry throughout this work.





New authorities are being introduced to support harmonization

While the Minister already has authority under the *Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act* to set road construction standards, the October 2025 *Fighting Delays, Building Faster Act* adds new tools, such as reporting requirements and an exemption framework, to help implement harmonized standards effectively.

What harmonization aims to achieve

- **Improved design and technical review**
- **Streamlined procurement**
- **Construction efficiencies**

Opportunities and Challenges

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MTO consulted with stakeholders in summer and fall 2025 through a survey, meetings, and a posting on the Environmental Registry of Ontario. Stakeholder feedback received to date has informed program development & draft regulation.

Potential Opportunities	Potential Challenges
Cost savings through consistent materials, better quality, and faster approvals.	Cost savings benefitting select stakeholders **without changes to procurement processes**.
More **sustainable practices**, such as using low-carbon concrete or recycled aggregates.	**Compliance cost implications** for municipalities, especially small and rural.
Cost efficiencies through **economies of scale** and reduced design, testing, and compliance work.	**Market consolidation** among contractors as standards become uniform. Stakeholders highlighted the need to ensure smaller firms remain competitive.
Faster project delivery thanks to streamlined procurement and contract processes.	
Longer-lasting, higher-quality roads through consistent material specifications.	The degree to which municipalities currently use OPSS.MUNI, and their degrees of customization, are not well understood.
Safer worksites supported by consistent safety practices across projects.	

Industry and municipal stakeholders generally support harmonizing road construction standards, with a phased adoption of OPSS.MUNI by all municipalities and a formal governance structure with MTO, municipal, and industry representation.

Proposed Regulation Overview

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The Minister of Transportation has authority under the *Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act* to establish regulations mandating municipal road construction standards.

MTO is advancing a regulation that:

1. Makes **OPSS.MUNI standards mandatory in priority areas** (hot mix asphalt, aggregates, drainage) and require the use of OPSS.MUNI 100 General Conditions of Contract. A **transition period** is proposed where **technical standards are mandated for use starting July 1, 2027**.
2. Defines a **project-based exemption process** where municipalities may submit to the Minister a request for an exemption from the application of a standard or standards.
3. Requires **municipalities to submit an annual report** with respect to the application of mandatory standards and authorizes the Minister to publish information from those reports.

The **remaining OPSS.MUNI standards will be harmonized in future phases**, supported by a new governance framework enabling regular updates and ongoing municipal and industry input.

Proposed regulation was **open for public comment on the Regulatory Registry (RR) until March 30, 2026.** Feedback will help refine implementation planning and timing, future phases of standards, and development of a governance structure.

MTO is committed to ongoing engagement and will continue to consult with partners after the posting on the RR has closed.

Proposed Regulation – First Phase Priority Standards

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Details	Priority Standards
• Makes **OPSS.MUNI standards mandatory in priority areas** (hot mix asphalt, aggregates, drainage). • Requires that the **OPSS.MUNI 100 General Conditions of Contract be used by all municipalities** to standardize contractual terms pertaining to municipal road construction. • A transition period is proposed where **standards are mandated for use July 1, 2027**.	Hot Mix Asphalt Aggregates Drainage General Condition of Contract

Details	Future Phased Standards	
• MTO intends to harmonize all remaining OPSS.MUNI through future phases. • MTO is actively seeking input on prioritization of standards for next phases. • Governance will review and finalize future category direction.	Grading Pavements Electrical Traffic safety Environmental Structural Steel Reinforcement	Seals & Bearings Wood & Plastics Coatings Signs & Supports Chemicals Concrete

Proposed Regulation – Elements

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Transition Period	Exemptions	Reporting
In response to stakeholder feedback, the proposed regulation includes a transition provision whereby municipalities will be required to use the **mandated standards only for projects where procurement processes begin on or after July 1, 2027**.	To accommodate exceptional circumstances, the proposed regulation would establish a process by which **a municipality may request an exemption from the application of a standard** based on criteria such as cost impacts, safety considerations, lifecycle performance, innovation potential, and supply constraints. Municipalities would be required to provide information and supporting documentation to inform evaluation of the request, such as the project to which the exemption would apply and the alternative standard being proposed.	Municipalities must submit an **annual report** describing compliance with mandatory standards. The Minister may **publish information drawn from these reports** to support transparency and track province-wide progress.

Governance – Your Participation Matters

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MTO will serve as the lead organization for the oversight, review, and modernization of municipal road construction standards. Under a strengthened governance framework, MTO will establish partnerships with municipalities and industry stakeholders to collaboratively guide the development, evaluation, and updating of municipal road construction standards.

A successful and effective governance model to harmonize municipal road construction standards would:	
Provide Guidance	Develop clear standards, define stakeholder roles, and promote meaningful and balanced collaboration across MTO, municipal, and industry partners.
Oversee Implementation	Apply decision-making frameworks, share knowledge through training and communication, support efficient and flexible use of standards, and help manage impacts across diverse municipalities and industry groups.
Ensure Accountability	Maintain transparent reporting and audits, regular stakeholder communication, and performance monitoring to support improvement, risk management, and operational efficiency.
Support Cost Efficiency and Shared Financial Benefits	Promote predictability, reduce duplication of effort, and enable province-wide consistency to help municipalities achieve cost savings through streamlined procurement and more efficient project delivery.

Governance is not part of the regulation and is still being developed. We will work with partners to shape a model that supports shared participation while ensuring MTO continues to guide key strategic and operational decision-making.

- **Where do you envision your involvement in the proposed governance framework?**
- **How can we leverage your expertise and experience to help ensure successful implementation?**

Conceptual Governance Structure

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MTO Municipal Standards Harmonization Office (MSHO)

Holistic governance of program oversight, administration, and committee operations.

Municipal Standards Governance Board (Board)

Frequency: Up to three meetings per year.

- Provides strategic direction ensuring harmonization program aligns with provincial goals and stakeholder needs.
- Approves major policy decisions and endorses harmonized standards.

Municipal Standards Program Management Committee (PMC)

Frequency: Meetings four-to-six times per year.

- Manages the coordination, prioritization, and resourcing of standards development.
- Reviews and advances recommendations from advisory committees.

Program Advisory Committees (PACs)

Frequency: Meetings six times per year.

- Develop and update technical content for specifications, standards, and related documents.
- Provide subject-matter expertise and identify issues, improvements, and emerging needs.

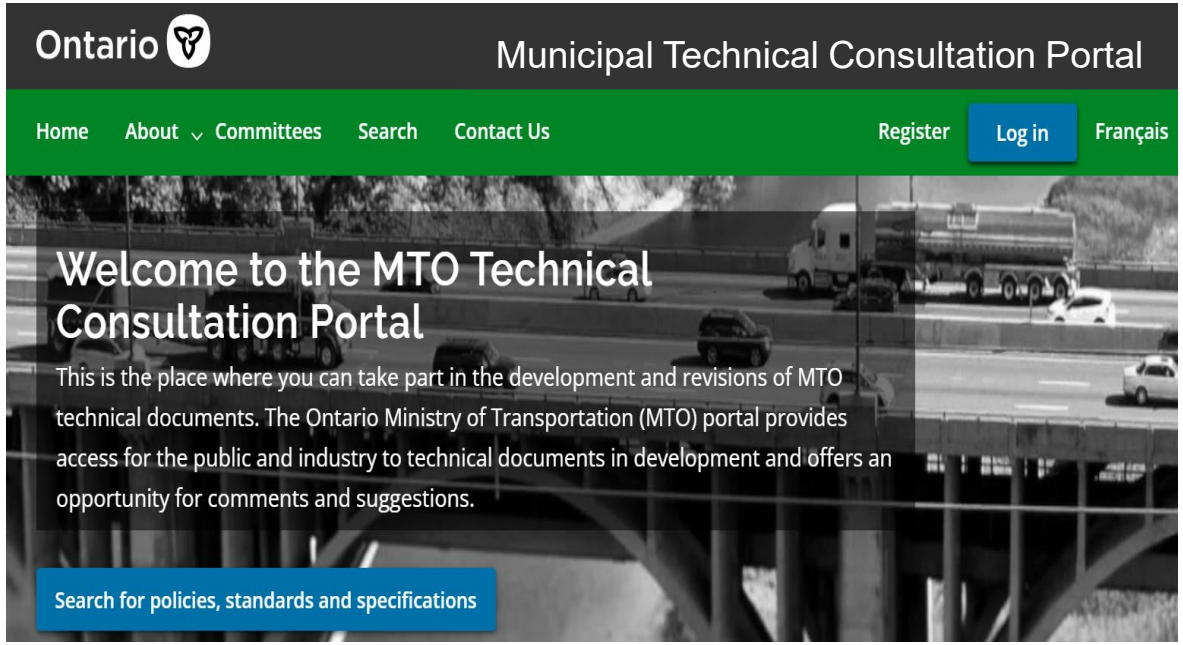
Technical Standards Committee

Compliance & Reporting Committee

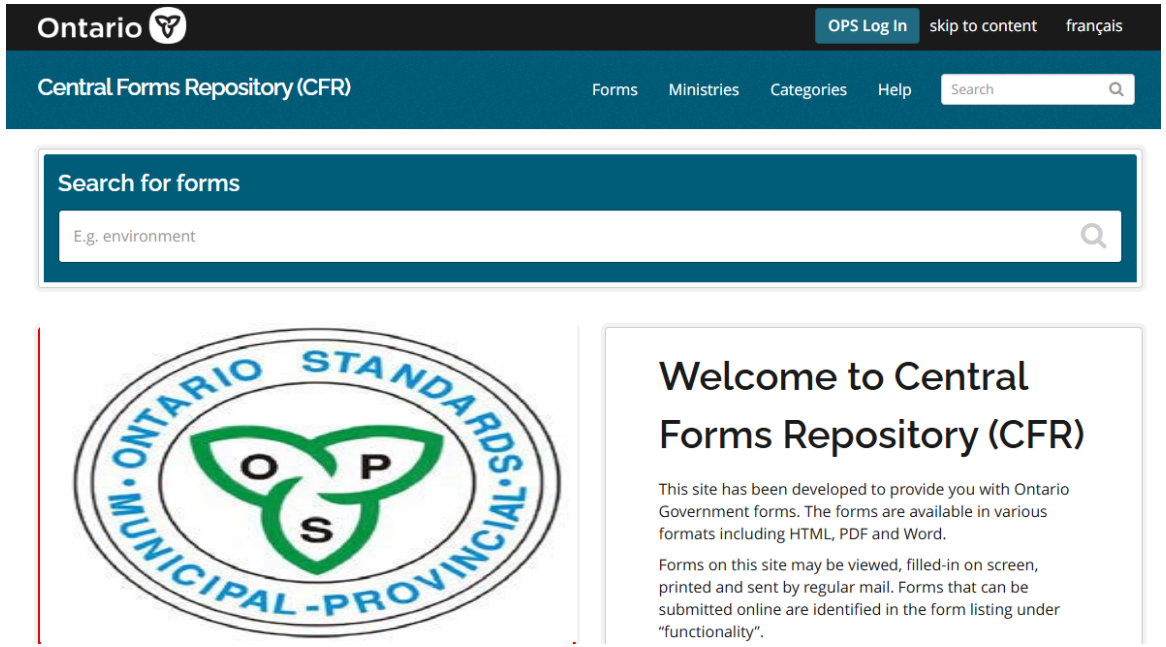
Communications & Education Committee

Specialty Committees
Frequency: Meeting monthly

Future State – IT Solutions



- MTO is pursuing a dedicated, single platform where stakeholders can review proposed changes to OPSS.MUNI standards and submit comments.
- New domain would be for MUNI only and would emulate the look and feel of the current Technical Consultation Portal (TCP).
- Municipalities will be able to access general program information, reference communication products, and access individual forms for exemption requests and annual reporting.



- MTO is developing processes and templates with the intention of minimizing administrative burden for both municipalities and the ministry.
- Web-based HTML forms for exemptions and reporting are being developed and will be hosted on the Ontario Central Forms Repository.

Next Steps

- Comments received via the Regulatory Registry are being assessed and will help inform the final regulation.
- Ongoing engagement with stakeholders as governance framework is refined and established.
- MTO is working on IT solutions to support harmonization, including a municipal TCP and forms for the exemptions and reporting processes.

Contact Information

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Thank You!

We appreciate your continued collaboration as we work together to harmonize municipal road standards across Ontario. The Ministry looks forward to ongoing engagement with our partners throughout implementation.