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Toronto Votes for Open Competition and Full Range of Large Diameter PVC Pipe for its Water Transmission Mains

Toronto, February 13, 2012 - Toronto council voted decisively last week to open up its material specifications to include alternative materials like PVC pipe for large diameter transmission watermains. Allowing a broader range of piping materials in its water system will enable Toronto to realize significant cost savings. A staff report noted that this approach “promotes competition and realizes potential capital cost and construction time savings while ensuring system performance needs are met.”

Since the 1950s only cement mortar lined steel pipe encased in concrete was used in Toronto for water infrastructure requiring pipe 24 inches in diameter or larger. The decision will allow PVC pipe in sizes ranging from 20 to 48 inches to be included in bids for water projects. Since pipelines typically represent up to 60 percent of the capital investment for water and wastewater infrastructure projects, the new measure will enable Toronto to achieve significant cost savings. “Spending taxpayer dollars in an open and competitive manner and allowing all pipe technologies to be considered in bids drives innovation and results in more efficient, cost-effective and sustainable water systems,” said Bruce Hollands, Executive Director of the PVC Pipe Association.

Toronto's move could not come at a better time. Like other cash-strapped municipalities in North America grappling with crumbling infrastructure, the city needs to find better ways to stretch every dollar. The impetus for change came from a report by Cole Engineering Group Ltd., which concluded “that future construction tenders allow multiple pipe materials which meet performance specifications, such as ... polyvinyl chloride (PVC) pipe.” Says Hollands, “This is a benchmark and best practice that should be studied and replicated by all cities in Canada and the United States.”

Toronto's Chair of Public Works and Infrastructure, Councillor Denzil Minnan-Wong was equally effusive: "The City of Toronto's decision to approve the use of alternative pipe materials for large diameter transmission water mains, including PVC, will ensure that we always have the best pipe for the appropriate location and at the best possible price. Future construction tenders will now consider multiple pipe materials promoting competition and savings for taxpayers. That is not only good public policy, but good business practice."
PVC pipe is one of the safest and most tested materials used in North America. For over 60 years, every aspect of its production, use and disposal has been evaluated and approved by government and independent certification and testing agencies. It meets or exceeds all required health and safety standards and regulations governed by the U.S. and Canadian Safe Drinking Water Acts and other international statutes. Over 40,000 North American water utilities use PVC pipe today, and more than one million miles are in service.

Completely recyclable, PVC pipe has been shown to have one of the lowest carbon footprints of all piping materials. But its greatest environmental attribute is perhaps its exceptional durability and corrosion resistance – leading to better water conservation and lower replacement, maintenance and repair costs. A study by the American Water Works Association Research Foundation recently confirmed the life expectancy of PVC pipe at more than 110 years, while a European report projected its longevity at more than 170 years.

"The City of Toronto has wisely followed the lead of other large Canadian municipalities in allowing for open and fair competition when purchasing large diameter transmission water mains. PVC will now be considered along with other pipe materials ensuring that Toronto taxpayers get the best possible product at the best possible price," commented Veso Sobot, spokesperson for IPEX Management Inc., a major producer of vinyl pipe in the Toronto area.

Jayson Myers, President and CEO of Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters discussed the need for all municipalities on the continent to follow Toronto’s example: “Open bidding processes benefit industry, the City, and taxpayers. Toronto is now showing other municipalities how procurement should be done. This approach should be reciprocated by all cities in North America.”

As the health and financial costs of corrosion-induced water main breaks continue to take their toll on our communities, it’s nice to know that an affordable, made-in-North America solution exists, which supports local jobs, a healthier economy and a better quality of life.

*The PVC Pipe Association [www.uni-bell.org](http://www.uni-bell.org) is a non-profit organization that serves the engineering, regulatory, public health and standardization communities for North America’s PVC pipe industry.*

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