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All articles by Ian Cunninham, COCA President

Status of Fall Economic Statement Bill

The legislation that puts the government's Fall Economic Statement (FES) into action is known as Bill 57 Restoring Trust, Transparency and Accountability Act, 2018. If passed, Bill 57 will amend numerous statutes including minor amendments to the new Construction Act and increasing the minimum number of seats in the Legislature that a party must hold in order to qualify for official Party status from 8 to 12 (the Liberals currently hold 7). (The FES also called for a review of the WSIB to ensure it remains sustainable and is managed efficiently.)

- It was introduced in the Legislature on November 15th
- It passed second reading and was referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs on November 28th
- The Committee will convene for public hearings on Monday, December 3, 2018 from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.
- The deadline for filing written submissions with the Committee clerk will be 6:00 p.m. on Monday, December 3, 2018
- The Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs will meet on Tuesday, December 4, 2018 from 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. and Wednesday, December 5, 2018 from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. to 11:59 p.m. for clause-by-clause consideration of the Bill
- The Bill could be reported back to the Legislature as early as Thursday, December 6
- Third reading debate will be limited to one hour after which the Bill will pass quickly and receive Royal Assent
- The Legislature adjourns for its winter break on December 13th and will reconvene on February 19, 2019 (The winter break is a great time to meet with your MPPs and get them to address an association lunch or dinner event for an update on what's happening at Queen's Park. Build the relationships and make them work for your association.)

Ontario's Skilled Trades and Apprenticeship System; An Update on OCoT

The Ontario College of Trades (OCoT) continues to exist and the Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act (OCTAA), as recently amended by Bill 47, continues to be the law. However, once a new skilled trades and apprenticeship system has been developed and is ready to be implemented, OCTAA will be repealed and replaced with new legislation and OCoT will cease to exist. Developing this replacement system for OCoT could take up to 18 months but changes, possible further amendments to OCTAA, could be made along the way.

An important initiative for COCA will be the development of a vision for Ontario's new skilled trades and apprenticeship system to succeed OCoT. Once we have this completed, we will provide the government our best advice on the shape of this new system. The COCA College of Trades Committee's report, which is contained in the meeting information package for the upcoming Board of Directors meeting scheduled for December 4th at Woodbine, contains some thoughts, ideas and principles gleaned from conversations with COCA members and with others. They are intended to serve as thought starters for a facilitated discussion at the Board meeting. These discussions will be the beginning of an ongoing conversation about the replacement system.

One of the amendments to the OCTAA made by Bill 47 is the change in the journey person to apprentice ratios for trades that have ratios to one to one. So one-to-one is now the law and the regional offices of the Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities are ready to accept new apprentice applications.

Former COCA Chair Wins 2018 Premier's Award

It will come as no surprise to anyone affiliated with COCA or anyone that knows him, that former Chair, Don Gosen, was awarded a 2018 Ontario Premier's Award in the category of apprenticeship.

Don was recognized for his outstanding achievements related to Conestoga College, apprenticeship and for his significant contributions to his community. As the biggest champion of Conestoga College's apprenticeship program, Don has sponsored more than 70 apprentices throughout his four decades in business before passing ownership of Gosen Electric Limited to three of his former trainees.

Presented annually, the Premier's Awards recognize graduates in the following seven categories: apprenticeship, business, community services, creative arts and design, health sciences, recent graduate, and technology and honours the important social and economic contributions that college graduates make to Ontario and throughout the world. Don was among 12 other nominees in his category and among the 118 nominees from across industries and Ontario.

The Province partners with Colleges Ontario to administer the awards and recipients are chosen from nominations submitted by Ontario's 24 public colleges. Don was nominated by his alma mater, Conestoga College, where he is an electrical apprenticeship instructor.

Congratulations to Don on this very significant recognition.

Increasing Suicides in the Construction Industry

Our psychologist friend Paul Radkowski of the Life Recovery Program forwarded an article describing an update to a US study on workplace suicide. The study shows an alarming increase in suicide in the construction industry. It recommends a number of strategies to address the issue, namely:

- Employee assistance programs,
- Workplace wellness programs,
- Technology to provide online mental health screenings and tools,
- Reduction of stigma toward mental illness and seeking help,
- Increased awareness of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK.

To access the full article click on the following link: <https://goo.gl/XQpudi>

MPP Quits Tories to Sit As Independent

Amanda Simard was elected as the MPP for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell on June 7th under the PC banner. Her riding, which has a large francophone population and significant majority of people who speak both French and English, was created in 1999 and has been in Liberal hands up until the time of her election. Following the election, Simard, the sole francophone in the new government, was appointed Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs, Caroline Mulroney (which now has the full status of a ministry).

In a letter to the Speaker dated November 29, 2018, Simard announced that she is leaving the PC caucus to sit as an independent.

Simard, a strong francophone rights advocate, spoke out against her own party's cancellation of a French language university which had been promised by Premier Ford during the election campaign and the cancellation of the Office of the French Language Commissioner.

Simard, a conscientious up and comer, served as a page in the Senate of Canada, is a graduate of the University of Ottawa Law School (2010), was a political staffer on Parliament Hill for several years and prior to her election to the Ontario Legislature was a Councillor in Russell Township in eastern Ontario .