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Another Successful Construction Day

COCA held its annual construction industry lobby day, Construction Day at Queen's Park, on Monday, September 25th. Forty volunteers from 19 COCA member associations were assembled into teams of four and each team had four meetings with cabinet ministers, PAs, back bench government MPPs and MPPs from the opposition parties. The purpose of Construction Day was to push for the speedy passage of Bill 142 Construction Lien Amendment Act 2017, now in the second reading debate stage of the legislative process, before the end of the fall 2017 session. While we have learned to always expect the unexpected when it comes to Queen's Park, we left the Pink Palace with a modest degree of confidence that our objective will be met. Many thanks to all who participated.

Bill 142 Update

Bill 142 passed through the 6 ½ hour second reading debate threshold on September 28th. The government agreed to allow further debate. It's anticipated that the Bill will be subject to further second reading debate on October 3rd and 4th. It could get second reading vote following debate on Wednesday and be referred to the Committee on Justice Policy.

WAH Deadline

You will recall the deadline for the Working at Heights training was pushed back to October 1, 2017. ALL workers who work at heights must have completed an approved WAH training program delivered by an approved trainer after September 30th.

CMS in Force Date To Be Rolled Back

Minister of Labour Kevin Flynn was the keynoter at a luncheon hosted by COCA at the RCMI on September 26th. In response to a question about the impact of coverage for workplace chronic mental stress on employer premium rates, Minister Flynn reported that the in force date, which is currently legislated for January 1, 2018, may have to be rolled back to 2014 due to a Charter challenge. We anticipate that legislation to amend the WSIA will be introduced in the fall 2017 session. Once the amendment is made, the retroactive claims costs dating back to 2014 will have to be loaded in to future years' premium rates.

Construction Rates Reduced for 2018

WSIB Chair Elizabeth Witmer announced the 2018 premium rates at the provincial compensation agency's AGM on September 20th. All construction Rate Groups will experience reductions next year. 2018 premium rates for construction Rate Groups are as follows:

CONSTRUCTION				
704	Electrical and Incidental Construction Services	3.15	3.40	-7.4%
707	Mechanical and Sheet Metal Work	3.75	4.05	-7.4%
711	Roadbuilding and Excavating	4.50	4.87	-7.6%
719	Inside Finishing	6.15	6.65	-7.5%
723	Industrial, Commercial and Institutional Construction	4.07	4.40	-7.5%
728	Roofing	12.59	13.62	-7.6%
732	Heavy Civil Construction	5.98	6.47	-7.6%
737	Millwrighting and Welding	5.88	6.36	-7.5%
741	Masonry	11.29	12.21	-7.5%
748	Form Work and Demolition	14.56	15.75	-7.6%
751	Siding and Outside Finishing	8.15	8.82	-7.6%
755	Non-Exempt Partners and Executive Officers in Construction	0.19	0.20	-5.0%
764	Homebuilding	7.24	7.83	-7.5%

Minimum Wage Going Up

The general minimum wage in the Province of Ontario will increase from the current level of \$11.40 per hour to \$11.60 per hour on October 1, 2017. If Bill 148 is passed, the general minimum wage will increase to \$14/hour on January 1, 2018 and again to \$15/hour on January 1, 2019. Thereafter, the general minimum wage will be subject to annual inflationary increases beginning in October 2019.

Recent Poll Results

An online public opinion poll of 1133 Ontario voters conducted by Campaign Research revealed the following:

- If an election was held at the time of the poll 38% of respondents would vote for the Tories, 33% would support the Liberals, 23% would support the NDP and 6% would support the Greens
- Andrea Horwath was rated the most popular leader with a +18 approval rating; Patrick Brown was next with +6 rating; Kathleen Wynne came in at -48
- 22% thought Patrick Brown would make the best premier, 20% for Horwath and 14% for Wynne; 19% selected none of the above.

Not Running on June 7, 2018

Cheri DiNovo, the MPP for Parkdale-High Park, recently announced that she will not be seeking re-election in the 2018 Ontario general election. An ordained United Church Minister, DiNovo will assume the position of minister at Trinity-St. Paul's Centre for Faith, Arts and Justice in downtown Toronto on Jan. 1, 2018. Her seat will remain vacant until the time of the general election.

DiNovo, a member of the NDP caucus in the Ontario Legislature, joins Liberals Brad Duguid, Dave Levac, Monte Kwinter and Mario Sergio and PC Julia Munro on the list of MPPs not seeking re-election.

Driving Laws to be Toughened Fines to be Increased

Transportation Minister Steven Del Duca announced recently that he will introduce legislation that will toughen laws around drug-impaired driving and distracted driving. It may also include increased penalties for drivers who fail to yield to pedestrians. It's thought that the prospect of the legalization of recreational cannabis and the increased incidence of texting and driving has precipitated this initiative.

Hwy 11/17 To Be Widened

The Government of Canada announced recently that it's investing \$83M in the expansion of Highway 11/17 which serves as a strategic link in the Trans-Canada Highway system connecting Northern and Southern Ontario and a the primary link to Western Canada. These improvements in northern Ontario will improve the flow of goods across the country, will contribute to development in the region and make the route safer and free of delays and stoppages. Approximately 26 kilometres will be widened from two lanes to four lanes from Coughlin Road westerly to Highway 582, from Coughlin Road easterly to Red Rock Road 9, and from Highway 587 to Pearl Creek. The three projects are jointly funded by the Governments of Canada and Ontario.

California, Quebec and Ontario Harmonize Carbon Markets

On September 22nd the leaders of California, Quebec and Ontario signed an agreement that integrates and harmonizes the carbon markets of their jurisdictions. The agreement, which is effective on January 1, 2018, creates the second largest carbon market in the world after the EU. It will harmonize regulations and reporting and also the planning and holding joint auctions of GHG emission allowances.

Fuel Cells May Power GO

As the Province of Ontario considers the electrification of the GO rail network, it has issued an RFP for concept design work to show how a hydrogen fuel cell system could be integrated into a Bi-level Electric Multiple Unit (EMU) train. It's expected that a number of rail vehicle manufacturers will respond to the RFP and will be commissioned to prepare designs and demonstrate the impact that incorporating hydrogen fuel cells into bi-level trains would have on the performance of the GO rail network.

An EMU train is an electric-powered train consisting of multiple self-propelled carriages linked together. An EMU does not require a separate locomotive, as electric motors are incorporated in each carriage. Examples of EMUs currently in service include the Heathrow Flyer in the UK, the AGV in France and the TTC's Toronto Rocket subway trains.