

## GOVERNMENT RELATIONS REPORT

August 2019

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## SKILLED TRADES AND APPRENTICESHIP SYSTEM UPDATE

With the appointment of a new minister (Ross Romano, MPP, Sault Ste Marie) in June and a new deputy minister (Laurie LeBlanc, an experienced senior bureaucrat) in August, progress on the development of the new skilled trades and apprenticeship system has been slower than anticipated.

However, we fully expect the government to move forward with the disaggregation of all trades as we currently know them into portable skill sets.

We expect the government will announce the appointment of Skills Advisors in the coming months to consult with stakeholders on the shape of portable skill sets for each trade and on restricted

skill sets. The planned fall 2019 wind down of the Ontario College of Trades could be delayed in order to avoid customer service problems.

The government is currently considering rationalizing enforcement of the workplace across all ministries and it is possible that the responsibility for enforcement of the skilled trades could be delegated to one or more ministries or agencies outside the Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities.

Various legislative changes could be required to make this possible. We anticipate that going forward, enforcement will focus on risk of harm as opposed to scopes of practice.

## HIGHLY REGARDED INDUSTRY PHOTOGRAPHER PASSES AWAY

We recently learned that Ron de Vries passed away suddenly on August 12th as a result of a heart attack which he suffered while kayaking. He was 65.

While I don't think I ever met Ron, I knew him from his exquisite photographs of construction projects which I would often come across in industry trade magazines. So, I knew Ron as a construction photographer. But when I went to his website, I discovered that he was so much more. He had also photographed political leaders, captains of industry, important dignitaries and celebrities and created beautiful architectural images, wildlife and fine art photography. He was an extremely talented photographer who had a significant impact on our industry.

Ron is the brother of our friend, John DeVries, President & CEO of the Ottawa Construction Association and we extend our sincere condolences to the DeVries family.

## NEWS FROM INFRASTRUCTURE ONTARIO

Infrastructure Ontario and Metrolinx recently announced that Mobilinx was selected as the preferred proponent to design, build, finance, operate and maintain the Hurontario Light Rail Transit project.

Members of the Mobilinx team include:

- Applicant Lead: John Laing, Astaldi, Hitachi, Transdev, Amico Concessions, Salini Impregilo
- Construction: Astaldi, Hitachi, Amico, Bot, Salini Impregilo
- Design: IBI Group, Hitachi, Morrison Hershfield, Arcadis, Daoust Lestage, Exp.
- Operation Maintenance & Rehabilitation Provider: Transdev, Hitachi, Astaldi, Salini Impregilo
- Financial Advisor: National Bank, HSBC

The Hurontario LRT project includes:

- 18 kilometres of new dedicated rapid transit between Port Credit GO Station in Mississauga to the Gateway Terminal at Steeles Avenue in Brampton
- 19 stops with connections to GO Transit's Milton and Lakeshore West rail lines,
- A maintenance and storage facility for the light rail vehicles located south of Highway 407 and west of Kennedy Road

Infrastructure Ontario and the Ministry of Transportation also announced the three shortlisted teams that are invited to respond to a request for proposals to design, build and finance the QEW/ Credit River Improvement project.

The shortlisted teams are:

### **Keystone Transportation Partners**

- Applicant Lead - Peter Kiewit Sons ULC & Dufferin Construction Company
- Construction Team - Peter Kiewit Sons ULC & Dufferin Construction Company
- Financial Advisor - Peter Kiewit Sons ULC

### **Credit River Developers**

- Applicant Lead - Ferrovial Agromán S.A
- Construction Team - Ferrovial Agromán S.A.
- Financial Advisor - Scotia Capital Inc.

### **EDCO**

- Applicant Lead - EllisDon Capital Inc. and Coco Paving Inc.
- Construction Team - EllisDon Capital Inc. and Coco Paving Inc.
- Financial Advisor - EllisDon Capital Inc.

## PREMIER FORD'S INFLUENCE IN THE FEDERAL ELECTION

Canada's next federal election will take place on or before October 21, 2019. Ontario will have 121 seats in play in the campaign out of a total of 338 seats in the House of Commons. Our province is a critically important battleground in the upcoming national contest. About a third of Ontario's seats are in the "905" ring around Toronto. In the June 2018 Ontario provincial election, those 905 area seats largely supported Doug Ford's successful bid for the premiership of the province.

But Ford's first year in power has turned out to be a debacle with disastrous communications and mismanaged program roll-outs often followed by retrenchments and walk-backs. The Ford government's popularity crashed in public opinion polls as Ontarians became displeased with proposed cutbacks to education, childcare and other programs and services they valued.

The Ford government's major failing is its inability to sell its overarching message, that Ontario is carrying an enormous debt load, the highest of any sub-national jurisdiction in the world, and if this debt is allowed to grow unchecked, the province will be financially crippled and unable to deliver the programs and services that Ontarians value, in the future. Simply put, we are living beyond our means.

The Ford government has been unable to convince Ontarians that controlling spending is in our long-term best interests. Perhaps Ontarians are tired of this message, they've heard it before and don't believe it. Or maybe they peer across the border and see the United States prospering with a total

national debt around \$US 20 trillion and a debt to GDP ratio in excess of 100% and just don't think it really matters. Whatever the reason, the Ford government hasn't been able to make this theme resonate with Ontarians.

Meanwhile, the Liberals are doing an effective job of painting federal Conservative leader, Andrew Scheer, as a Ford clone who, if elected, will savagely cut, slash and burn valued federal government programs and services. No accident, Premier Ford decided to adjourn our provincial legislature until after the federal election and lay low in order to minimize the opportunity for missteps that would cause further damage to the electoral chances of his federal cousins.

He did, however, make the news recently, trying to make amends with municipal leaders at their Association of Municipalities of Ontario conference in Ottawa. Ford announced that the cuts to municipal transfers that had already been made retroactively, would be delayed until next year.

The Ford government hit the reset button in June. The premier's single-minded and autocratic chief of staff was fired and the cabinet was shuffled, putting more experienced or better skilled people in critical portfolios. Government MPPs have been sent out all across the province to make announcements and re-announcements in order to better connect with voters. Things have been very quiet over the summer season so the reset appears to be having an effect, at least no more serious trouble.

But this hasn't translated into an improved showing by Andrew Scheer in the national polls. The recent polls show the Tories and the Libs running neck and neck and many pundits are predicting a Liberal minority. If that's the outcome, rightly or wrongly, it could all be put on Ford.

## LIBERAL LEADERSHIP CONTEST – DATES AND NUMBERS

The Liberal Party of Ontario was decimated in the June 2018 election, reduced to only 6 seats and without official party status in the 124 seat provincial legislature. But today, even under the guidance of a temporary leader, they are down but not be out.

Their popularity in the polls is improving (perhaps more to the credit of the declining approval of the governing PCs who have bungled almost every initiative they've rolled-out) and a Liberal comeback is within the realm of the possible.

The likelihood of this happening will depend upon to some degree on the new leader the party will select in a delegated convention on March 7, 2020 in Mississauga. Here's a brief summary of the Liberal leadership contest:

### Candidates:

- According to the Elections Ontario website, the only candidates who have made filings with Elections Ontario are former cabinet ministers Steven Del Duca, Michael Coteau and Mitzie Hunter.
- Defeated Liberal candidate in the Oakville-North Burlington in the June 2018 Ontario general election and former political staffer Alvin Tedjo

is actively campaigning and is expected to enter the race.

- Candidates must file their nomination documents not later than 5:00pm on November 25, 2019.

### Financial Requirements:

- All candidates must pay a registration fee of \$75,000 in three installments: 1) \$35,000 either when the candidate files nomination papers or not later than 5:00pm on August 26, 2019; 2) \$25,000 not later than November 25, 2019; and 3) \$15,000 not later than 5:00pm on January 15, 2020.
- Candidates must also remit a conditionally refundable deposit in the amount of \$25,000 with the filing of their nomination papers or not later than August 26, 2019. This deposit will be returned, net of any penalties imposed on the candidate by the Leadership Compliance Committee.
- Candidates must also remit to the Ontario Liberal Party 25% of all contributions they receive.
- Leadership candidates are not permitted to spend more than \$900,000. The registration fee and deposits paid to the Ontario Liberal Party do

not count towards this \$900,000 spending limit.

### Electing the New Leader

- Anyone who wants to participate in the process to elect the Party's new leader must become a member of the Ontario Liberal Party not later than 6:00pm on December 2, 2019.
- Leadership Election Meetings will be held on February 8th and 9th, 2020 in all 124 ridings to elect delegates to represent their ridings at the leadership convention in March 2020
- Candidates for positions as Delegates must file a notice of intention to stand and a declaration of support indicating which candidate for leadership they support or that they are independent.
- Delegates elected at LEMs will be eligible to attend the 2020 Leadership Convention on behalf of their riding association.
- Delegates elected at the leadership election meetings in each of the 124 ridings and who pay a registration fee can attend the Leadership Convention to be held at the International Centre in Mississauga and vote for the new leader on March 6 & 7, 2020

## ICYMI – GOVERNMENT BACKTRACKS ON SEX ED

Doug Ford was elected leader of the Ontario PCs with the support of the social conservative wing of the Party. That support put Ford over the top, narrowly besting Christine Elliott in a hard-fought leadership battle.

The major change that the so-cons demanded of Ford was a change to the sex education component of the physical and health education curriculum.

They want a curriculum that ignores how society has evolved over the last 30 years and to revert back to a curriculum that was introduced in the 90s. They objected to such issues as gender identity, masturbation and anal intercourse being addressed in the curriculum.

Once elected Premier, Ford promised to consult widely before making changes, which he did. Our government recently introduced its new sex-ed curriculum.

It remarkably resembles the one that was launched by the former government in 2015 with some minor tweaks and changes to the grades in which certain topics are addressed, some in earlier grades and others later. It is also modernized to include mental health, concussions, vaping, consent, cannabis and online safety. Also, parents will have the option to have their children opted out of certain topics. Needless to say, the so-cons feel betrayed.