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March 2024

CONTINUING HIGH CONSTRUCTION DEMAND – BUILDFORCE REPORT

Here are the highlights for Ontario from BuildForce Canada's report 2024-2033 Construction and Maintenance Looking Forward that was published on March 26, 2024.

- The outlook calls for strong growth in both the residential and non-residential sectors to the end of the forecast period; by 2033 employment in the residential construction sector is forecast to grow by 6% above 2023 levels; employment in the non-residential sector is expected to grow by just over 10%
- Overall industry hiring requirements over the forecast period are forecast at 141,200
- More than 89,000 workers (19% of the current work force) will retire over the forecast period
- The industry will attract approximately 105,700 new entrants under the age of 30 from within Ontario
- This leaves a shortfall of 35,300 workers to be filled from various sources including the Indigenous population, other underrepresented groups, women and newcomers
- Meeting peak demand will be challenged by limited interregional mobility due to high levels of demand across all regions

For the full story, click on the following link: <https://www.buildforce.ca/en/press-releases/canadas-construction-sector-poised-grow-through-2033>

TORIES OPPOSE EXACT SAME BILL THEY PROPOSED WHEN IN OPPOSITION

On March 27, 2017, then opposition PC MPP Sylvia Jones introduced a Private Members Bill, An Act to Amend the Government Advertising Act, 2004. The Bill unwound objectionable changes to the rules that apply when the Auditor General reviews government advertising, that had been made by the then Liberal Government in its 2015 budget Bill. Jones' Bill was defeated on Second Reading three days later.

On March 20, 2024, NDP leader Marit Stiles and NDP MPP John Vanthof introduced their private members Bill, Bill 112, End the Public Funding of Partisan Government Advertising Act 2024. Except for its title, this is the exact same Bill as the one introduced by the current Deputy Premier and Minister of Health, Sylvia Jones.

Obviously intended to embarrass Jones and the government, Bill 112 is a reaction to the Ford administration's \$8 million multi-million advertising campaign themed "It's happening here". The ads have aired in expensive time slots during the Super Bowl, the Oscars, the Emmys and the NHL All Star game and tout the governments successes and accomplishments.

Stiles, Vanthof and critics of the current regime assert that taxpayers' dollars should not be spent on partisan political advertising.

COULD TWO PROVINCIAL BY-ELECTIONS BE SCHEDULED ON SAME DATE?

Readers of this space will know that there are two vacancies in the Ontario legislature and by-election dates for both are yet to be set.

The by-election in Lambton-Kent-Middlesex caused by the resignation of Monte McNaughton last fall, must be called by the end of March. The candidates are as follows:

- PC candidate - Steve Pinsonneault, longtime Chatham Kent Councillor, a volunteer fire fighter and owner of Steve's Sign Shop
- Liberal candidate - Cathy Burghardt-Jesson, Mayor of Lucan-Biddulph, former Warden and current Deputy Warden of Middlesex County and former business owner
- NDP candidate - Kathryn Shailer, a community activist in Alvinston and a former post secondary dean and administrator
- New Blue Party candidate - Dr. Keith Benn, a former professor of geology at the University of Ottawa currently working as a mining consultant and former New Blue candidate in Sarnia in 2018

The by-election in Milton was caused by the resignation of PC MPP Parm Gill earlier this year. Candidates nominated so far in that yet-to-be-called by-election are as follows:

- PC candidate – Zee Hamid, former Milton Councillor who came a close second in the last mayoral election
- Liberal candidate – Galen Naidoo-Harris, son of former Liberal MPP Indira Naidoo-Harris and Manager of Community Affairs for MP Adam van Koeverden

The big news here is that provincial Liberal leader, Bonnie Crombie, has chosen not to be the Party's standard bearer in this contest, something she was reported to have been seriously considering.

Some Queen's Park observers are speculating that both by-elections could be called for the same date. This might give the Tories, thought to be more advanced in their organizing and funding, an advantage in Milton. A Tory victory in Lambton-Kent-Middlesex is all but a certainty.

ONTARIO FAILING SHORT ON AFFORDABLE HOUSING TARGET

- In a 10 year agreement with the federal government signed in 2018, Ontario committed to increasing available affordable housing by 19,660 units by the end of 2024-25
- If it meets the target, Ontario could become eligible for \$327 million federal funding
- Ontario has informed the federal government that it will only have 1,184 new units by then
- Ontario's focus has been on repairing existing units and has not been able to increase supply because of high interest rates, the high cost of construction materials and labour and supply chain issues
- Ontario has been asked to provide the federal government with a plan outlining how it expects to meet its target