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Omnibus Bill Designed to Accelerate Construction

Bill 98, Building Homes and Improving Transportation Infrastructure Act, 2026, introduced by Ontario's Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Rob Flack, on March 30th is an omnibus Bill which, if passed, will amend eight statutes and enacts another. Here's a high-level summary:

Schedule 1

Amends the Building Code Act, the City of Toronto Act and the Municipal Act in respect of standards and bylaws protecting the environment

Schedule 2

Among other provisions, amends the City of Toronto Act to remove references to "sustainable design", to provide that the City cannot require an owner of land to provide electric vehicle supply equipment in connection with off-street vehicular parking facilities

Schedule 3

Among other provisions, amends the Development Charges Act to exempt retirement home developments from payment of Development Charges

Schedule 4

Enacts the Fair Alignment and Seamless Transit Act 2026 which among other provisions: i) gives the Minister of Transportation the authority to establish fare structures for transit systems; ii) requires prescribed transit systems to participate in a unified fare payment system; iii) gives the Minister of Transportation authority to make regulations designating new and existing routes as priority routes and prescribing service standards for those routes

Schedule 5

Amends the Metrolinx Act to create a new process under which Metrolinx may notify a chief building official of a proposal to construct or demolish a building associated with a provincial transit project

Schedule 6

Amends the Municipal Act to require any person must apply to and receive consent from a municipality to construct, maintain or operate water or sewage treatment public utility

Schedule 7

Makes various amendments to the Planning Act including changes to the required contents of municipal Official Plans

Schedule 8

Amends the Safe Drinking Water Act changing the definition of municipal drinking water system to include a drinking water system owned by a corporation designated as a water and wastewater public corporation

Schedule 9

Makes various amendments to the Water and Wastewater Public Corporations Act, 2025.

This article is intended as a high level summary and does not in any comprehensive way provide all the details of Bill 98. For complete details, the Bill can be accessed by clicking on the following link:

<https://www.ola.org/en/legislative-business/bills/parliament-44/session-1/bill-98>

Canada-Ontario Partnership to Build Commits Billions

Several new cooperative initiatives between the governments of Canada and Ontario were announced on March 30th under the Canada Ontario Partnership to Build banner. Here are the highlights:

Development Charges Reduction:

Ontario and Canada agree to a cost-matched structure to provide a combined \$8.8 billion over 10 years to support housing-enabling infrastructure projects in Ontario. The funding will be prioritized for municipalities that reduce and maintain reductions on development charges (DCs).

Harmonized Sales Tax (HST) Rebate on New Homes:

The federal government will provide Ontario a payment in the amount of \$875 million, subject to passage of federal legislation, that may be applied against the federal five per cent portion of the HST that is being removed from new homes in Ontario. Together, the combined rebate would remove the full 13 per cent of the HST for eligible buyers of new homes valued up to \$1 million, for a maximum rebate of \$130,000. This maximum rebate of \$130,000 would be maintained for new homes valued up to \$1.5 million, and would decrease proportionally from \$130,000 at \$1.5 million to a maximum of \$24,000 for homes valued at \$1.85 million and above.

Waterfront East Transit:

Canada, Ontario and Toronto agree to cost-sharing for planning and construction of a transit line that will serve Toronto's eastern waterfront, including the East Bayfront and Port Lands. Current cost estimates set the project at \$3 billion.

Alto High-Speed Rail (HSR):

Canada and Ontario commit to collaborate with its agencies and the Quebec government and other key parties to move forward on planning and advancement of the Alto HSR initiative that will construct a new interprovincial rail line and connect millions of people living along the Toronto–Quebec City corridor.

Priority transit projects in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA): Canada and Ontario will work to conclude federal contribution agreements within 90 days on previously announced transit projects for the GTHA, including the Ontario Line, Eglinton Crosstown West Extension, Scarborough Subway Extension, Yonge North Subway Extension and the Hamilton LRT.

For the full story, click on the following links:

<https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/1007227/ontario-and-canada-sign-historic-partnership-to-build-homes-transit-and-communities>

<https://news.ontario.ca/en/backgrounder/1007226/details-of-the-canada-ontario-partnership-to-build>

Budget Bill Highlights

Bill 97, Plan to Protect Ontario Act (Budget Measures) 2026 is the legislation, which if passed, will turn Finance Minister Bethlenfalvy's 2026 budget into law. It is an omnibus Bill with 17 schedules amending the following statutes:

Bremner Boulevard Act, 2026

Allows for the redevelopment of a bus parking lot adjacent to the Rogers Centre

City of Toronto Act, 2006

Allows businesses in the City of Toronto to remain open on Family Day and Victoria Day

Conservation Authorities Act

Facilitates the amalgamations of conservation authorities

Corporations Tax Act

Makes amendments to the taxation of certain pension benefits

Financial Administration Act

Establishes the Protect Ontario Account Investment Fund and rules around the operation of the fund

Fiscal Sustainability, Transparency and Accountability Act, 2019

Requires that certain metrics with respect to the province's debt burden be included in annual budgets

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

Shields cabinet ministers, parliamentary assistants and their political staffs from freedom of information (Fol) requests

Land Transfer Tax Act

The definition of "foreign national" is amended to exclude a person registered as an Indian under the Indian Act

Liquor Tax Act, 1996

Makes various changes to the tax and tax rates applicable to beer, wine and wine cooler and spirits

Municipal Act, 2001

Allows businesses to remain open for business on Family Day and Victoria Day

Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

Makes changes to the rules around access to information

Ontario Loan Act, 2026

Creates the Ontario Loan Act which allows the Province to borrow up to an additional \$35 billion

Pension Benefits Act

Makes amendments to the way variable life benefits from pension plans are treated

Retail Business Holidays Act

the definition of "holiday" is repealed.

Taxation Act, 2007

Among other provisions, makes changes to the dividend tax credit and the small business deduction rate

Ticket Sales Act, 2017

Prohibits the sale of event tickets on the secondary market at an amount that exceeds the total price paid when the ticket was purchased from the primary seller, plus any applicable fees, service charges and taxes charged by the secondary seller or operator of a secondary ticketing platform.

Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997

Revises how WSIB board members are appointed and establishes an advisory committee to advise the minister.

George Brown Introduces Master of Construction Management Degree Program

Your members and their senior employees may be interested to know that George Brown College has introduced a new “Master of Construction Management” graduate degree program which is fully accredited by the provincial government and is 100% equivalent to a university master degree.

The degree is designed to be finished in one calendar year (starts in September and ends in August) although there are pathways for individual who decide for a longer period. The classes are approximately 50/50 on-campus vs online with the on-campus sessions at the new Limberlost Building at George Brown’s Waterfront Campus at the foot of Sherbourne and Queen’s Quay in Toronto.

George Brown is intending to timetable the on-campus classes for Friday mid-afternoons and Saturdays to accommodate working students. The online classes will be scheduled outside of normal working hours.

The typical course load is 5 courses per semester.

Here is the link to the program web page where you will find the full course listing, admission requirements, tuition, application process, and a fuller description of the program learning outcomes and philosophy.

<https://www.georgebrown.ca/programs/master-of-construction-management-program-t550>

Please share this information widely to ensure the program is fully subscribed. For additional information and questions, please contact:

Dr. Peter J. Tumidajski, Associate Dean Peter.Tumidajski@georgebrown.ca OR

Dr. Christopher Willis Christopher.Wilis@georgebrown.ca

Message from Skilled Trades Ontario

Skilled Trades Ontario’s March 2026 newsletter provides an update on key initiatives underway to strengthen Ontario’s skilled trades system. It highlights recent organizational efforts focused on improving certification processes, supporting apprentices and employers, and ensuring trades programs continue to reflect industry demand. Readers are also directed to timely updates from Skilled Trades Ontario, including operational changes, reviews of apprenticeship programs, and continued work with industry partners to maintain high standards across the sector.

The newsletter also promotes available resources for apprentices, employers, and experienced workers, while encouraging engagement with Skilled Trades Ontario’s tools, portals, and upcoming opportunities. It reinforces STO’s role as a central hub for skilled trades information in Ontario and underscores its commitment to building a responsive, modern trades workforce that supports the province’s economy. Read the full newsletter here:

<https://mailchi.mp/skilledtradesontario/skilled-trades-ontario-newsletter-march-2026-10342481?e=63aeff481a>

Ontario Construction Employment Down 1.7% From Year Ago

Here are the highlights copied from Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey for February 2026 published on March 13, 2026 :

For all of Canada, all sectors:

- Employment declined by 84,000 (-0.4%) in February and the employment rate fell 0.2 percentage points to 60.6%. The unemployment rate increased 0.2 percentage points to 6.7%.
- Employment fell among youth aged 15 to 24 years old (-47,000; -1.7%) and men in the core working age of 25 to 54 years old (-41,000; -0.6%). Employment was little changed for core-aged women and people aged 55 years and older.
- Employment declines in February were recorded in services-producing industries (-56,000; -0.3%) and goods-producing industries (-28,000; -0.7%). The largest declines were in wholesale and retail trade (-18,000; -0.6%), and 'other services' such as personal and repair services (-14,000; -1.8%).
- Employment declined in Quebec (-57,000; -1.2%), British Columbia (-20,000; -0.7%), Saskatchewan (-5,500; -0.9%) and Manitoba (-4,000; -0.5%). Employment increased in Newfoundland and Labrador (+2,100; +0.8%) and was little changed in the other provinces.
- Average hourly wages among employees were up 3.9% (+\$1.42 to \$37.56) on a year-over-year basis in February, following growth of 3.3% in January (not seasonally adjusted).

For Ontario, all sectors:

- Total employment in all sectors in Ontario in February 2026 stood at 8,211,300, an increase of 3,300 or 0.3% from the previous month's total
- However, employment in February 2026 declined by 10,200 or 0.4% from February 2025

For the construction industry in Ontario:

- Total employment in the construction industry in Ontario in February 2026 stood at 573,900, an increase of 1,600 or 0.3% from the previous month
- However total employment in the construction industry in Ontario in February 2026 declined by 10,200 or 1.7% from February 2025

For the full report, click on the following link:

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/260313/dq260313a-eng.htm>

Ontario & Feds to Rebate HST on Lower-Valued New Homes

Here's the 101:

Ontario's Expanded HST Relief for Housing Ontario is proposing a temporary expansion of existing HST relief on new homes. Subject to eligibility:

- For new homes valued up to \$1 million, Ontario, with the support of the federal government, would provide up to \$130,000 in relief, equivalent to the full 13 per cent HST.
- The \$130,000 maximum rebate would be maintained for new homes valued between \$1 million and \$1.5 million, reflecting the reality of housing costs in many Ontario communities.
- A reduced rebate would be available for new homes valued between \$1.5 million and \$1.85 million. New homes above \$1.85 million would qualify for \$24,000 in HST relief under pre-existing rebate.
- Ontario's contribution to the temporary expansion of HST rebates on new homes would provide almost \$1.4 billion in estimated total provincial tax relief.
- The federal government has agreed to cost-share with Ontario in support of provincial housing initiatives, subject to passage of federal legislation, which would approximately cover the federal 5 per cent portion of the HST that is being removed from new homes in Ontario.

The expanded relief would be available from April 1, 2026 to March 31, 2027 and the new home must be used as a primary place of residence or as a residential rental property.

Proposal subject to federal regulatory enactment. The HST and associated rebates are administered by the Canada Revenue Agency.

For the full story, click on the following link:

<https://news.ontario.ca/assets/files/20260325/2eefe6f1395d191fdd2d4192e7bc685f.pdf>

COCA Releases Updated Prompt Payment & Adjudication Resources



PROMPT PAYMENT & ADJUDICATION

The Council of Ontario Construction Associations (COCA) has announced significant updates to its Prompt Payment and Adjudication resources as major changes to Ontario's Construction Act come into force in early 2026. These updates reflect new provisions introduced through Bill 216, the Building Ontario for You Act (Budget Measures), 2024, and refined by Bill 60, both aimed at strengthening payment certainty and improving dispute resolution in the provincial construction sector.

[Click here to visit COCA's Prompt Payment Page to view the toolkit and download the fact sheets.](#)