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HOW EMPLOYERS WSIB 2020 PREMIUM RATES WERE CALCULATED

Despite all the information construction associations have provided to their members about the WSIB's Rate Framework, some have expressed surprise about their 2020 WSIB premium rates.

The Rate Framework, as you are well aware, includes the new NAICS-based employer classification system, a new employer-centric rate setting process and a new prospective experience rating program for all employers in the provincial compensation system. It will be implemented on January 1, 2020 so the 2020 premium rates are rooted in this new system.

The WSIB announced the 2020 employer premium rates at their AGM at the end of September. No doubt, you had already told your members that their 2020 rates would remain approximately the same as they were in

2019 and they are. Each individual employer's 2020 rate was calculated individually based on their 2019 Rate Group rate NET OF ANY REBATES OR SURCHARGES they may have received or been assessed.

Some employers were surprised that their 2020 rate didn't match their 2019 Rate Group rate. An employer's 2020 premium rate is an amount calculated specifically for each individual employer and it is approximately equal to the 2019 Rate Group rate plus or minus any surcharges or rebates.

If you have members enquiring about their 2020 premium rates and asking how it was calculated, point them to the videos on the WSIB's website. Here's the link: <https://www.wsib.ca/en/rate-framework-how-does-our-new-model-work>

WSIB'S EXCELLENCE PROGRAM LAUNCH TO BE RESCHEDULED

The public launch of the WSIB's Health and Safety Excellence Program scheduled for November 6th has been postponed to a date yet to be determined. The reason for the postponement wasn't announced. However, it is believed that it was postponed because November 6th is also the date of the government's Fall Economic Statement (FES). The government probably doesn't want the news of the HSEP launch to get lost in the wave of communication from the FES.

There is a soft launch and employers can sign up for the HSEP on the WSIB's website at the following link: <https://www.wsib.ca/en/businesses/health-and-safety/health-and-safety-excellence-program>

CANADIAN APPRENTICESHIP FORM CONSULTATION

I recently participated in a consultation at George Brown College in Toronto that was convened to address the skilled trades shortage. It was one of numerous similar consultations being held across the country by the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum (CAF) as part of a research project they are conducting. The feedback from all the consultation sessions along with the results from other elements of their research will be rolled up into a report that is expected to include actionable recommendations.

Mine was an interesting and diverse group of about 25 people, about half men and half women, some from the apprenticeship departments of a couple of colleges, representatives from three school boards, several union representatives and a number of employers. Construction was well represented, maybe overrepresented (is that possible?).

Among the issues raised in discussions (no surprises) were the following:

- There is a significant bias in our society against the skilled trades
- Apprenticeship is perceived as less than or inferior to a college or university education
- Apprenticeship is perceived as a pathway for students with inferior intellects
- Only a few trades such as electrician, carpenter and plumber are generally known/

understood; there is no public understanding of most trades such as boilermaker, mason, millwright, sheet metal worker, iron worker, operating engineer etc.

- The route into an apprenticeship can be unduly challenging to navigate
- A majority of the women working in construction who were surveyed reported harassment or discrimination
- There are many pathways into apprenticeship not just direct entry from high school as is the most common pathway to college and university
- Most often, high school graduates have to take some form of pre-apprenticeship training before they are capable of starting an apprenticeship

Some of the courses of action that came from the group included the following:

- A media campaign is needed to tell the story of the fulfilling and rewarding careers available in the skilled trades; remove the skilled trades stigma; stress the need for STEM in the skilled trades; apprenticeships offer the ability to earn while you learn; possibility of owning your own business; the skilled trades are technology
- There needs to be a single portal into apprenticeship, one place where students,

- parents, teachers and employers can go for the information, resources and supports they need
- Full participation/engagement is needed by every school board in the annual Skills Ontario Competition
- ESDC is funding the development of skilled trades videos for each trade that should be circulated widely
- The route into an apprenticeship must be made easier/simpler
- Full advantage should be taken of the Community Connected Experiential Learning funding that has been introduced by the Ontario government
- Once a student has become interested in the skilled trades, supports must be available to help the student determine which trade is most appropriate for his/her interests, aptitudes and abilities, where to go for the basic training and how to move forward to an apprenticeship

What impressed me most from the two hours of conversation was how much positive energy the skilled trades movement has garnered, how many impressive highly effective initiatives are already underway but how siloed and uncoordinated we are and how we don't talk with one another to share our own experiences and knowledge.

DEPUTY MINISTERS GET PAY HIKES

Deputy Ministers (DMs) in the government of Ontario have received an annual salary increase of 14%. Previously, the DM salary range was between \$205,000 and \$311,050, a salary range that was set in 2016. Cabinet recently approved an increased salary range of between \$234,080 and \$320,130. However, Treasury Board President Peter Bethlenfalvy subsequently reported that upper limit has been increased to \$326,560.

DMs are not members of AMAPCEO, the union that represents other senior managers and professionals in the Ontario Public Service, but their salaries are determined from rates established in the governments agreement with AMAPCEO.

The government has put an end to the practice of automatic annual increases and instead will be linking salary increases to past performance.

The government has placed the blame for the increase, which is significantly in excess of its objective of 1% increases for the broader public sector, on the former government and the collective agreement it bargained with AMAPCEO in 2017

GOVERNMENT TO CONSIDER PRIVATE INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT PROPOSALS

The province's Minister of Infrastructure, Laurie Scott, recently announced that the government is now open to receiving and considering unsolicited infrastructure project proposals from private proponents outside the government of Ontario and beyond her ministry's vendors of record list. Going forward, private sector developers, builders and others will have the opportunity to submit their unsolicited projects (USP) and her ministry has developed a formal process for their evaluation.

- Scott is looking for project proposals that:
- Are aligned with the government's priorities
- Provide a benefit for the people of Ontario
- Are commercially and technically feasible
- Address public needs in areas such as transit lines and stations, highways, health care facilities, energy generation and storage projects, housing supply and digital infrastructure
- provide the greatest value for money for any investment of public dollars.

GOVERNMENT BACKS OFF RESTRUCTURING REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS

Earlier this year, the government conducted a review of Ontario's eight regional governments and Simcoe County. Over 8,500 submissions were received and the Special Advisors, Michael Fenn and Ken Seiling, attended nine in-person sessions and listened to ideas from individuals and organizations on how to improve their local governments.

Throughout this extensive review, the government heard that local communities should decide what is best for them in terms of governance, decision-making and service delivery. After careful consideration of the feedback we heard through the course of the review, our government stands firm in its commitment to partnering with municipalities without pursuing a top-down approach.

Minister Steve Clark's understanding of local government from his experience as both a mayor and a municipal CAO could be reflected in this decision.

GOVERNMENT HOUSE LEADER ANNOUNCES GOVERNMENT'S KEY PRIORITIES

With the resumption of the Ontario Legislature on Monday, October 28th, Government House Leader, Paul Calandra, issued a news release outlining the government's key priorities. They are:

- Restoring trust and accountability in government by continuing to find efficiencies and respect taxpayers dollars.
- Leaving more money in people's pockets.
- Reducing red tape and regulatory burdens and making Ontario open for business so our small, medium and large job creators can continue to invest in communities and people.
- Connecting people and places by investing in infrastructure, transit and broadband networks.
- Building safer communities, combatting violence and criminal activity related to drugs, guns and gang activity.
- Ending hallway health care, putting patients first and ensuring sustainable services for future generations.
- Adopting smart initiatives that will reduce costs, eliminate wasteful spending, and ensure government services are delivered thoughtfully and efficiently, while protecting what matters most.

TORONTO AND PROVINCE STRIKE DEAL ON SUBWAY SYSTEM

We previously reported on rumours that the Government of Ontario and the City of Toronto were in negotiations regarding ownership of Toronto's subway system. In April the Government had announced its own plans for the expansion of the Toronto subway system and in June introduced legislation that would have uploaded ownership to the Province. As the saying goes, "Where there's smoke, there's fire". The rumour turned out to be correct. Whew!

The province has agreed to give up its ambition to takeover control of the Toronto subway system. In return, the City of Toronto has agreed to go along with the Government's expansion plans which, as outlined in our last COCA newsletter, are somewhat divergent from the City's long planned and already approved scheme.

ONTARIO TO APPEAL CARBON TAX TO SUPREME COURT DESPITE FEDERAL ELECTION OUTCOME

One of the early actions of our new Ontario government following its election in June 2018 was to challenge the authority of the federal government to impose a carbon tax on the provinces, in Ontario's Superior Court of Justice. At the time, the Premier said that he would take this case all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada if necessary. In June 2019 the court struck down the provincial government's case stating that the federal Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act falls within the constitutional purview of the federal government.

In the recent federal election campaign, carbon pricing was a major point of differentiation between the platforms of the Conservatives and the Liberals. For many voters, the carbon tax and the environment amounted to THE ballot question.

While nationally the Liberals lost 20 seats in our 338 seat House of Commons, received 1.3% fewer total votes than the Conservatives and were reduced to a minority government (the Liberals won 157 seats to the Conservatives 121), the story in Ontario was quite different. In Ontario, the Liberals pretty much held their ground and the Tories retrenched. 41.5% of votes cast by Ontarians were for the Liberals and in fact 64.5% of votes cast in Ontario were for parties that favoured a carbon pricing mechanism.

In August Ford said that, in the event of a Conservative defeat in the federal election, he would consult with his Attorney General and Cabinet and very likely abandon his appeal of the Superior Court's decision to the Supreme Court of Canada. However, following the election the Premier stated that he will follow through all the way to the Supreme Court.

ONTARIO LEGISLATURE FALL 2019 SCHEDULE

- Monday, October 28 – Legislature resumed sitting after a five month recess
- Monday, November 11 –> Friday, November 15 - Constituency Week
- Thursday, December 12, 2019 –> Tuesday, February 18, 2020 – Winter Recess

OGCA BEGINS SEARCH FOR NEXT STAFF LEADER

The Ontario General Contractors Association has commenced a search for its next association staff leader to succeed Clive Thurston. Thurston has served in the role for more than 18 years and will be retiring in June 2020 according to the OGCA's website. For more information click on the following link:

<https://ogca.ca/posts/president-recruitment/>