

## **Council of Ontario Construction Associations Report to the Membership January 2019**

December 31, 2019, marked the end of another very active and successful year for the Council of Ontario Construction Associations, the province's largest and most representative voice for the non-residential construction sector. We are pleased to provide you with this brief review of our activities and successes over the past twelve months and ask that it be tabled at your association's next board of directors meeting as a COCA Report

### **Government Relations**

COCA's primary role is to work with our members and senior officials at Queen's Park to ensure that the province's laws, regulations and policies support success in the construction industry. This government relations work is the backbone of COCA's being, and it's our "raison d'être." Here are some highlights of our government relations work in 2019:

#### **a. Prompt Payment and Adjudication**

Under pressure from COCA and other industry interests, the prompt payment and adjudication provisions of the Construction Act came into force as scheduled on October 1, 2019

#### **b. Reduced 2020 WSIB Premium Rates**

COCA's WSIB-Occupational Health and Safety Committee continues to advocate for WSIB premium rates that reflect the cost of new injuries accurately and are assigned fairly. At its Annual Meeting in September, the WSIB announced lower employer premium rates for 2020. The unfunded liability had been slain a year earlier and for 2020 the past claims cost charge was removed from the premium calculation.

#### **c. Accreditation Standard**

COCA's WSIB-Occupational Health and Safety Committee has been working on a health and safety "Accreditation" program for more than ten years. Our work on this file goes back before the time of the Tony Dean Expert Panel Report when the responsibility for Prevention programs and services resided at the WSIB. Accreditation is designed to recognize and reward the very best performing employers in order to inspire others to pull up their socks and follow their lead.

Since the transfer of Prevention to the then newly formed Prevention Office at the then Ministry of Labour, we have continued to work with the two successive Chief Prevention Officers and their staffs on the development and implementation of an Accreditation Standard.

It had been ready to go for about two years before it was finally launched in December 2019. Accreditation is aligned with the most commonly used health and safety management systems and the Ontario version of the Certificate of Recognition (CoR) has been enhanced as “Ontario CoR 2020” to align with the Accreditation Standard. Employers who apply for and receive Accreditation status will receive financial rewards to help offset the costs of achieving this program.

**d. The WSIB’s Health and Safety Excellence Program (HSEP)**

COCA’s WSIB-Occupational Health and Safety Committee had been working with the WSIB for several years on the development of this brilliantly designed new program. It replaces the WSIB’s three prevention programs, Safety Groups, Workwell and Safe Communities Incentive Program (SCIP).

Many member associations who have been Safety Groups sponsors also worked with the WSIB on the advisory committee established to help guide the development of this new program. Employers who embrace health and safety excellence by joining and completing the HSEP journey should be ready to apply for Accreditation status. The HSEP was launched in December along with the Accreditation Standard as part of the “Supporting Ontario’s Safe Employers” (SOSE) program.

**e. Implementation of WSIB’s Rate Framework**

Against the objections of a number of employer interests, COCA pressed the WSIB for the implementation of the Rate Framework on January 1, 2020. The Rate Framework includes a new classification system based on the more modern North American Industry Classification System (NAICS), a new employer-centric rate-setting process and a single new experience rating program that applies to all employers in the system.

As we had hoped, the Rate Framework came into force on January 1, 2020. The Rate Framework represents massive change at the WSIB so we can expect some bumps along the road. We look forward to working collaboratively with the WSIB to resolve any issues that

may arise.

**f. Non-exempt Executive Officers in Construction (Rate Group 755)**

Several years ago, we were able to secure a special low premium rate for non-exempt executive officers and partners in construction who were not “on the tools” and who were not exposed to the risks of worksite construction activity.

The WSIB created a new Rate Group, RG 755, for individuals who applied and qualified for this rate group and assigned them a very low rate. The Rate Framework, which is based on the NAICS, does not have a category for non-exempt executive officers and partners working in construction. Under pressure from COCA and other industry partners, the WSIB modified the NAICS to accommodate this special class of employees.

**g. Skilled Trades and Apprenticeship System**

Our only significant disappointment over the year was our government’s inaction on the development of a new skilled trades and apprenticeship system to succeed the Ontario College of Trades (OCOT).

With a new Chair and a new Registrar & CEO in place, OCOT had turned the corner and was beginning to operate effectively when the government introduced a new skilled trades and apprenticeship framework which has yet to be fleshed out and implemented. We look forward to working with the government on the design of the new system.

## **Member Engagement and Communications**

Our work on member engagement in 2019 was particularly successful. We continued our communications program including monthly electronic newsletters, monthly members-only government relations reports, timely member alerts on important fast-breaking news and our six-month member updates.

These are all designed to keep our member organizations up to speed on COCA’s advocacy initiatives, on relevant happenings at Queen’s Park and on news from within the COCA community.

Complimenting our communications program was our schedule of member visits. These personal get-togethers with our member associations on their home turf at board of directors meetings, gala awards dinners, golf tournaments, members days, race nights, holiday season luncheons, axe

throwing competitions (a new one this year) are critically important for broadening the connections with our members and for building a sense of community around COCA. I was pleased that COCA Chair, Steve Dietrich and Past Chair Gary van Bolderen were able to join me on a number of these occasions and we are grateful for the warm and generous hospitality extended to us on all these visits.

We look forward to receiving an invitation to attend one of your association's events in 2020.

### **Outreach Beyond the COCA Community**

With a membership that includes 29 of the province's very best construction associations that in aggregate represent approximately 10,000 general contractors and trade contractors, COCA's voice is a powerful one. But in the context of the broader provincial economy, we understand the need to reach out beyond the COCA federation and beyond the construction industry in order to develop and advance sound and practical public policy solutions that work for every sector.

That's why COCA's participation in various groups such as the Ontario Business Coalition, Prompt Payment Ontario, the Provincial Labour-Management Health and Safety Committee, the Construction Legislative Review Committee, the Prevention Employers Partnership, the Institute for Work & Health Knowledge Exchange, the Council for Experiential Learning and our relationships with the Canadian Construction Association, Skills Ontario and Helmets to Hard Hats is so important.

I want to acknowledge the important work and achievements of all our partners.

### **Events**

#### **a) Annual General Meeting**

About 20 COCA members convened on February 20<sup>th</sup> for our 44<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting. Included in the proceedings was the Chair's Report, President's Report, the Auditor's Report, the appointment of Auditors for 2019-20 and the election of Officers. The Executive Committee for 2019- 2020 remained pretty much intact with the addition of Paul Gunning to an at-large position. Steve Dietrich is currently completing the second year of a maximum three-year term as Chair.

#### **b) Annual Construction Associations Curling Bonspiel**

COCA and several of our member associations were represented at the 2019 edition of the Annual Ontario Construction Associations Curling Championship hosted by the Barrie Construction Association. This annual event has become one of the very best construction

associations' networking events in the province.

**c) Construction Day – March 18**

On March 18<sup>th</sup> seventeen eager industry volunteers convened at Queen's Park were organized into five teams and each team participated in three meetings for a total of fifteen lobbying meetings. The highlight of the day was the speech by then-Attorney General Caroline Mulroney at the post lobbying reception in which she guaranteed that the prompt payment and the adjudication provisions of the Construction Act would come into force on October 1, 2019.

**d) Awards Reception and Dinner**

On the evening of June 11<sup>th</sup> COCA hosted a Gala Awards Reception and Dinner at the Sheraton on the Falls Hotel in Niagara Falls.

- Anniversary plaques were presented to the Construction Association of Thunder Bay (70 years), the Grand Valley Construction Association (45 years), the Pipe Line Contractors Association of Canada (75 years), the Architectural Glass & Metal Contractors of Ontario (40 years) and the Ontario Industrial Roofing Contractors Association (55 years).
- President's Awards were presented to Alison Smith of the Barrie Construction Association and Mike Carter of the London and District Construction Association,
- Chair's Awards was presented to Harold Lindstrom of the Construction Association of Thunder Bay
- Industry Ally Award to Gail Smyth.
- Construction Hard Hat Special Achievement Awards went to John Mollenhauer of the Toronto Construction Association, Martha George of the Grand Valley Construction Association and posthumously to the late Hugh Laird the Interior Systems Contractors Association.
- Paul Gunning of the Acoustical Association of Ontario was recognized with COCA's highest award, the Cliff Bulmer Award for government relations.

Gary van Bolderen presented a video tribute to the President (me) which was both embarrassing and touching; thank you Gary.

**e) Fireside Chat with David Piccini, MPP**

On the morning of June 12<sup>th</sup> COCA hosted a fireside chat with David Piccini, the Parliamentary

Assistant to the Minister of Training Colleges and Universities and the Member of Provincial Parliament for the riding of Northumberland-Peterborough South at the Sheraton on the Falls Hotel in Niagara Falls.

## **Conclusion**

I hope this synopsis of 2019 represents success in your books too. Many thanks to all the dedicated volunteers who serve on COCA's Committees, the Board of Directors and the Executive Committee for their contributions to the success of your provincial construction federation and to the broader membership for your support. After all, it is on behalf of the membership that this work is performed.