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2017-18 Ontario Budget

Finance Minister Charles Sousa will deliver his 2017-2018 budget on Thursday, April 27th and he has announced that it will be a balanced budget as promised. Stay tuned.

Unions Strike Accord on OCoT Issues

According to an article in the April 24th issue of the DCN, Minister of Labour Kevin Flynn arranged for representatives of approximately 12 trade unions, both compulsory and voluntary, to get together for four days at the end of March and early in April to resolve issues of scopes of practice and compliance and enforcement, with former Superior Court Justice George Adams serving as facilitator.

According to the article, a post on the IBEW website indicates all participating trade union representatives endorsed the following principles:

- A vigorous approach to enforcement of those provisions of the Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act (OCOTAA) that prohibit the practice of a compulsory trade by anyone not holding a certificate of qualification in that trade;
- Proper enforcement of the journeyman-to-

apprentice ratios established under the OCOTAA;

- Future discussions between certain trade unions aimed at producing bilateral written agreements on obviously appropriate work allocations between certain trades; and
- a definition of risk of harm that is sensitive to scopes of practice, trade agreements, well-established trade practices and OLRB decisions.

Affordable Housing Plan

Among the key items contained in the Ontario government's recently announced 16 point Fair Housing Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe area are the following:

- A 15% "Non-Resident Speculation Tax."
- Expansion of rent control to include all rental units in Ontario which ends the post-1991 exemption. Rent increases will be limited to inflation, with a cap of 2.5 per cent per annum
- The introduction of a "standard lease" for all landlord/tenant contracts
- Tightened provisions for "landlord's own use" evictions
- \$125 million over five years in tax rebates to developers who build new apartment buildings
- The province will soon allow the City of Toronto to tax landlords of empty units, of which there are approximately 6,000 in the city

If the NDP Form Government

By all accounts, the Ontario NDP's recent convention was a big success with more than 1,200 delegates in attendance. Andrea Horwath was confirmed as leader with the support of 89% of delegates. In her speech to delegates, Horwath said if the NDP forms government following the 2018 election she will:

- Implement universal pharmacare
- Raise the minimum wage to \$15 per hour
- Buy back shares of Hydro One
- Make it easier for workers to join a union

Marshall Report on Auto Insurance

On April 11th the former WSIB President & CEO who currently serves as special advisor to the Minister of Finance released his report on the province's auto insurance system. The report titled "Fair Benefits Fairly Delivered; A Review of the Auto Insurance System in Ontario" presents recommendations for

improvement. In it Marshall notes that Ontario has one of the lowest levels of auto accidents and fatalities in Canada and yet the most expensive auto insurance premiums and while the number of automobile accidents in the province has come down the cost of claims has consistently gone up (does this sound familiar, like the WSIB?).

He concludes that Ontario has one of the least effective insurance systems in Canada, filled with disputes and inefficiencies and a very high percentage of premiums being used to pay experts and lawyers and not going directly to injured persons. Marshall's full report is available at the following link <http://fin.gov.on.ca/en/autoinsurance/fair-benefits.html>

Metrolinx Cannot Terminate Contract With Bombardier

A judge of the Ontario Superior Court of Justice recently ruled that Metrolinx cannot terminate its contract with Bombardier to purchase transit vehicles for the Eglinton Crosstown until the parties complete the dispute resolution process prescribed in their contract.

Ontario to Launch Basic Income Pilot

On April 24th Premier Wynne announced the launch of a pilot project to assess whether a basic income can better support vulnerable workers, improve health and education outcomes for people on low incomes, and help ensure that everyone shares in Ontario's economic growth. Here are some highlights:

- Three regions will take part in the study. Pilots will start in late spring in Hamilton, including Brantford and Brant County; and in Thunder Bay and the surrounding area. The third pilot will start by this fall in Lindsay.
- The Basic Income model Ontario has developed will ensure that eligible participants receive:
 - a. Up to \$16,989 per year for a single person, less 50 per cent of any earned income
 - b. Up to \$24,027 per year for a couple, less 50 per cent of any earned income
 - c. Up to an additional \$6,000 per year for a person with a disability.
- Ontario is one of a number of places, including Finland, Kenya and the Netherlands, that have launched or are considering a basic income program.
- People eligible for the Ontario Basic Income Pilot will be randomly chosen to receive the basic income or to be part of a control group who don't receive it.
- People receiving support through Ontario Works who enter the pilot will continue to receive the Ontario Drug Benefit, and people on the Ontario Disability Support Program will continue to receive the Ontario Drug Benefit and dental benefits.

- A single person earning \$10,000 per year from a part-time job would receive an additional \$11,989 in basic income (\$16,989 less 50% of their earned income), for a total income of \$21,989.
- A third-party research consortium that will evaluate the study will be announced shortly. The province will form an advisory group with research and evaluation experts to ensure that the pilot is conducted with the utmost integrity, rigour and ethical standards.

PC Leader's Budget Asks

In an April 12th open letter to Ontario Finance Minister Charles Sousa, PC leader Patrick Brown called for the following in the upcoming provincial budget:

- a long-term plan to get the province's debt under control
- an end to signing contracts for power we don't need
- the dismantling of the Green Energy Act
- an end to the fire sale of Hydro One
- reining in exorbitant executive compensation in the energy sector
- evidence-based measures to address both supply and demand of housing in the GGH
- an immediate review the of government housing portfolio
- Make the cap-and-trade system revenue neutral
- an immediate moratorium on school closures
- an immediate review of the flawed Pupil Accommodation Review Guideline that determines these closures

The budget is scheduled to be delivered on April 27th.

Recent Forum Poll of Toronto Voters

The recent Forum Research poll of 840 decided and leaning Toronto voters reflected the following:

- 38% said they would support the PCs, 31% said they would support the Libs, 22% said they would vote for the NDP, 6% said they would vote Green and 2%
- PC supporters included those aged 45-54 (48%), males (48%), earning \$80,000-\$100,000 (45%), with some college/university (38%) or a college/university degree (39%), who drive to work or school (46%), live in Etobicoke (45%) or North York (43%), and support Doug Ford for Mayor (56%)

- Liberal supporters included those aged 35-44 (36%) or 55-64 (35%), females (37%), the least wealthy (44%), with some college/university (41%), who take public transit to work or school (37%), and support John Tory for Mayor (42%)
- NDP supporters included those aged 34 or younger (29%) and earning \$40,000-\$60,000 (32%)

Forum expects to see some Toronto specific hand-outs in the upcoming provincial budget to win back support in the Toronto area.

Sault Ste Marie By Election Update

As previously reported here, quite some time ago the PCs nominated city councillor and lawyer Ross Romano and the NDP nominated city councillor and former United Way chair Joe Krmpotich as their candidates in the yet to be scheduled Sault Ste Marie by election. The Liberals have finally landed their standard bearer in the person of Debbie Amaroso a former Sault Ste Marie mayor and the first female to be elected to that office, a former councillor and former local March of Dimes manager. The contest will be held this summer.

Welcome to Construction Season

COCA's Welcome to Construction Season Reception will be held May 15, 2017, from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. in the Legislative Dining Room at Queens Park, Toronto.

COCA's annual Welcome to Construction Season Reception at Queen's Park is a Members only opportunity to keep our industry, organisation, and issues top of mind with government officials. The Welcome to Construction Season Reception is one of COCA's most successful and highly anticipated annual events.

Industry Champions

- Electrical Contractors Association of Ontario
- Interior Systems Contractors Association

Industry Partner

- Northeastern Ontario Construction Association

Industry Friends

- Canadian Farm Builders Association
- Reinforcing Steel Institute of Canada