

**Subject:** COCA Newsletter - June 2018

**Date:** Wednesday, June 13, 2018 at 9:29:02 AM Atlantic Daylight Time

**From:** Council of Ontario Construction Associations

**To:** Margaret Taylor



## COCA Newsletter

## June 2018 Edition

Dear Margaret ,

Welcome to COCA's new look Newsletter. The newsletter had been redesigned in response to feedback from members. The new design is mobile friendly and can be read on most mobile devices.

We have also addressed a concern that some articles were too long. Articles in the Newsletter are now summarized. To read the complete article click on Read More and you will be directed to the complete article.

We would welcome feedback (good or bad) on the new design, please contact Martin Benson at [mbenson@coca.on.ca](mailto:mbenson@coca.on.ca) with your comments.



**Voters Turf Liberals, Elect Majority PC Government – Much Work Ahead For COCA**

Ian Cunningham, COCA President

Looking back, it seems many of our elections in Ontario have been about throwing an unpopular incumbent government out of power as opposed to choosing the party that presents the most promising and credible vision and plan for the province. In 1990 we threw out the David Peterson Liberals in favour of the Bob Rae NDP; in 1995 we threw out Rae in favour of the Mike Harris PCs; in 2003 we threw out Harris' successor, Ernie Eves, in favour of the Dalton McGuinty led Liberals. This was again the case on June 7<sup>th</sup>. The election was all about change as Ontarians had grown tired after 15 years of Liberal rule and McGuinty's successor, Kathleen Wynne, had become intensely unpopular.

Election campaigns are, for the most part, marketing exercises that focus on the qualities of the party leaders. A party's leader, to a very significant extent and especially during an election campaign when it truly counts, is the party's brand. As already stated, the Liberal brand was tarnished because of a widely disliked leader and also by a history of scandals and unpopular policies. The NDP leader, Andrea Horwath, was experienced, knowledgeable, admired by more than the other leaders, which gave her party a chance in the race, but was seen to be a big time "tax-and-spender". Tory leader Doug Ford was generally perceived as the figurehead of the "Ford Nation" cult, a businessman, a person of questionable character, remembered from his days as a one-term Toronto councillor during the tumultuous time when his troubled brother Rob was mayor and also as a failed mayoral candidate. None of these was a perfect choice so for most voters, the election was about choosing the best from a bad lot.

Most voters don't have the time, background information or inclination to study all of the parties' election platforms in an attempt to identify the one with the best suite of detailed policies for the province's future. With this understanding, campaigns develop slogans and bumper sticker type, high-level themes to condense the essence of a party's the directional message into a form that is easy for voters to consume. In this election, the PCs appeared to understand this concept best and delivered the most effective campaign.

While the Libs tried to explain away their record and presented a fully costed and detailed platform based on their government's March 2018 budget and the NDP campaigned on a very similar detailed and costed plan, only with a little more of this and a little less of that, albeit with a major accounting blunder that was corrected mid-campaign, the Tories presented no coherent, costed plan. Instead, their leader, Doug Ford, in an uncharacteristically disciplined way, stuck to the party's slogans and themes.

Over and over again, voters across Ontario heard him say "Help is on the way", "The party with the taxpayers' money is over", "Government for the people", and "Ontario will be open for business again". Like the powerful commercial slogans "Just do it", "We try harder", "The best a man can get", and "Breakfast of champions", these Tory slogans resonated with many voters.

Until Patrick Brown was forced out as PC leader, Ford had been planning to run for the mayor's chair in the City of Toronto this fall. As a consequence, he had not been paying attention to Queen's Park and provincial issues and was not well informed about the complexities of the matters at hand. Some observers would say Ford is more of a retail politician who has little interest in the intricacies and nuances of public policy. Also, Ford clearly does not have the same command of

the English language as either Wynne or Horwath and he was not as his best in the three televised leaders' debates.

So his handlers limited his media availabilities, his meetings with newspaper editorial boards were few, his participation in community all candidates meetings were nonexistent. Instead there was a strong focus on social media and Ford participation in meetings with supporters and rallies.

Ford did however seem to freewheel somewhat during the campaign, making unrestrained and disconnected promises as he spoke to excited supporters. Among those promises are the following:

- Review and amend the sex education curriculum; consult widely especially with parents
- Ban cell phones in schools
- Ensure that Ontarians can buy beer for \$1.00 per bottle – “buck-a-beer”
- Reduce electricity costs by 12%
- Reduce the price of gasoline by 10 cents per litre
- Fire the Hydro One CEO, aka “the \$6 million man”
- Extricate Ontario from the Ontario–Quebec–California cap-and-trade system
- Fight any carbon tax imposed upon Ontario by the federal government all the way to the Supreme Court
- Review the provinces finances – bring in independent auditors
- Reduce personal income taxes by 20% for the middle class
- Reduce corporate income taxes from 11.5% to 10.5%
- Introduce a 75% child care tax credit
- Find 4% efficiencies across all Ontario government operations
- Not implement the increase in minimum wage from the current \$14 to \$15 scheduled for January 1 but provide an income tax credit for minimum-wage earners
- Create 15,000 new long-term care beds over the next five years and another 15,000 in 10 years
- Provide free dental care for low-income seniors
- Upload ownership of the Toronto subway system to the province and expand it to include a three stop subway to Scarborough, an extension of the Sheppard line, an extension of the Yonge North line and a downtown relief line

Some political pundits costed all of candidate Ford's promises and came up with new spending that almost equalled the Liberal and NDP platforms.

Prior to the election, in the 41<sup>st</sup> Ontario Parliament, the Liberals held 55 seats, the PCs held 27 seats, the NDP held 18 seats, there were three Independents (ousted PC MPPs Jack McLaren, Patrick Brown and Michael Harris) and four vacancies (caused by the resignations of NDP MPPs Cheri DiNovo and Jagmeet Singh and Liberal MPPs Eric Hoskins and Glen Murray) in the 107 seat provincial legislature

Leading up to the election, most polls had the PCs and the NDP running neck-and-neck with regard to the popular vote at around 37% but predicted a small majority PC victory because of the more efficient distribution of the PC support across all electoral districts. Because of the three unpopular, uninspiring party leaders, i.e. choosing the best from a bad lot, pollsters predicted voters would not be motivated to go to the polls and predicted a low voter turnout.

Traditional wisdom says that a low turnout generally favours the PCs because their supporters skew to the older and older people believe voting as their civic responsibility and always vote. A large turnout does not generally favour the PCs; when there is a large turnout, that means younger voters, generally on the more progressive side, show up. However, the outcome on June 7<sup>th</sup> was somewhat different than expected.

Here's what happened, by the numbers. 58% of eligible voters exercised their franchise, far more than expected and the largest voter turnout since 1999 when voter turnout was 58.3%. The election produced the following result for the 42<sup>nd</sup> Ontario Parliament which will have a total of 124 seats: PCs – 76 seats (an increase of 49 seats with 44.5% of the popular vote across the province); NDP – 40 seats (up 22 seats and winning 33.6% of the popular vote); Liberals – 7 seats (down 48 seats with 19.6% of the popular vote and losing official party status and all the funding and status that goes with it); Greens – 1 seat (up 1 seat, OGP leader Mike Schreiner prevailed in Guelph).

With Doug Ford now serving as Premier-elect and ready to be sworn-in on June 29<sup>th</sup>, here's what's happening:

- Premier-elect Ford's transition team, comprised of Chris Froggatt (chair), John Baird, Reuben Devlin, Mike Coates and Simone Daniels is currently working with the officials in the Premier's Office to ensure a smooth and orderly transfer of power
- Among Ford's first actions will be to engage an outside auditor to review government's books and determine the accurate state of government finances. Once this review is completed, look for Ford to exclaim that the state of the government's finances is much worse than previously thought. This will give him cover to "walk back" some of his campaign promises
- With a clear understanding of the government's finances, Ford will know the extent to which he can balance tax cuts and spending increases; he will then be in a position to identify his government's priorities, determining which priorities will be implemented in the first year, second year, third year of his four year mandate or not implemented at all.
- Premier-elect Ford will appoint his cabinet ministers based on individual competencies for specific portfolios, regional, gender and ethnic diversities and influence/support within the party; likely choices include star candidates Christine Elliott, Caroline Mulroney, Rod Phillips, Peter Bethlenfalvy and Greg Rickford and experienced caucus members Vic Fidelli, Steve Clark, Monte McNaughton, Raymond Cho, Lisa MacLeod. Even though Ford favours small government, with a caucus of 76 members to keep happy and busy, look for him to appoint a cabinet with about 28 members. It will be interesting to see if Ford will run his government in the same transparent way as his predecessor and by publish his mandate letters to all of his ministers and their parliamentary assistants.
- Staffing up the Premier's Office and Ministers' offices with loyal and competent party operatives will be a big job. Fortunately for Premier-elect Ford, there are a lot of unemployed former Harper federal government political staffers still available. Many observers describe our system of government as a series of four year dictatorships that are run by a handful of unelected political staffers in the Premier's Office. This is much more so with a large majority like the current government-elect. This makes Premier-elect Ford's choice of his Principal Secretary extremely important. Let's hope he selects an experienced, competent and serious executive and not someone from Deco Labels
- Premier-elect Ford and his team will then develop a legislative program for

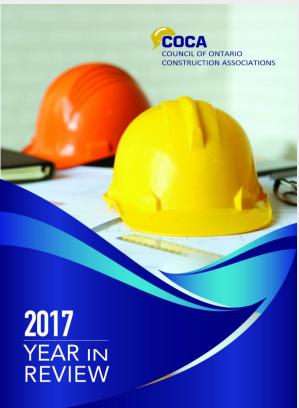
- Premier Elect Ford and his team will then develop a legislative program for the 42<sup>nd</sup> Parliament and a plan for the first session which we expect to open in mid-September. The session will begin with a Speech from the Throne read by the Lieutenant Governor that outlines the legislative program for the session and this has to be drafted

Given the dramatic change at Queen's Park, you might ask "What COCA will be doing?" Our role, of course, is to work with our members and senior officials at Queen's Park to ensure that the provinces framework of laws and regulations supports success in the construction industry. COCA is a non-partisan organization. We work respectfully and constructively with governments of all political stripes. We focus on public policy solutions to the challenges that confront our industry, not on partisanship and politics. Our success is determined by two things: i) the quality of our thinking, our ideas and solutions; and ii) the quality of our relationships.

COCA had excellent working relationships with all 107 MPPs in the last Parliament. Today there are 73 brand new MPPs and we have to get to work introducing ourselves to them and launching positive and productive relationships. In addition we will meet with the new Minister of Labour, Attorney General, Minister of Infrastructure and Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development, Minister of Economic Development (or however the new government chooses to name those ministries) and their Opposition and Liberal critics. We will be interested to meet with the new MPP for Guelph and OGP leader Mike Schreiner.

We will ask the issues that concern them most, inform them about the unique nature of the construction industry and ask them how we can help. We want to establish COCA as the first place to turn when construction related issues arise. We have our work cut out for us.





## COCA's 2017 Year In Review

COCA's 2017 year in Review includes A Message from the Chair, The President, A Review of the Work by COCA's Committees and a look back at COCA's 2017 events.

[Read the Annual Review online.](#)





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MINISTRY OF LABOUR

### Upcoming Inspection Blitzes

The Ministry of Labour has published a list of blitzes for early 2018. For the full list [click here.](#)



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### Eye on ICI Economic Update

To view a copy of the newsletter, [click here.](#)



COCA is the voice of our membership at Queen's Park.

We want to hear from you. All questions, ideas and comments are more than welcome.

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