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Premier McGuinty Thanks Building Trades Workers

(Toronto, ON) – Premier Dalton McGuinty gave the keynote speech to the 55th Annual Convention of the Provincial Building and Construction Trades Council of Ontario which took place on October 19-20 at the Delta Toronto East Hotel. Mr. McGuinty thanked all Building Trades workers for their contributions in building the province's infrastructure, emphasizing the importance of the construction industry as a whole, to job creation and Ontario's economy.



Premier Dalton McGuinty addresses Delegates and Guests at the 55th Annual Convention of the Provincial Building and Construction Trades Council of Ontario

"You do more than just build. You build us up," he explained to the delegates and guests, adding that the success of the construction industry has been absolutely vital to the continued economic development of the province.

The Premier also compared his government's record to that of his federal counterparts, noting that "this year alone, we are

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You build us up."*

"We've doubled our apprenticeship opportunities from 60,000 to 120,000. That helped our workers compete in a global economy because we all know it takes good skills to get a good job."

investing \$13 billion in all kinds of Ontario infrastructure. In Ottawa, the federal government is investing \$6 billion for the country – interesting contrast."

Mr. McGuinty's address came just days after his decision to prorogue the Legislature and to step down as Leader and Premier, which has paved the way for a leadership race to succeed him.

He went on to say that Ontario must continue to work hard to promote the skilled trades as an attractive career choice for youth. "We've doubled our apprenticeship opportunities from 60,000 to 120,000. That helped our workers compete in a global economy because we all know it takes good skills to get a good job."

Business Manager Patrick Dillon conveyed his gratitude to Mr. McGuinty, for all his years of public service: "On behalf of the delegates here, and all construction workers, both represented and unrepresented workers in the province of Ontario, you have done a splendid job. I thank you whole-heartedly for being with us."



Business Manager Patrick Dillon thanks Premier McGuinty for his keynote address

Let's Work Towards a Shared Prosperity: Andrea Horwath

(Toronto, ON) Andrea Horwath, Leader of the Ontario New Democratic Party addressed the 55th Annual Building Trades Convention. She received a warm welcome from delegates and guests, and her remarks focused primarily on Ontario's economy and the rising tide of inequality across Canada, largely fueled by right-wing policies that advance the corporate agenda.

"The ripple effect of lower wages drags the entire economy down ... We can't win a race to the bottom on wages, and we shouldn't be trying to do that," explained Ms. Horwath, contrasting her party's philosophy with that of the Progressive Conservatives who are calling for 'Right-to-Work' policies.

She insisted on better public policies to ensure that employers who enjoy tax cuts actually hire and train Ontario workers, saying that "we can win a race by investing in our people, their talents, their skills." On behalf of New Democrats, Ms. Horwath praised the Building Trades Council and the unionized construction industry for promoting and sustaining good-paying jobs throughout Ontario, pledging to work with the Council moving forward.



Business Manager Patrick Dillon thanks Ontario NDP Leader Andrea Horwath for her speech at the Convention.

"Given the choice between increasing pay or cutting jobs, which means fewer services, our government chose to protect jobs and public services, every time."



Minister Linda Jeffrey

Hudak's White Paper on Labour is a 'Pathway to Poverty': Minister Jeffrey

(Toronto, ON) As dictated by tradition, Ontario's Minister of Labour, the Honourable Linda Jeffrey, spoke at the 55th Annual Convention, discussing a wide range of topics ranging from labour relations to the fiscal challenges faced by government. In the context of sweeping austerity across most of the developed world, Minister Jeffrey noted that in Ontario, there is a firm commitment to protect jobs: "Given the choice between increasing pay or cutting jobs, which means fewer services, our government chose to protect jobs and public services, every time."

The Minister acknowledged the challenges that lie ahead, but was firmly against the idea of introducing 'Right-to-Work' legislation which her Conservative colleagues led by Tim Hudak are calling for. "No other Canadian province has embraced this form of legislation, and the reason, quite simply, is because this proposal doesn't reflect Canadian values," pointed out Minister Jeffrey.

She also discussed the strengths of Bill 119 (*An Act to Amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997*) which will come into effect on January 1, 2013, requiring all Independent Operators in the construction industry to provide WSIB coverage for their employees. In his thank-you remarks to the Minister, Patrick Dillon said that "Bill 119's success will be measured by how much enforcement we actually get, out there, in the workplace, to make sure that it's happening."



Senator Art Eggleton

Senator Eggleton on Income Inequality

(Toronto, ON) "Income inequality is a rising issue in this country," warned Senator Art Eggleton, speaking to the delegates and guests of the 55th Annual Convention. The Senator added that the growing gap between the rich and the rest will seriously threaten the social fabric of Canada. Senator Eggleton was invited pursuant to Resolution 9 which was passed at last year's Convention, dealing with the conundrum of right-wing political parties claiming to fight for the middle class while at the same time promoting policies that de-unionize their state or province, which shrinks the middle class and hurts all workers and the economy.

"The top 100 CEOs made, on average, \$8.4 million a year, whereas the average Canadian was making \$44,000,"

The Senator explained that Canada's current economic reality is unprecedented, and in the absence of political interventions or drastic regulatory action, income inequality will continue to rise. He observed that "the top 100 CEOs made, on average, \$8.4 million a year, whereas the average Canadian was making \$44,000," noting how "that is obscene." Commenting on the Senator's presentation, Patrick Dillon told the delegates that "we believe that the increase in the gap is directly related to the shrinking of unionization."



George Gritzotis, Chief Prevention Officer

Chief Prevention Officer Lays out Prevention Priorities

(Toronto, ON) In his remarks to delegates and guests of the 55th Annual Convention, George Gritzotis, Ontario's first Chief Prevention Officer, laid out the framework that will be in place to drive the Prevention agenda forward. He announced the recent appointments of Prevention Council members, including Building Trades Business Manager Patrick Dillon, who will work with him and his Council colleagues to improve safety outcomes by implementing ways of reducing workplace injuries and fatalities, pursuant to the recommendations of the Tony Dean report. Mr. Gritzotis told the audience that unfortunately, construction has the 'lion's share' of workplace fatalities and that this must change.

Echoing earlier remarks by Minister Linda Jeffrey, Mr. Gritzotis said that Bill 119 and the mandatory coverage that it will bring is an important step forward to tackling workplace fatalities in construction: "44% of those fatalities are with firms with no insurable earnings," he said, making it clear that businesses must have an institutional attachment to Prevention, if there are to be any substantive improvements in safety performance.

In his words of thanks to Mr. Gritzotis, Patrick Dillon reminded him and the delegates that "The Tony Dean Panel produced a consensus report ... the issues in Prevention in the past in Ontario, like the right to refuse unsafe work, and the right to have an Occupational Health and Safety Act, were never reached by consensus, so we have to keep that in mind."

"The fact that we have Bruce Power [and] the private sector approach, has been totally different than what we were used to in the past when it was run by one organization. So there's been an opening that allows for information sharing which is in everybody's best interest."



Duncan Hawthorne, President and CEO of Bruce Power

Duncan Hawthorne Shares Vision for Nuclear Industry

(Toronto, On) Bruce Power President and Chief Executive Officer Duncan Hawthorne spoke for the second time in three years, at the 55th Annual Building Trades Convention. He thanked the Building Trades for all their hard work, professionalism and craftsmanship in successfully completing the recent refurbishment and synchronization of Bruce A, reactor units 1 and 2.

Mr. Hawthorne went on to explain the scale and significance of these, and future refurbishment projects. "The power contract we have for Bruce A is a \$40 billion contract. If we sign one for the entire site, it would be the largest power contract ever executed in the world, at \$120 billion and [will] provide about a third of Ontario's power for the next 30 years." He also stated that as tangible economic benefits are felt in communities thanks to these investments, the public appetite for refurbishment is improving, despite the plethora of anti-nuclear sentiments that continue to be expressed in the public realm by some groups.

Pointing to the success of refurbishing reactor units 1 and 2, Patrick Dillon contrasted these projects with what typically occurred in years past: "The fact that we have Bruce Power [and] the private sector approach, has been totally different than what we were used to in the past when it was run by one organization. So there's been an opening that allows for information sharing which is in everybody's best interest," concluded Dillon.



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Sean Strickland, CEO of the Ontario Construction Secretariat

Ontario Construction Secretariat Overview

(Toronto, ON) Sean Strickland, Chief Executive Officer of the Ontario Construction Secretariat, in his remarks and presentation to the 55th Annual Convention, delivered a comprehensive overview of the Industrial, Commercial, and Institutional (ICI) construction sector in Ontario with a view to demonstrate the labour market conditions in each of the five geographic regions throughout the province. His analysis suggests that "over the next few years, construction activity will likely increase ... Growth will be the strongest in Northern Ontario and the GTA; with less or more moderate growth in Central, Southwestern, and Eastern Ontario."

Mr. Strickland also talked about the persistent threat in the form of the Underground economy which continues to threaten health and safety, as well as undermining legitimate contractors and all levels of government. "Governments federally and provincially, in Ontario, lose approximately \$2.5 billion a year to the Underground economy," pointed Mr. Strickland who then described efforts like Bill 119 and procurement reform to try and address some of those challenges.



Ron Johnson, Board of Governors Chair - OCOT

College of Trades Chair Optimistic, Calls for Input from Workers

(Toronto, ON) Ron Johnson, Chair of the Board of Governors of the Ontario College of Trades (OCOT) addressed the 55th Annual Convention, describing the mandate and priorities that will guide the work of the College once it comes into force in 2013. Mr. Johnson said, "Let me make a commitment to all of you ... The College of Trades is completely and absolutely committed, as one of its highest priorities, to enforce training and certification standards around the province."

He then explained how apprenticeship ratios and compulsory certification status will be reviewed periodically with input from individual Trade Boards, while urging the delegates to participate in those reviews. "It's very important that folks like yourselves are involved in that process, that you get out there and make your case to the review panel each and every four years; if you don't, you may get a result you don't like."

"Although we are getting a little bigger, we are not growing as fast as the market. The market continues to outpace us."



Bob Blakely, Director of Canadian Affairs, Building and Construction Trades Department, AFL-CIO

Bob Blakely Provides Update from Ottawa

(Toronto, ON) In his address to the Convention delegates, Canadian Affairs Director of the Building and Construction Trades Department AFL-CIO (Canadian Office) Bob Blakely delivered a detailed presentation outlining what some of the challenges the Building Trades are facing nationally.

One such challenge is embodied in what federal Private Member's Bill C-377 (*An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act – requirements for labour organizations*) will mean for workers if it is enacted. This Bill is an outright attack on unionized workers in Canada, as it calls for unions to meet excessive and intrusive reporting requirements by having to post detailed financial statements on a universally-accessible website. C-377 generated a country-wide backlash from organized labour, and as Mr. Blakely explained, this legislation was driven by the Merit and Open shop community of employers who are actively lobbying the federal government for this legislation.

This Bill passed third reading on December 12, 2012 and will be sent to the Senate of Canada for further review. Mr. Blakely asked delegates to visit www.workersbuildcanada.ca in order to voice their opposition to this legislation.

He also talked about declining market share, saying that "although we are getting a little bigger, we are not growing as fast as the market. The market continues to outpace us." Patrick Dillon echoed his remarks, saying that it is up to the union leadership to communicate to the membership, the threats that are emerging.



"We would not be where we are at with the College without the open door policy and very, very strong personality of Minister Murray."



Minister Glen Murray

Minister Murray Talks Training, Economy

(Toronto, ON) On the second day of the 55th Annual Building Trades Convention, Glen Murray, then Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities addressed the delegates and guests. The Minister talked about the shifting global economy, the steady decline of manufacturing, and the reorientation of economic policy to suit a more service-based model. "It is unions that protect us, not our borders," the Minister said, adding that "we cannot direct capital, it is now international." In his speech, the Minister did point to policy tools that government can and ought to use to encourage economic activity and empower people through training and education. "The College of Trades is important because we're trying to move now from defending rights, which is more stressed now in the workplace, to celebrating and advancing the value of labour." Patrick Dillon told the delegates that "we would not be where we are at with the College without the open door policy and very, very strong personality of Minister Murray."



Sid Ryan, President of the Ontario Federation of Labour

OFL President Reviews Ontario Politics Landscape

(Toronto, ON) As is customary, Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) President Sid Ryan wrapped up the Annual Building Trades Convention, appearing as the last speaker of the Convention, offering some inspiring words to the delegates. His remarks centered on the political situation in the province of Ontario, with the uncertainty brought on by the announced resignation of Premier McGuinty, as well as the Liberal leadership race to succeed him, coupled with the reactions of the NDP and PC parties. At this sensitive time, Mr. Ryan told delegates that "Labour ought to make certain that we understand the consequences of rolling the dice and making the wrong decisions." Progressive political forces in Ontario and in Canada have, for a long time, suffered as a result of the fragmentation that exists between those who support Liberals and those who support New Democrats. In the current political environment, Ontarians can ill-afford to allow such divisions to give rise to conservative forces. "We are all united in one issue, and that is, none of us want to see Tories get elected in this province," concluded Ryan.