



Ian Cunningham Appointed COCA President

Chairman James Coates and the Board of Directors of the Council of Ontario Construction Associations (COCA) are pleased to announce the appointment of Ian S. Cunningham as President commencing 25 August 2008.

Mr. Cunningham is an experienced association executive, having spent many years in senior management of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and the Mississauga Crime Prevention Association. His areas of expertise include Strategic Planning, Board Governance, Strategic Partnerships, Government Relations, Public Affairs, Financial Oversight and Staff & Volunteer Leadership.

Introducing Mr. Cunningham to COCA members, Mr. Coates said, "Ian's strengths go very well with those of the excellent staff members already at COCA. We look forward to a resurgence of activity under his leadership."



Accreditation pilot still needs some work

The Ontario Workplace Safety & Insurance Board is actively promoting employer participation in its Accreditation Pilot Program, rolled out to industry this past May and June. The pilot program is to run over the course of the next year as a precursor to a full-fledged Accreditation Program in 2009 as part of the WSIB's legislated mandate to reduce the occurrence of workplace injuries and diseases. However, what is being tabled after significant consultation is a program that COCA cannot recommend its members support in its present form.

Early discussions COCA and its members had with WSIB focused on the creation of a program that would embody a commitment to fostering a cooperative business environment recognizing and rewarding employers committed to the occupational health and safety of their employees while providing motivation for improvement for poorer performers. The program would be a logical follow-on occupational health and safety program for firms graduating from the soon to expire Safety Groups program. This philosophy represented the bedrock on which the construction industry rested its support. Unfortunately this philosophy seems to be missing from the current pilot program. Particularly problematic issues include:

- A lack of recognition of the unique characteristics of the construction industry;

- A reliance upon claims experience - a critical flaw, given recognized problems with current experience rating plans;
- An overly stringent and inadequate financial incentive offering for "superior" firms;
- A "fatality clause" that excludes firms from participating in the program - running counter to the stated philosophy of encouraging firms to improve their occupational health and safety commitment and performance; and,
- A lack of ability for small firms, which make up the majority of construction companies, to participate despite the fact that they pay WSIB premiums.

To the WSIB's credit, it has been responsive to construction industry concerns and is working with COCA and other organizations to set a meeting date at which these concerns and possible amendments to the pilot program can be discussed. COCA is looking forward to being able to reconsider its position coming out of these discussions.

COCA and its members are strong supporters of creating a robust workplace safety culture in Ontario, have always been and remain committed to the continuous improvement of occupational health and safety programs in Ontario's workplaces. We will provide additional details as they develop.

- Acoustical Association of Ontario
- Architectural Glass & Metal Contractors of Ontario
- Association of Millwrighting Contractors of Ontario
- Barrie Construction Association
- Canadian Farm Builders Associations—Ontario Division
- Canadian Fence Industry Association
- Concrete Floor Contractors Association
- Construction Association of Thunder Bay
- Electrical Contractors Association of Ontario
- Grand Valley Construction Association
- Hamilton-Halton Construction Association
- Heavy Construction Association of Toronto
- Interior Systems Contractors Association of Ontario
- Kingston Construction Association
- London & District Construction Association
- Mechanical Contractors Association of Ontario
- Ontario Demolition Contractors Association
- Ontario Electrical League
- Ontario General Contractors Association
- Ontario Industrial Roofing Contractors Association
- Ontario Painting Contractors Association
- Ontario Refrigeration & Air Conditioning Contractors
- Ontario Sewer & Watermain Construction Association
- Ottawa Construction Association
- Pipe Line Contractors Association of Canada
- Reinforcing Steel Institute of Ontario
- Resilient Flooring Contractors Association of Ontario
- Sarnia Construction Association
- Sault Ste. Marie Construction Association
- Sealant & Waterproofing Contractors Association
- Scaffold Industry Association of Ontario
- Sudbury Construction Association
- Terrazzo, Tile & Marble Guild of Ontario
- Toronto & Area Road Builders Association
- Toronto Construction Association
- Utility Contractors Association of Ontario
- Windsor Construction Association

Building Permit Values Fall in June

Having enjoyed two consecutive monthly increases, construction building permits fell 5.3% to \$6.3 billion nationally in June. Ontario saw the most significant decreases; an overall 7.9% decline to \$2.3 billion due mainly to a 15.8% drop in non-residential construction. The residential construction sector saw a modest decline of 1.7%. The decrease is significantly steeper than the consensus view from economists, who had forecasted a month-over-month decline of 1%.

So what does this mean? First, it is important to remember that the 1.1% rise in permit values in May was entirely unexpected; a 6% drop was anticipated. Also, the May increase followed a sharp 17% spike in values in April. Back to back increases in construction intentions had not been seen since November 2006, and despite the current decline, July's level was still nearly 10% better than the average

monthly level in 2006.

Secondly, Ontario has been hit especially hard by layoffs in the manufacturing sector; 41,000 manufacturing jobs were lost in Ontario last month (July). The effect of these losses may now be translating into fewer applications for building permits; the national value of industrial permits fell 31.1% mainly due to decreases in permits for utility buildings.

Lastly, with continuing government investment in infrastructure many firms may simply have reached their capacity to deliver on current construction contracts. On August 5th AECON issued a press release announcing a project backlog totaling \$1.48 billion. If a significant backlog is becoming the norm for most construction companies, many may focus on fulfilling their current obligations rather than bidding new projects, which could significantly impact the future value of building permits.

Provinces agree to move on labour mobility

Labour mobility was on the agenda at the recent Council of the Federation meeting held in Quebec City as premiers agreed that "full labour market participation and unimpeded mobility of labour is vital to Canada's economic growth." As a result it was agreed that the national *Agreement on Internal Trade* (AIT) would be amended by January 1, 2009 to facilitate this end.

The proposed changes to the agreement will provide that:

- Any worker certified for an occupation by a regulatory authority of one province or

territory shall be recognized as qualified to practice that occupation by all other provinces and territories, and;

- Any exceptions to full labour market mobility will have to be clearly identified and justified as necessary to meet a legislative objective such as the protection of public health or safety.

The finer details impacting existing policies and standards are expected to be resolved (permitting for the full mutual recognition of occupational credentials between all provinces and territories) in time for the 2009 Council of the Federation

meeting in Saskatchewan. A new and enhanced government to government dispute resolution system will also be put in place, including monetary penalties to a maximum of \$5 million.

Recognition of professional/occupational and safety standards appear to be the issues requiring the greatest time and effort to harmonize by the January 1, 2009 deadline. While the elimination of barriers to labour mobility is an encouraging concept, satisfying existing mandatory worker and workplace safety regimes across jurisdictions will prove to be a daunting task.

SAVE THE DATE!

COCA's Annual General Meeting will take place on Thursday, February 26 2009 at the Hilton Toronto Airport.

