

Ontario General Contractors to Organize

As Published in The Daily Commercial News, Monday, March 20, 1939

Several instances in recent years have demonstrated the desirability of an organization to represent the general contractors of Ontario. Legislation, such as that involved in the Workmen's Compensation Act, and its effects upon the business of building, will occur most readily to mind as emphasizing the absence of machinery for dealing adequately with these matters. Undoubtedly the interests, concerned have been at a disadvantage because of this lack, and it is recognition of this fact that underlies the present effort to improve the situation.

In this attempt are associated with Mr. A. Reg. Timms, chairman of the General Contractors' Section of the Canadian Construction Association, as a provisional committee, a number of the executives of other general contracting companies, chosen so as to give representation to every part of the province. They are engaged at the moment in an endeavor to line up behind a proposed provincial association, the majority of the large and small operators throughout Ontario; there are about 750 legitimate general contractors in business in the province today, and it might not be too optimistic to hope that at least 450 of them will see the wisdom of lending the movement their support. As soon as preliminary work has been completed, a meeting will be called in Toronto, to effect a definite organization.

Activities of the proposed association are not to overlap those of either the CCA or existing builders' exchanges. In fact, it is intended to supplement these bodies in a field in which they cannot function now, and the new group should also be effective in helping to bridge the gap between the present national and local bodies. There is no question that it will find plenty of opportunity with which to justify its coming into being. To mention only one matter, it is generally agreed that it will not be long before some action is taken in Ontario to improve the conditions of competition in the building industry, and whether this takes the form of a registration or a licensing law, or the introduction of something similar to the trust fund legislation in force in Manitoba, it is clear that the general contractors will require some protection. It happens incidentally that they are almost the only branch of the industry to be without a provincial organization.

Many other reasons could be advanced in favor of their remedying this defect. Mr. Timms and his associates deserve to be commended for the service that they are performing, and to the proposed association, every success.

Editorial

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From 1929 to 1939 general contractors in Ontario paid out more than \$116,000,000 in wages. This exceeds 58 per cent of the total pay roll of the Construction Industry in the province for the same period. And to it may be added approximately \$25,000,000 more, comprising the pay rolls of the masonry and carpentry contractors.

In spite of this preponderance, this section of the building business is probably the only important one to remain in an unorganized condition. Most of the trades - plumbing, heating, electrical, plastering, and so on - all have their own associations, and it is undeniable that they have enjoyed certain advantages as a result, upon which general contractors as a class may look with envy. There are influences at work, affecting practically every line of endeavor that can be combated only through a united effort, and by having brought this to bear within their own fields, many of the trade contractors have gone far towards the elimination of evils from which the general contractor continues to suffer. Furthermore, they have set up a valuable protection against outside interference with their affairs, and although the general contractors obviously constitute an important factor in the economic life of the province, they are without any similar machinery either to guard their interests from ill-considered raids or to advance them in the common good.

Recognition of the need to change this situation has been forced by many events, and a plan to form a provincial association of general contractors has been launched within the last few weeks. It is being sponsored by a committee headed by A. Reg. Timms, of Welland, and consisting of Robert Drummond, T.N. Carter, Philip N. Gross of Toronto, H.P. Frid, Hamilton; S.E. Dinsmore, Windsor; J. Allan, New Liskeard, J.F. Meagher, Ottawa; Charles Robertson, Brantford, H. Ball, Kitchener, and John Putherbough, London. This committee has called a meeting to be held in the Royal York Hotel, Toronto, at 10:30 a.m., Monday, April 3, 1939. It will be open to ALL general contractors and builders, and in view of the vital nature of the proposals that are to be considered, it should be widely attended.

General Contractors of Province of Ontario Form New Association

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Organization will endeavor to Represent Interests In Connection with Varied Problems - Provisional Executive is Appointed

Meeting Represents All of Jurisdiction

TORONTO, April 3, 1939 - The Ontario Association of General Contractors was inaugurated at a meeting held in the Royal York Hotel, here today. Discussion indicated that in a general way the new organization would have as its objective the protection and advancement of the interests of the general contractors of the province. In particular, it is likely to be concerned with such measures as unemployment insurance, wages and credit control through legislation, accident prevention work, apprenticeship training, research and the improvement of the relationships between the various branches of the Construction Industry. It is intended that it shall work in close co-operation with the Canadian Construction Association, local builders exchanges and other existing trade groups.

At yesterday's meeting, a provincial executive committee was constituted to proceed with organization. It is composed of A. Reg. Timms, Welland, Ont., Chairman; Robert Drummond, Toronto, Vice Chairman; T.N. Carter, Toronto; secretary-treasurer; P. Gross, Toronto; H.P. Frid, Hamilton, S.E. Dinsmore, Windsor, J.F. Meagher, Ottawa, Charles Robertson, Brantford, Harold J. Ball, Kitchener, John Putherbough, London, and R.F. Francis, New Liskeard.

Speaking as chairman of yesterday's gathering, Mr. Timms stated that the chaotic condition in which the Province of Ontario found itself today was due largely to the fact the general contractors were without any organization to act on their behalf. Most of the trade contractors, he said, had strong organizations.

Lack of Organization

The result of the lack of an organization of general contractors, he continued was to be seen in the failure of the different attempts that had been initiated from time to time by local builders' exchanges and the Canadian Construction Association, to make headway. While these organizations all have much to their credit in their own fields, they were not designed to deal with matters of purely provincial jurisdiction, and it would be idle to look for much achievement there until such time as the general contractors were in a position to give direction to whatever questions might arise.

Mr. Timms mentioned the small number of apprentices in training in the province today as showing the need for a provincial organization to support legislation that had already been placed upon the statute books at the behest of the Construction Industry. He added that other legislation, such as workmen's compensation was imminent, and that as it would have an important influence upon the business of contracting, the general contractors should have a voice in shaping it.

Speaking for the Border Cities, S. E. Dinsmore stated that he felt that the need for an organization of general contractors was well recognized. "I have had the privilege of looking over the set up of some of the trade organizations, and wonder why it is not possible to have an organization of general contractors that would be just as strong as some of them are? Is it because we are too selfish? I am heartily in accord with setting up an organization. There are many problems with which it could deal. But if we go into it let us go in a whole-hearted way."

Attendance at yesterday's meeting, H.P. Frid, declared, speaking for the Hamilton district, emphasized that there was a general awareness of the need for an organization. Registration or trust fund legislation, youth training and public relations were questions with which it might deal. Mr. Frid urged that the general contractors should support the Youth Training Plan of the Canadian Corps. Association.

E.C. Goldie, Toronto, added that the absolute necessity of an organization of general contractors had been demonstrated on a number of occasions recently. Registration and workmen's compensation and unemployment insurance were matters of vital concern, and made the setting up of machinery for dealing with them essential.

Harold J. Ball, Kitchener, reported that the general contractors in that area were interested in the proposed organization.

J.M. Pigott, Hamilton, said that he had had experience with several other efforts to organize the general contractors. These had failed because of attempts to prescribe standard. "If you let the question of ethics - the making of rules to guide some one else - come in, you will fail too. Take a mouthful at a time. Don't start in to clean up the morals of competitive bidding right away or you won't last very long."

As President of the Toronto Builders' Exchange, J.E. Clarke commended the move to organize the general contractors of the province, but counseled that it should proceed carefully.

Other speakers were J.E. Allen, R.F. Francis, W.B. Sullivan, I. Ilesley, W.H. Dunker, and F.P. Toms.

Many Registered

Among those present at the meeting were: A.R. Timms, R. Timms Construction, Welland, H.P. Frid, Frid Construction Company Limited, Hamilton, H.C. Nicholls, Milne & Nicholls, Toronto, E.E. Van Alstine, W.H. Yates Construction Company Limited, Hamilton