

NEGOTIATION UPDATES

Industrial, Commercial and Institutional (ICI) Negotiation Update

This sector of the Ontario construction industry remains in contract negotiation mode. Labour agreements for all single trade provincial bargaining agencies expired on April 30, 2022. To date, 68 percent of trades have reached ratified settlements. We have had three work stoppages, two of short duration and the third commenced just this week. Thus far, the stoppages have not had a major effect on any project's progress. The remaining bargaining agencies are working diligently to reach ratifiable settlements.

Toronto-centric Nature of ICI Construction Contract Negotiations

The Industrial, Commercial and Institutional (ICI) construction sector in Ontario comprises 25 individual trades. The structure of these trades varies within the province. Some unions comprise one single provincial local, while others have as many as 13 locals across the province. Some unions have a single journey person total package wage rate for the province, while others have varying total package labour rates that, in theory, account for regional differences such as cost of living and market share. In most cases where there is an allowance for regional differences, sad to say that these were the regional differences present at the inception of single trade provincial bargaining in 1978.

That brings us to today. A stumbling block that has been prevalent for the last number of collective agreement negotiations in the ICI construction sector is the volume of work and the number of union members in the Toronto locals. The Toronto-based union locals in most trades control the contract renewal vote where one component of the contract sets the total package wage rate. Contractors and union officials outside of Toronto are then put in a difficult position; they do not have control of their destiny, especially if it is one wage rate for the province. How can they compete for available work?

Revisions to the Ontario Labour Relations Act in the late 1990s envisioned this occurrence with the incorporation of article 163.2 into the Act. This section addresses local modifications to the provincial agreement where a designated regional employer's organization could apply to an affiliated bargaining agent to agree to amendments to the agreement.

While this legislation has been on the books for 20-plus years, the article has been used only a few times, with each requested revision having to go before the Ontario Labour Relations Board for adjudication. As it is currently written, the legislation appears to be an avenue to address regional issues but, as written, it is extremely difficult to work with. This needs to be addressed through a review of the Labour Relations Act.

Inquisitive Minds Want to Know

Summer's here, and with it comes safety hazards specific to the season. Kids are out of school - or soon will be - and on their bikes and in our neighbourhoods. They're always drawn to and curious about construction sites, especially where there is drilling, demolition or other big equipment and lots of noise. We remind contractors of the increased risk of curious kids, and ask that they ensure their sites are appropriately fenced off, secured and guarded at all times.



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