

# DAILY COMMERCIAL NEWS

## AND CONSTRUCTION RECORD

LATEST NEWS   
Skills Training | O H & S

June 2, 2009

College of Trades

### Proposed Ontario College of Trades risks creating more bureaucracy, critics say

VINCE VERSACE  
staff writer

The governance model outlined for Ontario's proposed College of Trades introduces a level of bureaucracy that concerns some industry stakeholders.

Kevin Whitaker, implementation advisor for the college, recently delivered his report and recommendations about the arms-length self governing institution designed to promote skilled trades and modernize apprenticeship in Ontario.

Legislation to help establish the college has been introduced at Queen's Park for its first reading.

"My greatest concern is that this is very bureaucratic and could be so convoluted, taking up so much effort to set up, that we may never see it," says Clive Thurston, president of the Ontario General Contractors Association (OGCA). "That would be a loss. We support having a platform that brings together everyone to discuss issues [and] promote education, training and safety in our industry."

Among the report's 19 recommendations are that the college be organized into four divisions, representing construction, services, industrial and motive power. These divisions would be directed by a divisional board consisting of five members. The college's board of governors could consist of two employee and two employer members from each division, five public members and an ex-officio chief executive officer. An appointments council to help with the college's creation will have its members appointed by the government.

Whitaker met with 26 stakeholder groups to collect feedback concerning the college's mandate and governance. A Notice of Consultation was issued to over 450 stakeholders, inviting written submissions in response to eight questions, and 65 written submissions were received. Four regional public hearings were held where a total of 27 parties presented their views.

"There appear to be too many levels of bureaucracy," says Pat Dillon, business manager for the Provincial Building and Construction Trades Council of Ontario. "Part of the rationale for the college was to empower industry to have more say in creating and maintaining its future workforce. Through the legislation, it looks like it is more top-down driven than bottom-up driven."

Dillon adds that setting up the college could be a "really good thing if done properly or a really bad thing if it is not."

He thinks continued consultation with all college stakeholders is necessary as the legislation moves forward.

The Council of Ontario Construction Associations (COCA) has highlighted five areas of concern which include the "complexity of the college's organization structure," the need for and power of a recommended appointments council, the process to determine ratios and trade status, cost of establishing and maintaining the college and the role of employer representatives.

The OGCA's additional concerns about arms-length funding and non-partisanship in the college's governance were partly addressed. It is concerned with the province making the appointments to the appointment council.

The Merit Open Shop Contractors Association of Ontario (MOCAO) says the college will create a large, costly and unneeded bureaucracy it believes is “designed to please the Building Trades” in the areas of both ratio and compulsory trade applications review and enforcement.

The Ontario Road Builders’ Association (ORBA) also has concerns about the college appointment council’s powers and makeup.

The roles of the complaints and disciplines committees also need to be looked at to help reduce potential “fishing expeditions” as it concerns company complaints.

“Overall, I think they were attempting to do the right thing by helping give the industry a bit of a handle on the way we practise and train our employees. This is a good thing,” says Karen Renkema, ORBA’s government relations director.

“However, it initially looks like they are trying to rush into it and putting a lot of authority in few people’s hands, specifically when it gets to discipline, complaints and fitness to practice.”

David McDonald, MOCAO chair, echoed these concerns about the complaints, discipline and fitness to practice committees noting that a “kangaroo court” could be created depending on who is appointed to them. He adds that the college will be more like a “creature of government” than at arms-length since it will be based on appointment council decisions.

A majority of industry experts are confident that opportunities for further streamlining of the initial report and its recommendations will occur as the legislation moves forward.

---



500 Hood Rd, 4th Flr., Markham, ON. L3R 9Z3  
Phone: 905-752-5408 | Fax: 905-752-5450  
Toll free: 800-465-6475 | Toll free Fax: 888-396-9413  
E-mail: [dcnonl@reedbusiness.com](mailto:dcnonl@reedbusiness.com)

© [Reed Business Information](#) a division of [Reed Elsevier Inc.](#) All rights reserved.