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Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario

Hillier brings spark to Ontario PC leadership race

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In Randy Hillier's Ontario, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board would have private-sector competition, union card-based certification would end and all apprenticeship ratios would be one-to-one.

As a former electrician, MPP Hillier knows a thing or two about creating sparks and as the standard bearer for the far right wing, he's using doing just that as he bids for the leadership of the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario.

Hillier, first elected last fall as provincial member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, is already pushing several controversial issues aiming to create a buzz — especially targeting labour practices in and around the construction industry.



The outspoken former member of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers and federal project manager is looking to rally other conservatives who have wandered in the political wilderness since the demise of the Mike Harris government. He has already targeted existing labour laws and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) among platform planks that echo the "Common Sense Revolution."

"There's a reason Ontario is a have not-province and is on federal welfare," says Hillier, "And that's because there are a million rules and regulations here."

Randy Hillier

His first target is the WSIB, which he says, is costly and is responsible for excessive regulation.

He says he'd like to see a private-sector alternative that would provide competition and a motivation for the WSIB to perform better.

"The WSIB is not working as insurance for small businesses," he says, noting those who do make a claim end up repaying it all through increased premiums.

Other targets for change include raising the ratio of journeymen to apprentices to 1 to 1 from the current 3 to 1, which, he says would provide much-needed jobs for youth while lowering construction costs. Hillier would also like to change the Ontario Labour Relations Act to require a full democratic vote for union certification instead of the 50 per working on any given day rule.

"It's absolutely atrocious to limit competition for exclusive monopolies," says the father of four who has been married 26 years.

"We are not a centrally planned economy — we are a free-market economy. It's what built Canada into a prosperous nation. So why do we allow legislation and regulations to be passed which are diametrically opposed to that? Why are we bringing in legislation to benefit a select group at the expense of others."

He's also vowing to break down the closed shop doors to allow non-union workers to work alongside their card-carrying counterparts. He says public bodies are forced into using union labour as are contractors under current labour laws and it's being taken to extremes.

Installation of carpeting and office equipment need not be a union job, he says, which would allow smaller, open shop firms to compete more effectively against the larger contractors.

"We're now seeing the consequences of these restrictions in our economy," he says calling those regulations and laws a drag on the province's economy.

Hillier is up against two other MPPs. Christine Elliott (Whitby-Oshawa), wife of federal finance minister Jim Flaherty, is considered more centrist. She is pushing a small-business agenda and drawing heavily on the political capital generated by her husband.

Also contending is Tim Hudak (Niagara West-Glanbrook), who is also appealing to the middle class right but is considered less

small-C conservative than Hillier. His key platforms are around stopping Ontario's job losses and rejecting Premier Dalton McGuinty's plan to harmonize the PST with the GST.

As he gears up for the Friday, June 26 convention, he's also airing out a slate of controversial ideas including giving ministers the right to decline performing gay marriages, re-opening the spring bear hunt, modernizing liquor laws to allow corner beer store sales and licensees to retail alcohol, abolishing the Ontario Human Rights Commission, dismantling the market assessment agency MPAC, reversing pesticide bans and allowing plebiscites on amalgamation under The Municipal Reform Act.



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