

Merit takes issue with Bill 183 closure

Liberals invoked measure to stop filibuster

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Hearings have ended on the bill designed to create a provincial trades college but the way they closed is of concern for the Merit OpenShop Contractors Association of Ontario.

"When the Conservatives started their filibuster, the Liberals realized what they were going to do, so they ramped up and introduced a bill with closure, which limits normal legislative review to take place in committee," said David McDonald, president and government relations representative, MOCAO.

A clause-by-clause hearing on Bill 183, the Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act, wrapped up on Oct. 8. Two public hearings were also held at Queen's Park during September by the Standing Committee on Justice Policy.

Bill 183 was originally introduced without closure and the order to introduce a bill with closure is designed to push the bill through, said McDonald.

"When imposing closure, you are stifling debate," he said. "The unholy rush with which this government is pursuing this legislation, which is not wanted by the industry, is a glaring example of this government's lack of concern about democracy. The majority of this industry does not want this legislation."

Pat Dillon, business manager of the Provincial Building and Construction Trades Council of Ontario, thinks the legislative change by the government was necessary because the delays occurring at the committee during the clause-by-clause hearing were not resulting in constructive dialogue.

"From what I read and heard, I did not see any principled position of opposition but more delays from getting on in getting the job done," said Dillon. "If they were shutting down debate I would have a different comment, but what is happening is they (Conservatives) were moving a motion of delay, then not debating for 20 minutes to half an hour. Then, they would deal with the next motion and then another motion to delay and then go play games in the corridors."

Dillon added that he sees tradespeople in Ontario looking forward to having their own college and delays that are not constructive are a disservice to both trades people and the citizens of Ontario.

"They are not debating principled issues, they are just delaying," he said. "They are dragging out the inevitable almost as if this was a game they were playing."

McDonald counters by saying the majority of industry does not want a college and that only industry associations will benefit from the college since building trades rules will be imposed on the entire industry.

"There has been no study on the apprenticeship system and various delivery models in the creation of this bill," said McDonald.

"It is completely irresponsible for the government to be proceeding with it with this haste to please its political friends in the building trades."

Bill 183 has been sent to third reading. Some industry stakeholders believe the act could be passed by the end of December.