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Queen's Park "gridlock" major 2013 industry issue

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Legislative "gridlock" at Queen's Park was a major issue for several Ontario construction industry leaders this year as they had hoped for more legislative change after 2012's prorogation.

[Council of Ontario Construction Associations](#) president Ian Cunningham noted that 155 bills were introduced in this session of parliament and the minority Liberal government succeeded in passing very little.

"This is a pretty minimal level of productivity and I think the citizens of Ontario expect more."

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All three parties have voiced their support for Bill 69, the Prompt Payment Act, which passed second reading in May and was referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills. Nothing has happened with the bill since.

"All party leaders including the Premier have, in my presence, stated their support for the bill but it's the legislative gridlock and paralysis that has kept it from passing. That is an enormous disappointment to the construction industry," said Cunningham.

Most Queen's Park observers are expecting a spring election and [Ontario General Contractors Association](#) government relations director David Frame doesn't expect the bill to get passed before then.

"In the last year it's become well-established that it is an act that will eventually go through the legislature, it's a matter of getting it right. I think it's been slowed down because there's obviously a misfit in it right now for the residential sector that has to be fixed before it goes ahead," he said.

"Prompt payment made significant strides this year and with all three parties buying in, it's inevitable that at some point it's going to become law."

[Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario](#) executive director Andy

Manahan was pleased to see that transit infrastructure became a prominent issue. Premier Kathleen Wynne's final decision on how to pay for transit will be in the spring budget and several organizations, such as the [Toronto Board of Trade](#) and [CivicAction Alliance](#), have highlighted the need for transit infrastructure investment.

"We had the Metrolinx investment strategy, we have a new infrastructure, transportation minister, Glen Murray, who has also made lots of comments about how to fund transit through land value capture and other means, so for me it was really the year of very serious conversations about how to fund transit investment," said Manahan.

The Ministry of Finance has made a "very significant" leap with the introduction of dedicated funds, such as the recently announced Trillium Fund, said Manahan.

The [Ontario College of Trades](#) (OCOT), which began accepting membership on April 8, continued to be a big news maker in 2013. OCOT reviewed journeyman to apprentice ratios in 33 trades. In some cases the ratios stayed the same, increased or decreased.

Sean Reid, Ontario and federal director of the Progressive Contractors Association of Canada, is concerned about the review process itself.

“The fact that the criteria that the ratio review panels used to make their decisions changed in the midst of the reviews. There were significant flaws in that process overall,” he said.

Patrick Dillon, business manager of the [Provincial Building and Construction Trades Council of Ontario](#), pointed out that it’s a new organization and that people don’t adapt to change quickly.

“People are usually cautious thinking the worst is going to happen. The absolute intent of setting up the college in the first place is for tradespeople.”