

February 1, 2013

Wait and see approach on Wynne for construction

KELLY LAPOINTE

staff writer

Construction industry leaders say it is still too early to tell the direction Ontario premier-elect Kathleen Wynne's government will take but they hope to talk with her on issues such as infrastructure, transportation and the [Ontario College of Trades](#).

"I was always impressed by her listening abilities....She's a very detailed-oriented, policy oriented person," said [Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario \(RCCAO\) executive director Andy Manahan](#).

Industry leaders have liaised with Wynne in her roles as minister of transportation and minister of municipal affairs and housing.

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After three rounds of voting at the [Ontario Liberal Party](#) convention, Wynne was elected as the 31st leader of the party, defeating Sandra Pupatello after gaining the support of candidates Eric Hoskins, Gerard Kennedy and Charles Sousa.

"The past three months have been about ideas, renewal, and excitement. Now, as a party, we will take that vision, that momentum, and transform it into a brighter future," she said in her victory speech.

"The best way to do that is to keep governing because Ontarians don't want an election. They expect us to lead."



Kathleen Wynne

Wynne has committed to reopening the prorogued legislature on Feb. 19. She will be spending the next few weeks selecting a new cabinet and laying out a legislative agenda.

In her victory speech, she announced she would hold her first caucus meeting on Jan. 29.

Members of the construction industry have been advocating for the continuation of a standalone infrastructure ministry.

"We're going to be continuing to advocate for infrastructure as an important investment tool to keep the economy in Ontario strong. It will be fairly simple messages because there's going to be a lot of noise out there from all sorts of different groups," said Manahan.

The [Council of Ontario Construction Associations](#) (COCA) will be looking for construction lien act reform, the introduction of prompt payment legislation and the continuation of reducing the [Workplace Safety and Insurance Board's](#) (WSIB) \$14 billion unfunded liability.

"I trust that she will support the current senior management at the WSIB in taking steps that make the WSIB sustainable and transform it into a competitive advantage for Ontario," said COCA president Ian Cunningham.

The [Ontario General Contractors Association](#) (OGCA) will be looking closely at the budget expected this spring. Wynne has promised to maintain the Liberals' current plan to eliminate the deficit by 2017/18.

"There's going to be enormous pressure under this budget and they will have a very short consultation timeline to be able to put a budget together too," said OGCA director of government relations David Frame.

"It needs to meet the requirements of deficit reduction and she's going to try to deal with the problems that have come up with the public service because of the government's initial efforts to reduce the deficit.

"It's going to be a big challenge."

The Liberals have a minority government, holding 53 seats of the 107 at Queen's Park. Wynne has already reached out to Progressive Conservative leader Tim Hudak and New Democratic Party leader Andrea Horwath. The support from one of those parties will be needed to pass the budget and avoid an election.

"I was thinking a spring election was likely, it's less likely now. I think there seems to be some will to find a way to make a spring session work. We'll have to see what comes of that in the next couple of weeks," said Frame.

"I was impressed with her determination to reach out make a minority government work for the benefit of Ontarians," added Cunningham.

Frame said this is an opportunity to get away from issues the government has had concerning the Ontario College of Trades (OCOT).

"She has an opportunity to get out from underneath the College of Trades before it becomes a big problem for her, so we're going to be encouraging her to do that," he said.

The OGCA is part of the Ontario Construction Employers Coalition which is calling for the abolition or complete overhaul of OCOT.

"The first thing we would need is a recognition that the College does not have the type of support it needs to move forward and that the agenda that is put forward isn't what we need in order to build good jobs," said Frame.