



Acoustical Association Ontario

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Provincial in scope ...

Provincial in outlook

President's Annual Message

It would be remiss of me to provide an annual review and message without first acknowledging and thanking all of you for the support you have provided over the course of this past year. 2011 was very tragic and trying for me personally and the support was humbly welcomed. I wish to personally thank the Executive Board for picking up the slack; it was, of course, greatly appreciated.

In looking back over the last year we survived a rollercoaster ride of sorts, with many ups and downs. Some geographic areas and industry sectors did well while others fared poorly. Increased competition from non-union and out-of-province contractors loomed heavily and continued to put us in a cost-price squeeze. The Canadian economy stumbled in 2011 and there is still much uncertainty on a go forward basis. World economies have not fully recovered from the 2008/2009 recession and are still struggling to counter the aftermath of that financial meltdown and return to growth. The unresolved sovereign debt crisis in Europe will continue to effect world financial markets and, if not checked, could pull the industrialized world back into recession.

Our governments here in Canada, at all levels, will be forced to deal with their huge deficits much like many countries in Europe and varied jurisdictions in the United States. The Federal government is talking about budget cuts in a move to balance its books over the next few years. In Ontario, belt tightening will be the order of the day as the Provincial government will be forced to slay

a budget shortfall of \$16 billion. The government is "tapped out" and we cannot rely on provincial government spending to sustain our industry. Private sector spending, incidentally, slowed in 2011 after an improved 2010. Although corporate balance sheets are in great health with firms sitting on vast amounts of cash, it is uncertain if they will open their purse strings in 2012.

Now we are in the final year of our current collective agreement and will be, before long, negotiating a new contract. Preparations will soon begin and, given the underlying economic environment, I ask that you all get involved. The more assistance we get from you the more successful the outcome for all of us. I encourage everyone to provide support and input in any form what so ever. Complex issues involving competitiveness, market retention and industry standardization will be up for discussion and any new and fresh ideas will be welcomed.

These shifting sands of economic uncertainty coupled with ongoing competitiveness issues have created a dynamic and challenging time for all of us and I wish everyone the greatest success in 2012 – these are truly interesting times.

Thank you,

Carmin Giamberardino

President, AAO

The Mathews Dinsdale Minute



Happy New Year. Unfortunately, we are now going to dampen these sentiments by re-visiting what is considered one of the worst workplace accidents in Ontario history.

In its December 23rd edition, the Toronto Star ran an article that included pictures of the lone survivor on the Christmas Eve 2009 scaffold collapse in Toronto. This young man in his early 20s clung to the collapsed scaffold before falling 13 stories. He survived, but is largely bound to his apartment, can reportedly only stand for 10 or 15 minutes at a time and has plates in his knees and major pain in his back. He had arrived in Toronto, as a refugee from Uzbekistan, three months before the accident.

In the last fiscal year for the Ministry of Labour, 377 workers died from workplace injuries or related illnesses. This was a 16% increase from the prior year and is a cause for deep concern. The scaffold accident resulted in an Ontario Government probe led by Tony Dean. One of his recommended changes was implemented this fall with the introduction of a new “Chief Prevention Officer” in Ontario whose role is to oversee province-wide occupational safety and prevention matters.

All of this means, obviously, a tighter environment under which you will operate going forward. However, this is probably something that you, as employers, shouldn't be too worried about. These rules, no matter how stringent, will push all employers to operate safer workplaces. In turn, these will then improve your odds of not being at the centre of a storm like that of the now infamous swing stage accident. Let's review the fallout from that accident for the companies that were involved:

- ◆ Three employees of the employer of the injured workers are facing criminal charges: four counts each of criminal negligence causing death and one count each of criminal negligence causing bodily harm.
- ◆ A total of 61 charges under the Occupational Health and Safety Act were filed against the employer of the workers and the supplier of the scaffold.
- ◆ The lone survivor of the accident is suing the Ministry of Labour, his former employer, the scaffold supplier and the apartment building owner for \$18 million, with additional claims filed by the families of the workers who died.

As this new-year unfolds before us, we wish each of you a prosperous, happy and safe working year and we truly hope that none of you face a situation that even remotely resembles this one.

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