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INVESTING IN ONTARIO

MAKING HEALTH & SAFETY A CULTURAL INVESTMENT IN ONTARIO

When the topic of health and safety in construction comes up, most people picture a hard hat and steel-toed boots.

Last week, Infrastructure Ontario's Senior Vice President Lawrence Quinn donned a hockey jersey to the applause of leaders in workplace safety called the League of Champions.

The League is an organization that strives to be "a catalyst for safety improvement in individual companies and the industry as a whole."

By donning the League's coveted jersey, Quinn made IO the first public agency to literally wear its commitment to safety on its sleeve.

"We value the well-being of our employees as well as our clients, industry partners and the general public," said Quinn. "IO is committed to making health and safety a priority on all of its job sites across Ontario, including our own."

Certificate of Recognition

To raise the bar on safety, IO is in the process of enhancing the performance requirements on all of its larger construction projects. The Certificate of Recognition (COR) occupational health and safety accreditation program is a key component that IO currently uses to cover Major Projects that use the Alternative Financing and Procurement (AFP) model and are generally over \$100 million. Over time, traditionally delivered real estate projects with a construction value over \$10 million are heading in the same direction. These are the projects IO refers to as Direct Delivery.

"ProjectCos on our AFP projects continue to be asked to submit safety records up front as part of the evaluation process," according to Quinn, noting that it includes Workplace Injury Summary Reports and CAD7, which outlines the record of a company's safety record and management of safety insurance claims. "What has changed is that we now ask for COR as a fundamental prequalification requirement," said Quinn. "We also evaluate the safety records and this influences the frequency of independent safety inspections during construction".

Effective September 1, 2016, COR is a mandatory requirement for general contractors / constructors participating in the Request for Qualifications (RFQ) process for AFP projects.

"IO wants to work with industry partners who are leaders in the field of health and safety," said Quinn. "These initiatives move us in the right direction for AFP projects and we're expanding that effort into traditional delivery as well."

For Direct Delivery projects, COR requirements are being phased in to ensure there's adequate time for firms bidding on these projects to begin and complete



David Frame (Government Relations, OGCA), Clive Thurston (President OGCA), Bob Ellis (Founder, MySafeWork), Lawrence Quinn (Senior Vice-President, IO), Jason Butt (Past Chair, OGCA).

the application process. As of Spring 2017, companies will be required to have applied for COR certification to be eligible to bid on Direct Delivery projects. Effective Spring 2018, companies will need to be COR-certified to submit RFP's for these projects.

The safety focus also carries over into demolition projects, with IO adopting the Professional Engineers of Ontario guidelines.

Partnership with Industry

IO takes great pride in building and maintaining strong relationships with a number of industry associations. Both IO and the Ontario General Contractors Association (OGCA) understand that while there will always be challenges to overcome, a professional partnership is the best way forward.

"I'm delighted that IO has enthusiastically joined the League of Champions to support the creation of a safety culture throughout the construction industry," noted OGCA president Clive Thurston. "The province is the largest buyer of construction in Ontario, so having IO adopt COR and join the League is significant."

"IO's leadership will have an immediate and lasting impact on health and safety," said Thurston.

Healthy Government Buildings

For the thousands of facilities in the government's real estate portfolio, IO is also taking steps to ensure strong safety standards are in place to protect the ministry

tenants who deliver programs and services Ontario residents count on. IO uses service providers for property and land management as well as project management on upgrade and renovation work that falls below the \$10 million threshold. Diligence and collaboration are the key to properly overseeing their efforts, through the use of tools like annual audits, recurring review meetings and quarterly reporting on health and safety.

Safety First for IO Employees

For IO, the focus on safe and healthy work environments begins with in its own workspace.

"We have a framework in place to guide internal efforts around compliance and awareness on health and safety," said Quinn. "Our approach involves continuous improvement, information sharing and training, and we're currently looking at all of our policies to ensure we're current with industry standards."

IO also protects its staff on visits to construction sites. A recent policy change requires IO employees to submit a project site visit form to their manager beforehand. The form outlines health and safety implications relevant to the visit. For one thing, personal protective equipment is mandatory. On AFP sites, safety training is provided by ProjectCo and no one enters the site without authorization. Additionally, in the fall of 2016, IO will be running regular training for its staff related to hazard analysis on construction sites. This will prepare them for what to look out for when touring active sites.

"Leadership starts from within," said Quinn.