

Why your new home is delayed



RICHARD LYALL
RESCON

A lot of homebuyers have called our office during the construction strikes and after they ended June 15.

This was the first time in 18 years that strikes were widespread across the residential construction sector in the GTA, and the work on job sites ground to a halt as framers, tile setters, drywallers, trim and electrical workers walked off the job.

This has caused delays far exceeding the 46 days of the strikes, and has tested everyone's patience.

"Susan" recently called to ask why her house is delayed. After receiving a September occupancy date, she was recently notified that due to an "unavoidable delay" — the strikes — that occupancy date was pushed back.

Susan is frustrated because moving and other life decisions had been made around the closing date. She has little time to make new arrangements, causing stress for her family.

Her story is very familiar. It's being played out across the GTA, and it's one that builders are very sympathetic to.

There are no benefits to occupancy delays for builders — to run a viable business, maintain a good reputation and build a loyal customer base, they have to deliver houses and condos on time to ensure customers are happy.

I told Susan that what's playing out since the strikes end is like waiting at an airport after a storm: the first delayed plane has to take off before the next 1,000 flights can depart; while one family is on the first flight, another family will be out last.

And while your plane may be delayed several hours, other factors

may extend that time (supply issues, storm cleanup, personnel). Meanwhile, your airline scrambles to provide the quickest departure time possible as pressure mounts for answers.

To give their best guesses on occupancy dates, builders worked closely with Tarion, Ontario's new-home warranty provider. Tarion regulates customer interactions with builders on communications, delays and warranty issues.

When needed, they declare "unavoidable work stoppages" and "unavoidable delays" in their communications with buyers.

When granting occupancy extensions to builders, Tarion recognizes that:

- other trades may be sympathetic to strikes;
- workers often slowly return to work once a strike officially ends; and,
- the supply chain is interrupted, disrupting building schedules.

The end result is builders are granted extensions on closings and repairs on a project by project basis, when warranted.

As builders complied with Tarion requirements, they made new occupancy dates with the best information available, before the full impact of the strikes and return-to-work process were realized.

No two houses or projects were affected the same way.

Strike activity was not evenly spread throughout the GTA, and neither was the return-to-work process.

This has left some builders scrambling because of skilled trade and supply shortages, creating an unrealistic construction schedule.

As new housing gets more sophis-

ticated every year, the home-building scheduling process with more than 20 trades is more complex than ever. During a strike, it becomes that much more difficult.

On behalf of builders, we appreciate your ongoing patience, and suggest calling your builder if you have questions

specific to your house or closing date.

— **Richard Lyall, president of the Residential Construction Council of Ontario (RESCON), has represented the residential construction industry in Ontario since 1991. Go to www.rescon.com for more.**



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Recent work stoppages have left some builders scrambling because of skilled trade and supply shortages, creating a situation of unreliable construction schedules.