



Looming labour shortage could accelerate supply crunch

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by Neil Sharma 22 Nov 2018

A major labour shortage in the construction industry is looming, and that could further hamper delivery of Ontario's already constrained housing supply.

Ontario will need about 90,000 people in the next 10 years to fulfill trades jobs in the residential construction industry primarily because of retirements, and this past spring the shortage was noticeable across the province's construction sites.

"The shortages have been going on already for three to five years and they are very real," said Patrick McManus, chair of the Ontario Skilled Trades Alliance. "In our sector, we couldn't find people in the spring of this past year and there tends to be a lot of people out there in the spring. We were already experiencing shortage at start of construction season and that's something new that speaks to how far the shortage has pushed its way through industry. It's quite concerning."

The Residential Construction Council of Ontario and the Ontario Skilled Trades Alliance are in the process of [surveying skilled trades workers](#) in a bid to solve the industry's impending labour shortage.

"It's the largest survey ever done in Ontario of its kind, trying to get into retention issues in residential and related infrastructure trades," said RESCON's Vice President Andrew Pariser. "We partnered with George Brown's Job Talks to take an academic approach to skilled trade issues, and they seriously questions the thoughts and feelings of why a tradesperson might enjoy, or might not enjoy, their job. One reason we picked them is they had done a federal study on trades like ironworkers and crane operators."

Another one of the organizations' goals is to raise the profile of trades jobs because, as Pariser says, people do not gravitate towards jobs they don't know exist.

"We're trying to bring more profile to lesser-known trades, as well," he said.

With high-rise construction at an all-time high, elucidating the need for more workers in the sector, that could just as easily be the low-rise construction industry in a few years.

"What exacerbates it is residential construction is a lot of boom and bust," said McManus.

"High-rise is busy and needs trades there while low-rise is slowing down, but if it starts back up

we'll be starting at a lower point. We might not need a bricklayer tomorrow, but we might need them in two years, or four years, or five years. We have to take a long-term view. It's about planning for the future and ensuring we are able to train people interested in construction."