



October 27, 2020

Jamil Jivani
Chair, Premier's Council on Equality of Opportunity
Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services

Sent electronically

RE: Feedback on the Black Youth Action Plan (BYAP)

Dear Mr. Jivani,

The Residential Construction Council of Ontario (RESCON) represents over 200 builders of high-rise, mid-rise and low-rise residential buildings in the province. Our goal is to work in cooperation with government and related stakeholders to offer realistic solutions to a variety of challenges facing the residential building industry, which in turn have wider societal impacts. The focus of RESCON's work is on technical standards; labour relations; industry research and innovation; health and safety; regulatory reforms; and training and apprenticeship.

Recent BuildForce Canada data estimates that the construction industry in Ontario alone will need to recruit, train and retain 100,000 workers within the next decade to offset retirements from the industry – this includes tapping into our next generation of the construction industry – today's youth. Ontario's housing goals are contingent upon having a sustainable workforce.

As outlined in labour legislation, the construction industry is recognized as transient. This is because builders utilize up to 25 trades when building a low-rise home or high-rise condo and not all skills – for example basement forming – are always needed. This means that workers (who are often unionized) move between employers with frequency. It is very common for a skilled trades worker to have multiple employers during a year and work on several different construction sites. For example, a low-rise electrician may literally work on a different house every week or every couple of days.

We believe the provincial government has made great strides in addressing the skilled trades shortage through improved promotion of the many careers in the trades and through expansion of existing training programs and grants. The provincial government also plays a significant role in facilitating pathways into the construction skilled trades for youth. Despite improvements to apprenticeship system and the simplification of the complete pathways into the trades, barriers still exist for youth entering the trades. These across-the-board barriers are exacerbated for Black youth, who face additional systemic barriers.

While there are many non-profit organizations and youth employment agencies that are doing exceptional work in decreasing Black youth unemployment rates, there are certain programs and initiatives that we believe should be scaled up or receive additional recognition. For example, the



Building Opportunities for Life Today Charitable Foundation (BOLT) and the STEP to Construction Program through the Toronto District School Board (TDSB). BOLT works to address the needs of marginalized youth by educating them about opportunities and financing scholarships to assist their training in construction. The attractiveness of BOLT's programs is further enhanced by its work supporting essential skills for marginalized youth, their high rates in placing these young people, and the crucial social support and development mentoring provided as these youth are in the initial phase(s) of their construction jobs.

STEP to Construction is a TDSB program offered through Northview Heights Secondary School that provides unique and in-depth exposure to and experience in multiple trades. In a co-op education semester, STEP to Construction participants rotate through multiple skilled construction trades during one semester, spending approximately two weeks with each trade on a construction site. Many of these students are from marginalized communities and/or have had challenges in graduating high school. STEP to Construction allows students to experience multiple trades before potentially choosing and continuing education in one trade. There have been 500 alumni since inception in 2004.

RESCON members and residential sub-trades find it difficult to partner with non-profit organizations and youth employment agencies for several reasons. First, these organizations have often been created to fill a niche which has created fragmentation of small organizations. Second, there is a lack of marketing, awareness, and communication to the construction industry about these organizations and their programs. The private sector, including residential builders and developers, should be tapped into, and looked to for partnerships with non-profit organizations and youth employment agencies.

RESCON has always believed that working together with government, organized labour, and non-profit organizations, rather than in isolation, results in more impactful outcomes. Finally, RESCON believes that government funded employer incentives to recruiting, training, and retaining youth, including Black youth, would be extremely successful.

RESCON is grateful to have been included in virtual consultations and to submit written comments. We hope to continue engagement with the Premier's Council on Equality of Opportunity to ensure we are including Black youth in the construction industry.

Thank you,

Amina Dibe
Chair, Anti-Racism Roundtable
RESCON