

July 29, 2021

Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development  
14th Floor, 400 University Avenue  
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1T7



*Submitted electronically*

RE: RESCON's comments to Ontario's Workforce Recovery Advisory Committee

Dear Chair McArthur and Members of OWRAC,

The Residential Construction Council of Ontario (RESCON) represents over 200 residential builders of high, mid, and low-rise buildings in the province, with a focus on the GTA. Our members build Ontario's communities, homes, and future. We are committed to providing leadership and fostering innovation in the industry through the following six core focuses: Training and Apprenticeship; Government Relations; Labour Relations; Health and Safety; Building Science and Innovation; and Building Code Reform and Technical Standards.

RESCON is pleased to provide commentary on how Ontario can become a leading jurisdiction to recruit and retain workers. Please see our feedback below based on the three pillars:

1. ***Economic recovery: How to make Ontario the top jurisdiction with a world-class workforce and talent supply?***

To ensure Ontario is the top jurisdiction for top-talent, it is crucial that greater focus is put on high-growth sectors and in-demand jobs in these sectors. Specifically, construction has and will continue to drive the economic recovery in construction. When analyzing the data, residential construction is the largest sector of construction in Ontario and has a tradition of investing in their workforce. This was demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic and supported by WSIB injury data which highlighted the tremendous efforts made by residential builders to keep workers safe.

Marketing and promotion of careers to youth and immigrants looking to settle in Ontario should be centered around these in-demand careers. In construction alone, there are 90,000 skilled trades jobs that will open up in Ontario between now and 2030. Many of these jobs are in the residential sector which depends on specialized skilled sets to respond to our unique market needs. In-demand residential careers include residential bricklayers, stucco installers, concrete and drain workers, elevator installers, crane operators, and other finishing trades.

With respect attracting talent via immigration, gaps still exist. More focus is needed on recruiting individuals who have or are willing to learn the specialized skill sets needed to have a fulfilling and lucrative career in residential construction. While improving trade equivalency and recognizing education and experience from international jurisdictions is important, Ontario needs to go back to what worked and welcome immigrants interested specialized careers in the residential sector. In construction, specific voluntary based skilled trades careers including but not limited to low-rise framing, concrete and drain, bricklaying, interior finishing as well as many of the careers outlined above continue to rely on skilled foreign workers to offset domestic training programs. The current immigration system has trouble recognizing these careers as skilled and therefore has created barriers for immigrants with these skills. The trade equivalency assessment process should consider

these skilled immigrants and their contributions to the construction industry at equal footing to other skilled workers across construction and the broader economy. Further, the OINP application process should consider and base assessment on labour market demands – including in construction and the related in demand careers as outlined above.

Finally, existing federal requirements including the job-posting requirement do not recognize how the residential construction industry is organized and the role of our union and labour partners. Specifically, it is not practical or possible for an employer to post a job nationally as construction is and has always been recognized as transient. This means that a worker accumulates full-time work through employment on several projects with various employers through a year and career. There is a reason why construction workers are called ‘journeypeople’ – it is because they travel.

Understanding how construction, including residential construction, is organized and operates would allow for immediate improvements in the immigration process.

2. ***Strengthening Ontario’s competitive position: In an increasingly remote, global and technologically advanced economy, how will we ensure that Ontario remains the best place in North America to recruit, retain, and reward workers?***

Recruitment and retention starts and stops with employers – and to ensure Ontario remains the top region to hire and train, the government must ensure that employers are fully supported to adapt to today’s everchanging environment.

The government should consider increasing on-the-job supports for employers who hire and employ skilled trades people – specifically graduates of specialized training programs and college programs.

As outlined above, most skilled trade workers in the residential construction industry fall under voluntary trades. This means that the vast majority of training is done on the job and employers should be compensated for the training they provide.

In terms of retaining employees – mentorship programs are invaluable as they help ensure that youth and job seekers are guided through their career pathway, which can reduce ‘drop-off’ rates during training and increase retention rates with employers. The government should reward employers that have robust mentorship programs and ensure that government funded training programs have a significant mentorship component.

3. ***Supporting workers: How to ensure Ontario’s technology platform workers benefit from flexibility, control, and security?***

Job seekers, and workers alike, should be able to access information publicly and easily about in-demand careers and industries, and their associated training requirements/programs. Use of digital tools and existing marketing materials should continue to be used by industry and government alike. For example – the Job Talks Construction resource is a open-source video series profiling 25 different jobs in the construction skilled trades.

RESCON is encouraged that a digital portal will be created through the formation of Skilled Trades Ontario. The digital portal will help ensure that apprentices are progressing through their training and remain on track to certification. While we are glad that using of technology is a priority, the

digital portal must be easy to use (accessible) for both apprentices, job seekers, journey people and employers.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'RL', written in a cursive style.

Richard Lyall  
President  
RESCON

**Copy to:**

Monte McNaughton, Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development

Walid Abou-Hamde, Director of Stakeholder Relations, Minister McNaughton's Office