



RESCON: Construction in the age of COVID-19

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Published: April 9, 2020



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Construction has had to adjust the way it operates in the COVID-19 pandemic. Here are RESCON's top-five issues that you should know about in this new reality.

1. Safety is our top priority. We fully support the new safety protocols for construction introduced by the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development. Construction's commitment to safety has led to enhanced on-site safety practices and hygiene. While, these

steps have slowed progress on job sites, all builders and the industry are determined to protect the health and safety of our on-site workers.

2. Housing completions will continue. Many new-home buyers will be happy to know that housing completions will continue – a good decision by the government. I'd like to acknowledge the steady, inspiring leadership of Premier Ford and his able Cabinet. As stories started circulating about families that could become homeless as construction on their new homes had stopped and closing dates were cancelled, Premier Ford made the right call. He understands that building shelter for people, including affordable housing, is a key service for Ontarians and is strategically important as well.

3. 24/7 construction is vital. If you see or hear overnight work, that is important work being done for hospitals, medical centres and other health infrastructure. The extended hours allow for further staggering of shifts and will aid the practice of physical distancing. This is another smart move by Premier Ford and Minister Monte McNaughton, all in the name of safety for workers as they build healthcare facilities to take care of the general population.

4. A time for innovation. Toronto Mayor John Tory and Councillor Joe Cressy recently noted that there is currently an opportunity to fix the housing supply crisis. The City of Toronto could quickly fix the zoning barriers on heights and densities for housing across the city, along main streets and corridors, and around transit hubs. It's regrettable that it takes a crisis like COVID-19 to be an impetus for rapid change for desperately needed housing but there is hope for positive change that will improve how we build and put roofs over more heads.

Elsewhere on the innovation front, the industry is working on ways to move elements of pre-construction paperwork for City Hall online, such as permit reviews and some inspections, as done in leading jurisdictions such as Singapore and Finland. I'm talking about a digital disruption: paperless planning and online building approvals systems could be introduced quickly and ultimately speed up occupancies. Also, the City of Toronto deserves kudos for considering new modular-housing projects, using prefabricated units to build supportive housing to address the housing supply crisis.

5. Does the West know best? While RESCON supports the decision by the Ontario government to close the operations of many construction sites in reaction to COVID-19, residential construction continues on the west coast. British Columbia has managed to flatten the curve of the virus while maintaining housing construction in all forms. Victoria recognized that construction is a strategically important industry and new housing is essential. Residential construction is one of the cogs of the Ontario economy and should be proceeding as much as possible in these challenging times.

This conversation will continue to evolve over the coming weeks as industry continues to collaborate with government to ensure construction continues in a safe and responsible way, so keep reading torontosun.com.

I'd like to close by praising the many frontline workers, especially nurses and doctors, who are working through the holiday weekend. You are Canada's true heroes in the war against the virus. Thank you!

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