

## RESCON reacts to Ontario economic statement

November 8, 2021

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By RESCON

The [Residential Construction Council of Ontario \(RESCON\)](#) commends the provincial government for delivering a fall economic statement that focuses on skilled trades training, job creation, housing supply, transit and building roads and highways to keep goods flowing.

“We have a skilled trades shortage looming, so it’s essential that funds be set aside for strategies to train the next generation of workers and encourage more young people to pursue rewarding careers in the construction industry,” says RESCON president Richard Lyall. “The GTA, meanwhile, is expected to grow by 2.8 million people in the next 25 years and it’s anticipated traffic congestion will double, so it is critical that we ensure there are reliable transportation networks for commuters and supply chains.”

Housing supply and affordability continue to be issues and establishment of the Housing Affordability Task Force is vital. The Transit Oriented Communities plan, meantime, will help bring housing closer to public transportation, which will help create more connected communities.

RESCON is also pleased the government is investing an additional \$90.3 million over three years for the Skilled Trades Strategy, as well as enhancing the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program and the Pre-Apprenticeship Training Program, as they will create better incentives for employers to train and retain apprentices.

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“We are encouraged by the government’s commitment to the goals in the Skilled Trades Strategy and to breaking the stigma by improving guidance about careers in the skilled trades to educators and guidance counsellors,” says RESCON VP Andrew Pariser. “They have a significant influence on a young person’s career decisions, and if they are not informed or have misconceptions about careers in construction, they won’t recommend that pathway to their students.”

Supporting the next generation of workers is crucial as more than 100,000 workers will be needed in construction in Ontario alone over the next decade. Expanding the Ontario Jobs Training Tax Credit with an additional \$275 million will help offset training costs for another 240,000 job seekers.

RESCON applauds the government's investment of \$3.8 billion over the next 10 years to Ontario's mental health system. Furthermore, an investment of \$32.7 million for targeted addictions services and supports, including opioid addiction treatments, is significant to the construction industry as COVID-19 has exacerbated the challenges for workers.

Over the past year, RESCON, through the launch of the Anti-Racism Roundtable, has made diversity, equity and inclusion of underrepresented groups such as women and BIPOC workers a strategic priority. An additional \$5 million for expansion of the Second Career Program in 2021-22 will help construction achieve the goal of greater inclusion.

"Diversity and inclusion are something that must be specifically recognized through recruitment and retention policies, programs and practices," says RESCON manager of government and stakeholder relations Amina Dibe, who is chair of the Anti-Racism Roundtable. "I was pleased to see that a diversity and inclusion governance structure will be established within Skilled Trades Ontario."

COVID-19 was specifically difficult for women and female-dominated industries during the height of the pandemic. Establishing Ontario's Task Force on Women and the Economy and investment in the Women's Future program will help remove barriers to accessing employment (including in construction) and re-entering the economy

RESCON is also pleased that digitization remains a focus of the government. We have advocated for the removal of red tape and speeding up the development approvals process via the One Ontario initiative that proposes a streamlined and digitized data exchange standard to be used by municipalities.