



RESCON: Three reflections for a new year

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It's that time where we prepare for a new year while reflecting on the year that has just passed.

Where did 2019 go? It was a busy one for the residential construction industry. Here are a few thoughts for you about the behind-the-scenes of the construction of your new house or condo suite that will be important for 2020.

Supply, Supply, Supply: Remember the favourite pitch rattled off by most real estate agents about the most important factor in finding a new home? Well, consider “supply, supply supply” the mantra of builders/developers who want to help get millennials, new Canadians and the middle class into new houses and condo suites. But we can’t do it without help. Bill 108 – the More Homes, More Choice act – is a good first step and a brave move but there is a lot more that needs to be done so that more people can get a new home, especially at the municipal level. Without serious reform and digitization of the approvals process to move us into the 21st century, the GTA will continue to rack up a deficit of 20,000 new homes every year. If we look across the Pacific Ocean to Tokyo, where housing policies have seen relative deregulation (no rent controls and fewer restrictions on height and density), there is hope for the GTA. After all, Tokyo’s substantial increase in supply has kept home prices from rising as drastically as many other international cities, including Hogtown.

Getting Youth into Construction: We can’t emphasize this enough: we need more young people to join the skilled trades as well as construction management, especially women. According to BuildForce Canada, the next decade will see 103,900 jobs open up because of impending retirements and the burgeoning demand of new-home buyers for all types of construction across the GTA. This is a drum I’ve been banging all year long with the RESCON team, including our VP Andrew Pariser, as skills training and development is a big component of what our association promotes (visit the new rescon.com for two 2019 reports). Our strong partnerships on this issue include George Brown College, Humber College, BOLT (Building Opportunities for Life Today), the Centre for Skills Development, STEP to Construction (TDSB) and Job Talks Construction.

Partnership with Government: The Ontario government’s ministers have been responsive to the industry’s needs. Do they follow up on everything we ask? Absolutely not. But they are listening, and we appreciate it. In fact, Minister Monte McNaughton visited BOLT’s Day of Discovery on his first day on the job for the skills development and training file. Housing and Municipal Affairs Minister Steve Clark visited our annual general meeting and was the keynote speaker for the University of Toronto’s BIM+ event – he wants to establish a BIM mandate in Ontario so the industry undergoes a digital transformation in delivery of service. We support this move. Meanwhile, we also pledge to continue to work with the City of Toronto on crucial issues as they arise – including the city’s water and wastewater distribution crunch. Earlier this year, the noise bylaw exemption resolution involving concrete work (a crucial stage of construction for new high-rise projects) proved that city council and the industry can collaborate for satisfying outcomes for all parties.

Thank you for reading, and good luck with your house hunting. Happy holidays, merry Christmas, happy Hanukkah – and Happy New Year!

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