

Police probing three racist noose incidents at Toronto construction sites

By Robin McNamara - July 1, 2020



Three racist noose incidents have been reported at Greater Toronto Area construction sites, provoking police investigations of possible hate crimes.

The incidents occurred in June on project sites under the supervision of EllisDon, Govan Brown and The Daniels Corporation.

The Daniels Corporation said a noose was discovered at a work site in the area of Dundas and Sumach streets last Friday.

“We are disgusted and horrified at this heinous act, which we are treating as a hate crime,” company president Mitchell Cohen said in a statement. “We have taken immediate action and filed a report with (the) Toronto Police Service . . . We have also launched our own internal investigation with independent third-party experts who specialize in health and safety in the workplace to treat this with the severity it warrants.”

Meanwhile, Toronto police said they are investigating after another noose was found hanging from an EllisDon construction site on June 25 — just weeks after two nooses were found by Black construction workers on another EllisDon site in East York.

Police say they are now trying to figure out whether or not the two incidents are connected. Both are being investigated as hate crimes, CBC Toronto has reported.

EllisDon told CBC Toronto that the noose was discovered inside a partially-built tower at 81 Bay St., across from Scotiabank Arena.

“Yesterday, a piece of hate paraphernalia (a noose) was discovered at a portion of the project being managed by EllisDon and Govan Brown in joint venture,” said Dustin Luchka, a spokesperson for the company.

Toronto police Supt. Michael Barsky confirmed that police were made aware of the incident EllisDon incident. He told the broadcaster that the noose was found on a high floor in the building, where workers were installing heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC). Police have seized the rope as evidence.

The incident comes just weeks after [nooses were found at the Michael Garron Hospital construction site](#), also run by EllisDon. Two Black construction workers found two nooses at that site on June 10, and police were called.

Business organizations and unions have spoken out to condemn the racist activities.

The Carpenters’ District Council of Ontario (CDCO) said in a statement it is “disgusted and saddened by the racist and hateful acts that have taken place at construction sites across Toronto in recent days and weeks.”

“We denounce these acts in the strongest terms and commend our industry employer colleagues for their actions in promptly addressing these repulsive incidents by launching internal investigations into what happened, contacting the Toronto Police Service, and overtly characterizing these acts as hate crimes. The Carpenters will do everything possible to support them and the police in their respective investigations.

“The Carpenters will not tolerate any behaviour that makes anyone feel unsafe on our worksites,” the union said. “Now’s the time for all employers in the construction industry, as well as governments at all levels, to implement more safeguards to protect employees and focus more resources on long-term education to help eradicate racism in the workplace.”

“We recently signed the Charter of Inclusive Workplaces and Communities – brought forward by the Carpenters Local 27 – as part of a multi-union effort supported by the Toronto and York Region Labour Council to create safe and respectful workplaces,” said CDCO president Mike Yorke. “While only a first step, this Charter holds us accountable and reminds us that we must learn and grow together as an industry.”

[The Charter of Inclusive Workplaces and Communities](#) is available online and will be posted on all job sites and in administrative offices where members are working. “We are also committed to holding regular on-site meetings providing a forum to ask questions and promote discussion about how we can support an inclusive and diverse workplace, strengthening our commitment to equality, respect, and dignity for all,” the CDCO statement said.

The Carpenters also encourage members to be vocal in combatting racism.

“Keep having those difficult conversations with family, friends, and colleagues,” said CDCO executive secretary treasurer Tony Iannuzzi. “These deplorable acts of racism need to stop. We encourage everyone to speak up against racism in all its forms, and get involved in activities within your community. Know that we stand behind you 100 per cent.”

Employers represented by the [Residential Construction Council of Ontario \(RESCON\)](#) also indicated they were appalled about the nooses.

“These are disturbing and shocking racially-motivated incidents that are denounced by everyone who works in our industry,” said RESCON president Richard Lyall. “These are acts of cowardice and racism that have no place in our industry nor society. The perpetrators must be caught and prosecuted.

“Our industry and members have zero tolerance for racism and discriminatory behaviour of any kind. Hanging a noose is a hate crime. These perpetrators will be terminated and no longer welcome in the industry.”

RESCON represents more than 200 residential builders in the province. The recent incidents in no way exemplify the more than 400,000 people who work in Ontario’s construction industry, the organization said.

“RESCON is disgusted by these incidents,” says Lyall. “A noose is a very specific racist symbol and one that is disturbingly targeted against the Black community. This is completely unacceptable. We have a multi-racial and multi-cultural workforce and oppose all forms of racism.”

“Sadly, such incidents have occurred at three construction sites now in Toronto,” says Lyall. “Whoever did this is merely attempting to sow division and hatred. These incidents must be investigated to the fullest extent. We can not allow this to go unpunished.”

Anyone with information about the incidents to contact Toronto Police Service at 416-808-2222 or leave an anonymous tip with Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-8477.