

Critical vote could decide fate of Toronto's construction industry

by Neil Sharma 17 Apr 2019



A City Council vote today could determine the fate of Toronto's construction industry.

Municipal Licensing and Standards wants to rescind a noise bylaw exemption on concrete work the Toronto construction industry has enjoyed since 2007—which catalyzed the city's building boom—but the **Residential Construction Council of Ontario (RESCON)** says it could put 7,000 jobs on the line and cripple Toronto's construction industry.

“The production and productivity wouldn't be able to achieve anywhere near where they are, and hopefully the exemption continues,” said **Paul De Berardis, RESCON's director of building science and innovation**. “If the exemption is removed, we expect timeline increases of anywhere from 30-40% on construction schedules.”

The exemption, added De Berardis, facilitated the construction of Toronto's myriad high-rise towers, which elevated the city's global status. He also noted, however, that should the exemption be retracted, 32,000 units permitted for construction will be at risk.

“The schedule of delivering them to renters and new condo buyers would have been laid out with the current exemption in place, but if work has to stop at 7PM there's no way projects that are

just starting construction or already undergoing concrete superstructures will complete on schedule because they won't be able to maintain production.”

In the summer, concrete curing takes hours, but during winter it takes even longer. Toronto condos are already delivered to market at a snail's pace, thanks in part to the delays in obtaining approval permits from the city bureaucracy, and even slower delivery could exacerbate existing affordability woes by further constricting supply.

Moreover, thousands of construction jobs could be lost, and given that there's already a pronounced shortage of skilled trades and 90,000 workers are slated for retirement in decade, RESCON worries withdrawing the noise exemption will do irreparable damage to Toronto's housing market.

Said Richard Lyall, RESCON's president: It's mystifying why the City is targeting housing without supporting data as this will kill jobs and reduce supply.”

Municipal Licensing and Standards emailed MortgageBrokerNews.ca a statement from Carleton Grant, its director of policy and strategic support, about why the 12-year-old noise exemption may be repealed:

“The [proposed amendments to the Noise Bylaw](#) (Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 591, Noise) regarding continuous concrete pouring are meant to ensure companies consider noise management and mitigation before projects are underway. Under the proposed amendments, companies that wish to undertake continuous concrete pouring and/or large crane work outside of the permitted hours, can apply for a noise exemption permit. During the permit process, Municipal Licensing and Standards may request a noise mitigation plan. For construction, this may include a list of equipment to be used and noise mitigation efforts such as sound barriers. Permits can be obtained before work begins and cover an extended period of time.

“Construction-related noises are one of the main sources of noise complaints to the City, representing one-third of all general noise complaints. The goal of the amendment is to work collaboratively with the construction industry to support their work, while balancing the needs of residents.”

Interestingly, De Berardis pointed to Municipal Licensing and Standards polling that showed only 8% of Torontonians find construction noise too much of a nuisance. He, furthermore, stated that withdrawing the noise exemption will stall construction in Toronto and possibly move it elsewhere.

“Neighbouring jurisdictions that don't employ strict rules will push development to the outside of Toronto where it's simpler to build.”