



RESCON applauds Ontario government's COVID-19 action plan

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Vaughan, March 25, 2020 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) --

The Province has released March 2020 Economic and Fiscal Update – Ontario's Action Plan: Responding to COVID-19. The document provides the first step by the government in its response to COVID-19 and it includes \$7 billion in additional resources for the healthcare system and direct support for families and jobs. It also will make available \$10 billion in support for people and businesses through tax and other deferrals. As a result of today's COVID-19 action plan, the government is forecasting a deficit of \$20.5 billion in the 2020–21 fiscal year.

“We applaud the government's response to COVID-19 and believe that the measures reflected in the economic update will provide much needed assistance to businesses and Ontarians,” said **Richard Lyall, president of the Residential Construction Council of Ontario (RESCON)**.

The economic update includes funding for municipalities through the Municipal Modernization Program to support 405 small and rural municipalities in service delivery reviews and projects aimed at increasing municipal efficiency. This is on the heels of the government's passing of the Municipal Emergency Act last week, which allows municipalities the ability to fully conduct council, local board and committee meetings electronically when faced with local and province-wide emergencies.

“The COVID-19 crisis has highlighted the drawbacks of the traditional way of doing business,” Lyall said. “It is imperative that municipalities undertake innovative methods to continue with service delivery remotely and electronically. For example, e-permitting and digital alternatives to municipal site inspections are more relevant than ever because of the speed and ease of these alternatives in the middle of a housing crisis and when municipal business processes have slowed down remarkably.

“There should be a concentrated effort by the Province to allow municipal building officials to undertake ‘remote inspections’ using interactive digital platforms. Policies have been introduced in Finland to address the slowdown in site inspections as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.”

The document contained a restated commitment to supporting workers and increasing skilled trades training opportunities through the additional funding for skills training programs. Further, there is expanded funding for the Specialist High Skills Majors program which allows students to focus on career pathways that match their skill set. This program allows young people to discover careers in the skilled trades and leads them on a clearer pathway from secondary to post-secondary education and training.

Further, during Minister Rod Phillips’ tabling of the economic update, he noted that the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, in conjunction with the Province, will be permitting businesses to defer premium rate payments and reporting to Aug. 31, 2020.

RESCON vice-president Andrew Pariser said: “Demand for skilled labour in the construction industry continues to be a challenge, and funding for retraining programs is especially necessary in times like this when skills trades training would be vital for people who face unemployment or job uncertainty due to COVID-19. Residential construction will be quick to adapt to COVID-19 obstacles and will continue to be an industry that creates high-paying and satisfying careers.”

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