

## Looming strikes could stall GTA home construction this summer

by News Staff

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If you're having a home built in or around the city this summer, you may be in store for a later move-in date than you anticipated.

CityNews received a tip that a number of GTA residential construction unions have voted in favour of a strike following failed bargaining with the Ministry of Labour. Negotiations were ongoing in the lead up to bargaining agreements expiring on April 30.

Unions for tile contractors, drywallers and home framers were all involved in these discussions. There are approximately 20 to 25 trades involved in building a house, according to the Residential Construction Council of Ontario (RESCON). They say four trades are on strike, which is approximately 7,000 workers.

The significant number of parties involved could be what makes these negotiations so complex, says Bill Nichols, Program Coordinator at the George Brown College School of Construction Management.

"There are multiple unions so it's not just one union you're dealing with," he says. "You could be dealing with up to 50." He also cautions homeowners that delays are unavoidable.

"If no framing can get done, no drywall, no tiling, no kitchen installation, the whole process really does get jammed up by virtue of this one strike," said Jason Ottey of LiUNA Local

183. Though standalone low-rise homes will face the primary impact of this job action Ottey says condominium developments have the potential to be affected, as well.

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GTA framers’ union LiUNA Local 183 said about 5,000 framers responsible for roughly 90 per cent of construction projects between Burlington and Bowmanville are already striking. Although 5,000 may not sound intimidating, the framers’ strike is likely to cause a ripple effect among many other trade jobs because framers set the framework for most construction projects.

RESCON said in a statement that it’s impossible to know how long labour disruptions will last.

The maximum delay will be six weeks, according to a legislated return-to-work date of no later than June 15.

RESCON Vice-President Andrew Pariser said avoiding the maximum labour delay is the priority of all parties involved.

“We don’t know the full extent of the situation but every member that I’ve talked to and all of the homebuilders that I’ve talked to – this is their number one priority,” said Pariser.

And as for homeowners, George Brown College’s Nichols says they could potentially be out of luck.

“They would be out luck, out of pocket for any expense they incurred due to the strike,” he says. “This is an unavoidable delay, it’s the same as force majeure. The homeowners are not entitled to compensation.”