



ONTARIO'S RESIDENTIAL BUILDERS LAUD GOVERNMENT FOR BUDGET INITIATIVES

March 24, 2021, Vaughan, Ont. – The [Residential Construction Council of Ontario \(RESCON\)](#) commends the provincial government for tackling the COVID-19 pandemic and protecting workers while continuing to make significant investments in training, anti-racism and important mental health initiatives.

“We appreciate the government's continued leadership and swift response throughout the pandemic,” says RESCON president Richard Lyall. “COVID-19 has taken its toll on many industries, but the province worked with construction employers and unions to keep our vital industry safe and operational. We appreciate the support and leadership that the government has shown to our industry and Ontarians during this extremely tough time.”

The \$186.1-billion budget, dubbed Ontario's Action Plan: Protecting People's Health and Our Economy, outlines a roadmap for Ontario's future. RESCON is encouraged by the \$1.4-billion investment for personal protective equipment (PPE) which will help ensure that supply is sustained throughout the pandemic.

“While an increased number of Ontarians are being vaccinated, COVID-19 testing and tracing remains a priority and we are pleased to see funding for rapid testing and contact tracing, as it will help mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in workplaces and on jobsites,” notes Lyall. “We are also encouraged by the \$1 billion in funding to ensure that every Ontarian can be vaccinated against COVID-19, which will further accelerate our economic recovery.”

RESCON applauds the government's continued focus on providing opportunities for youth through its Skilled Trades Strategy. The industry's current growth projections, along with the number of baby boomers set to retire very soon from jobsites, place the sector at risk of a sharp labour deficit. By 2030, 116,200 construction workers will be needed to offset retirements. Attracting youth to the trades through increased promotion and awareness in elementary and secondary schools is needed. The skilled trades, including voluntary residential trades, offer high-paying, rewarding careers with upward mobility and high job satisfaction.

Youth and young jobseekers have been significantly impacted by the pandemic and RESCON is pleased to see the proposal for an Ontario Jobs Training Tax Credit which would offset training costs up to \$2,000 for individuals.

RESCON also commends the government for providing additional funds for experiential learning programs for youth interested in the skilled trades, including \$39.6 million in additional funding over three years for the Specialist High Skills Major program and the expansion of the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program to allow for a Grade 10 summer program.

Providing opportunities for high school-aged youth to discover careers in construction and become job-ready is crucial as the industry aims to recruit en masse. RESCON welcomes the announcement of 75 new programs to provide opportunities for Grade 11 and 12 students to develop job-ready skills and explore opportunities in the skilled trades.

The newly announced digital portal for apprentices further ensures that apprentices can monitor their career journey and access information from an accessible online tool, further simplifying the apprenticeship process. Funding for the skilled trades in the 2021 budget makes pathways into the trades more clear and seamless, further bridging the gap from interested youth to hired youth.

COVID-19 has exacerbated existing mental health challenges that Ontarians face, including workers in the construction industry, and RESCON is glad to see the government's additional investment of \$175 million over the next year for mental health and addictions support services. This is part of the province's Roadmap to Wellness plan which sees \$3.8 billion earmarked over 10 years for mental health and addictions services.

We also commend the government's additional investment of \$1.6 million over two years for the Anti-Racism and Anti-Hate Grant program, which will support anti-Black racism initiatives.

"This funding is in line with the goals of RESCON's Anti-Racism Roundtable, which aims to combat racism and discrimination within the construction industry and remove barriers for Black youth to enter the construction skilled trades," says Amina Dibe, manager of government and stakeholder relations at RESCON and chair of the roundtable.

Background on RESCON: RESCON is the province's leading association of residential builders committed to providing leadership and fostering innovation in the industry.

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