

Home construction industry has learned to bounce back



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When COVID-19 hit, Ontario's construction industry had to pivot and address the pandemic's impacts swiftly, decisively and comprehensively. We did just that.

As an essential sector, the industry was able to remain largely open and continue building while preventing the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace.

We led the early development and implementation of COVID-19 protocols for residential construction sites in partnership with the CDAO and ORCA.

Our sector was the first one in Ontario to produce sector-specific guidance documents that were approved by both labour and management and which served as a blueprint for the development of the province's 170 sector-specific guidance resources.

The industry also implemented additional health and safety parameters to ensure that operations were maintained. These included staggering shifts, maintaining physical distancing and more.

Our success in addressing COVID-19 is in no small part due to the government's swift and methodical approach to the pandemic. From the beginning, Ontario took the necessary steps and made difficult choices to address the reality, always with an eye to Ontarians' well-being as a top priority.

When the virus initially struck, the residential building industry lost about 25 per cent of its workforce. A few contractors and builders temporarily shut down for two weeks to get organized. Productivity fell an estimated 40 to 50 per cent.

But we bounced back quickly. Most developers are now running at 75 to 90 per cent productivity. Work is

impacted by social distance and other requirements. For example, workers must get clearance to go on site, there are restrictions on the number of people on site, and there are sometimes lineups to get on a site.

These measures will likely be with us for some time and we expect productivity to be impacted until a vaccine is found, or safety measures evolve and allow for greater productivity.



While the industry has certainly bounced back, we are not out of the woods yet. There is clearly still room for improvement before we get back to pre-pandemic productivity levels.

This lower productivity will have a direct impact on housing supply in Ontario. Statistics for residential construction show that 97 per cent of pre-construction projects are delayed, with 32 per cent delayed more than six months. Also, 85 per cent of projects under construction above-grade and 83 per cent under construction below-grade are delayed three to six months.

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Legislative and regulatory policies that the province put

in place, such as extending construction hours, must remain, as they are necessary for the health and safety of workers and continuation of all construction projects.

Extending construction hours has enabled worksite managers more flexibility to stagger shifts, limit the number of people in one place, such as in hoists, and ensure that health and safety guidelines are adhered to.

It's imperative that the industry get back to its peak days as soon as possible. Demand for housing has not abated. We need to speed up the approval process in our province to increase supply.

Our research shows that building approval timelines are a lot longer than they should be. Presently, residential site plan approvals can take two years.

There have been some positive signs of late. Marketing and sales efforts have restarted with certain safety elements in mind. With discipline and safety measures in place, we expect housing production to keep rolling.

There could be some issues, however, in the supply chain on specific products subject to production and delivery constraints. The situation in the U.S. is particularly concerning given the inability to get a grip on the spread of the virus through relatively simple and straightforward measures.

We anticipate public roll-out of a contact tracing app soon by the province and federal government. A functioning public tracing app will be critical to snuff out hot spots.

The COVID-19 situation has certainly not been an ordinary event by any stretch of the imagination, but thankfully the response of our construction industry and workers has been extraordinary.

Richard Lyall, president of Rescon, has represented the building industry in Ontario since 1991. Contact him at media@rescon.com

onthemarket

The North Region has experienced positive growth during the last few months leading all regions with 451 sales in June.

Markets such as Newmarket, Stouffville, Markham, Unionville, Thornhill, Aurora, Bradford and Barrie have led the GTA in inventory and sales numbers. There are continuous new openings with a variety of home types at different price points.

The top selling builders year-to-date in low-rise sales are: 1. Mattamy Homes; 2. Minto Homes; 3. Great Gulf Homes; 4. Remington Homes; 5. Pace Developments; 6. Townwood Homes; 7. National Homes; 8. Pratt Homes; 9. Regal Crest Homes; 10. Tribute Communities.

Watch for monthly updates on the Trimart Top 20 builders list or call 905-820-6711.

Examples of notable sites are: Shining Hill in Newmarket by Regal Crest Homes; Anchor Woods Holland Landing by Regal Crest Homes; Jade Gardens Cornell in Markham by Primont Homes; Riverview Heights in Brampton by Ashley Oaks Homes; and, Glen Abbey Encore in Oakville by Hallet Homes.



Markham
Jade Gardens Cornell
Primont Homes

Prices range from \$789,900 to \$1,199,900 for 1,805 sq. ft. to 3,197 sq. ft. Townhomes
www.primonthomes.com



Newmarket
Shining Hill
Regal Crest Homes

Prices range from \$809,000 to \$988,000 for 1,963 sq. ft. to 3,095 sq. ft. Townhomes



Brampton
Riverview Heights
Ashley Oaks Homes

Prices range from \$791,900 to \$1,249,900 for 1,500 sq. ft. to 3,438 sq. ft. Townhomes plus detached on 38' and 41' lots
<http://ashleyoakshomes.com>



East Gwillimbury
Anchor Woods
Regal Crest Homes

Prices range from \$703,000 to \$1,088,900 for 2,117 sq. ft. to 3,206 sq. ft. Townhomes, semi-detached plus detached homes on 38' lots
www.regalcresthomes.com



Oakville
Glen Abbey Encore
Hallet Homes

Prices range from \$2,389,990 to \$2,649,990 for 4,963 sq. ft. to 5,869 sq. ft. Detached homes on 60' lots

Information provided by Trimart Research Corporation. Prices and features subject to change. For more information or to list a new site opening, contact Trimart Corporation at admin@trimart.ca.

