

May 21, 2021: Bill 288 Deputation

Introduction

- Good afternoon Chair Sandhu and members of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.
- RESCON appreciates the opportunity to speak in front of you today in favor of Bill 288, the Building Opportunities in the Skilled Trades Act.
- My name is Amina Dibe and I am the Manager of Government and Stakeholder Relations at the Residential Construction Council of Ontario (RESCON). I am joined by my colleague Andrew Pariser who is the Vice President of RESCON.
- **RESCON** (Residential Construction Council of Ontario) represents over 200 residential builders of high, mid, and low-rise buildings in the Province with a focus on the GTA. We are committed to providing leadership and fostering innovation in the industry through the following five core focuses:
 - (1) Labour Relations
 - (2) Training and Apprenticeship, including improving pathways into the skilled trades for youth and women.
 - (3) Health and Safety, including mental health and anti-racism.
 - (4) Building Science and Innovation, including digitization
 - (5) Building Code Reform and Technical Standards
 - (6) Government Relations

RESCON is happy with Bill 288 because it creates the Skills Trades Ontario Crown agency to officially replace the Ontario College of Trades. We are appreciative that the government is following through with their longstanding commitment to wind down the College of Trades and improve pathways into the skilled trades. The College of Trades was never able to meet its mandate or expectations. It was overly burdensome for employers, journey people and apprentices, resulting in low employer engagement and a 'drop off' in apprentices' career journey.

Role of compliance and ORLB

With respect to construction, the College of Trades did not fully understand the differences between the different construction sectors and did not create a corresponding operational plan. This created great difficulties in the residential construction sector and underrepresentation of voluntary trades workers / employers.

Specifically, RESCON supports Bill 288 because it moves enforcement and compliance of apprenticeable trades to the Minister of Labour, Training and Skills Development, which has the proven expertise and track record in enforcement and compliance measures. Bill 288 also respects the role and function of the Ontario Labour Relations Board (ORLB) board respecting past practice and jurisprudence. This is in line with the ORLB's role and expertise in existing workplace and employment legislation and statutes.

In order to fully improve Ontario's training and apprenticeship system, the 7 sectors need to be reflected and the unique way each sector operates, recruits and trains workers must be understood. These 7 sectors are: residential, ICI, electrical power systems (EPSCA), pipelines, sewer and watermain, roads and heavy civil.

Concluding remarks on why its important to get young people into trades

We are also pleased to see that there is emphasis on tools in Bill 288 to ensure that apprentices maintain their progress to certification. By 2030, the construction industry will need to recruit more than 92,000 workers. Our industry cannot afford to have an apprenticeship system that deters youth and employers. That is why we are also glad that the Bill, and the proposed new Crown agency, Skilled Trades Ontario, has a significant promotion mandate. We must promote real careers that exist in the skilled trades. The residential construction sector (with a focus on the GTHA) is made up of dozens if not 100s of jobs that fall within the 40 construction trades. Careers like low-rise or high forming, interior finishing, house framing, concrete and drain, and exterior cladding.

Finally, RESCON supports Bill 288 because the reduced number of members on the Board of Directors (11, from 21 in the previous system) will remove confusion, streamline decision making and eliminate red tape and bureaucracy. RESCON is confident that these 11 members will be equally representative of all skilled trades including construction, represent management and labour, and be representative of our workforce's diversity.

Bill 288 lays the infrastructure needed to improve skills trades regulation in Ontario.