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WSP

How Are Engineers Adjusting to COVID-19 Restrictions?

Throughout the Ontario Government's Declaration of Emergency, we have been reminded that one of our paramount responsibilities as engineers is to protect public safety. Similarly, condominiums, contractors, and consultants must work together to keep our families, friends, and communities healthy. Today, we want to share how COVID-19 has affected our work and how we have been operating throughout these unique and ever-changing weeks.

Our engineers were able to quickly shift from working in the office to working at home, taking advantage of our IT infrastructure, cloud file-sharing network, and video conferencing capabilities. We shifted our focus to accommodate and prioritize projects that immediately impacted public safety or were classified as essential; some examples are structural restoration projects (such as balcony and garage repairs), active water leakage problems, and quality control site visits at new condominium buildings under construction as part of Tarion's Bulletin 19 process.

Evaluations of building components that do not pose an immediate risk to public safety, or





Wrapping up projects and Tarion Updates

Where some of our projects were completed just prior to the shut-down of non-essential services, we have notified our clients about the lien period extension. If your project reached substantial completion during February or March, the lien period date was paused from March 16th to April 16th, 2020. This means that the condominium should retain the holdback monies until the lien period has reached the new maturity date.

Other contractual considerations we have been discussing with clients include:

- The possibility of fully electronic documents, signing all CCDC contracts and other construction documents electronically; and,
- Zero-dollar change orders due to forced schedule changes

Finally, all Tarion warranty periods retroactive to March 16th were suspended during the application of the government's Emergency Order. We have been restricted from completing some of our Performance Audit site visits that would typically include access into individual units. Tarion is providing "reasonable extensions" to file any claims and/or make requests for conciliation, and questions should be directed to Bonnie.Douglas@Tarion.com

By the time this article is released, there will no doubt be another government update. Restrictions will start to lift and capital projects will ramp up, but this summer will be different. More than ever before, collaborative communication between all parties will be essential. Remember that engineers are here to help, and protecting public safety will always be our priority.

which are otherwise non-essential, were postponed and as a result, when the restrictions lift, we will be busy completing this backlog of work. The month of April also allowed us to spend more focused time completing non-site analysis and reporting for projects such as reserve fund studies and performance audits. Working from home has also allowed us to prioritize the completion of design specification packages for our condominium clients so that we can hit the ground running with construction once restrictions ease.

How else has the pandemic affected engineering companies?

While we have been forced to generate unique solutions, typical engineering services provided are largely unchanged. These include video conferences to host tender meetings with contractors in order to obtain pricing for upcoming work, and video conferences with Boards to discuss project prioritization and next steps.



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