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Report Sounds Alarm Over Proposal to Ban Tiebacks

Vaughan, Ont. – A new report rings the alarm on the costly implications a ban of tiebacks would have across Ontario’s construction industry. A regulatory ban on tiebacks, which are a state-of-the-art engineering practice in construction, would spike building costs, increase congestion around project sites, present significant health and safety challenges for workers, prolong construction schedules, and render more developments uneconomical. The report signals the need for government education on building practices and the costly implications of rogue bureaucrats threatening to hinder construction with uneconomic policy directives.

A new report titled “Steel Bracing Vs. Tiebacks A Proposed Regulatory Change That Study Shows To Be Counter-Productive and Costly” was released today by the Residential Construction Council of Ontario (RESCON) and the Ontario Association of Foundation Specialists (OAFS) in partnership with the Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario (RCCAO).

Tiebacks are used on construction sites across Ontario. The report estimates there have likely been over 2 million tiebacks installed to date in the City of Toronto alone. The practice has been used safely and effectively since the 1970s because tiebacks free up construction excavations compared to bulky internal steel bracing, making it easier, faster and more cost-effective to build while simultaneously providing the best protection of streets and neighbouring buildings, and the safety of workers on-site.

The report notes that one incident in 2022, resulting from a costly municipal administrative clerical error, led to challenges for a sewage tunnel boring machine in a west end Toronto neighbourhood. The costly mistake is being used as the justification to ban the use of tiebacks in several Ontario municipalities.

“We could not remain silent as municipal bureaucrats through stealth pen strokes seek to overhaul modern engineering practices through sheer ignorance,” said Peter Smith, Executive Director of the Ontario Association of Foundation Specialists. “Our industry is speaking out to educate Mayors, Councillors, and Queen’s Park policymakers to intervene and stop the implementation of this costly proposal that would add millions in new costs to each new high-rise development in Ontario.”

The findings demonstrate tiebacks enable faster and more economical project delivery by reducing site congestion, allowing concurrent construction activities, and simplifying excavation and concrete forming procedures. Tiebacks also shortened the duration of necessary lane closures. In a representative high-rise multi-unit residential development scenario, the use of internal steel bracing resulted in an estimated \$5 to 6.5 million of additional costs, or \$14,000 to \$18,000 per unit, and increased the excavation and forming timeline by 5 to 7 months compared to tiebacks.

Over the coming weeks RESCON, OAFS, and RCCAO will be meeting with municipal and provincial leaders to educate policymakers on the realities of tiebacks and the reckless and unsafe impacts municipal bans on their use will have.

“Tiebacks are the most commonly utilized bracing system to support deep excavations, a foundational practice required to facilitate high-rise building construction.” said Paul De Berardis, VP, Building Standards & Engineering at RESCON. “The research shows how costly a ban would be and the industry is speaking out to educate policy makers on the realities of how this would negatively impact modern construction practices.”

The full report can be [downloaded here](#).

OAFS and RESCON representatives are available for interviews.

Background on RCCAO: *The Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario (RCCAO) is a labour-management construction alliance. Since its formation in 2005, RCCAO has been a leading industry advocate for infrastructure investment. It has commissioned 63 independent, solutions-based research reports to help inform decision makers.*

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