

# OMB didn't make midtown T.O. school ruling



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Let's address the recent confusion surrounding the plans for a 35-storey condo beside John Fisher Public School in midtown Toronto.

The City of Toronto, area ratepayer groups and the developer, KG Group, agreed to a settlement that would allow KG Group to go ahead with the project while requiring enhanced safety precautions.

The Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) accepted the wishes of all involved parties after mediation (not adjudication) settled the dispute. The OMB didn't make the final ruling.

The OMB heard from qualified expert witnesses and determined that the settlement struck between the three par-

ties represented good planning and was in the public interest.

Even Municipal Affairs Minister Bill Mauro recognized that the OMB didn't impose a resolution on the dispute when he said "this is not an OMB ruling."

Yet, protests erupted after neighbours heard that students might have to be relocated during construction. This was notwithstanding the KG Group has said all safety practices would be in place so students would not have to be moved.

The misunderstood and much maligned OMB was the focus of blame, NIMBY-ists, pitch forks and torches.

This story is like some perverse Groundhog Day, written

a thousand times over in the past decade. The province and municipalities, through policies and plans, determine what is to be built and where.

To preserve farmland and accommodate a growing population, government has called for intensification. And, frankly, intensification can get intense.

This policy-induced failure pushing intensification has dramatically reduced housing supply, rapidly escalated prices and deprived (still hard to believe) the vast majority of young income earners from home ownership.

The rights of those demonstrating against projects like John Fisher school need to be measured against those who cannot acquire new housing. One day, many of those same NIMBY-ists will wonder why their children cannot afford to live in the city they grew up in; others will ask why their kids are still living at home at the age of 35.

And this is the new knowledge economy? Yes, this is our innovative future where the welfare of the next generation



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has effectively been ignored.

If Toronto and other municipalities aspire to be world class, they must manage growth properly and understand the

root causes of the housing supply crisis we face.

This means streamlining the housing approvals process. (Toronto needs to move up

from the current World Bank ranking of 57th of 199 countries in efficiency for construction permitting.)

It's not perfect, but the OMB is critical to moving forward with the new housing we have. Handing the keys over to the proverbial "mob" would be a disaster. Let's face it: if we can't house the next generation, then what on Earth are we doing? This is Canada for crying out loud.

It's high time to start building more houses the next generation needs — addressing the housing supply crisis — rather than kowtowing to NIMBY-ist demands.

Let's not pin the blame on the OMB.

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