

Speeding up development approvals process only way to go

October 16, 2020 - *By Richard Lyall RESCON*



An exciting new project is underway that could dramatically transform the development approval processes in Ontario – and speed-up new housing builds.

The ambitious initiative, called One Ontario, is engaging stakeholders in a collaborative effort to develop guidelines for a digital platform that could be used by municipalities for the approvals and e-permitting process.

It is the brainchild of AECO Innovation Lab, a team of engineers, finance and business development consultants who regularly tackle the needs of architectural, engineering and construction (AEC) industries.

The venture is supported by RESCON, which represents more than 200 builders, the Ontario Building Officials Association (OBOA), and the Toronto BIM Community. It was launched at OBOA's recent annual meeting.

Presently, the stakeholders are working on engaging the province and municipal governments, AEC companies, and the community of software providers and academics.

Current development approval processes used by the 444 municipalities in Ontario are fragmented, lengthy and downright confusing for many builders who must use the system. Standards can vary from place to place. It can be especially frustrating for builders who work across different municipalities because it takes a lot of time to prepare and submit permit applications that are subject to different rules.

Years of frustration

The residential construction industry for years has been frustrated by the varied jurisdictional rules and timelines which only make it more difficult to build the much-needed housing in Ontario. As a result, we have a housing supply crisis. We are short about 12,000 units a year. It is clear something must be done.

It presently takes far too long to get residential developments approved and built in Ontario. The new initiative will change that by harmonizing and standardizing the data and information exchange flow between clients, municipalities, and provincial agencies. This will, no doubt, make the system easier to navigate.

Development of a streamlined and uniform e-permitting system to be used by planning and building departments in all municipalities across the province will result in faster building approvals and a more efficient system that would increase the supply of housing across the province. A common digital system that is in synch would allow external agencies to be linked with approval agencies, thereby improving the workflow.

More homes, more tax revenue

A recent report prepared for RESCON showed that speeding up the development approvals system would result in more homes being built and added tax revenues for the province and municipalities.

If, for example, approvals could be done six months earlier we could build an additional 33,100 homes in the province over the next five years above and beyond current baseline trends. This would also result in an additional contribution of \$4.5 billion to the Ontario economy annually by 2025 and support 40,500 jobs.

Seems the obvious way to go, in my books.



Richard Lyall is the president of the [Residential Construction Council of Ontario \(RESCON\)](#).