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RESCON argues for streamlined approvals process in Ontario

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The Residential Construction Council of Ontario (RESCON) has released a report arguing in favour of a simplified and accelerated process for development and building approvals in Ontario. “The current regulatory system inhibits the ability of builders to provide the supply of new houses and condos that new-home buyers deserve to choose from. After all, there is a growing population that sees about 100,000 people coming to the GTA every year,” writes RESCON President Richard Lyall, introducing the report.



A new RESCON report argues for a faster approvals process for Ontario. Photo by Stefan Novakovic.

The Executive Summary offers an overview of the issues raised in the ‘Streamlining the Development and Building Approvals Process in Ontario’ report:

Ontario’s development and building approval processes are much slower and less innovation friendly than that of many other advanced jurisdictions. According to a 2013 Bousfields-Altus report, site plan control approvals that should take one month often take more than nine months. A 2017 RESCON Ryerson study found that this timeline is now more than two years for residential buildings. The World Bank currently ranks Toronto (representing Canada) at 54th among 190 countries regarding development approval efficiency for routine building projects. Approval of innovative building projects is often slower than in many other jurisdictions.

Slow and uncertain development and building approvals in the GTA, contribute to increased developer cost and risk, resulting in less new housing supply, less innovation, higher housing prices, reduced affordability and a less attractive place for firms to invest and create jobs. Particularly affected by unnecessarily long and uncertain approvals are various infill housing forms already compliant with provincial growth policies and municipal Official Plans, such as mid-rise housing along avenues and the “missing middle”.

This report outlines some good practice concepts and back-to-basics reforms to improve the “machinery” for planning and building approvals. These proposed changes enhance accountability and speed up approvals for routine and innovative building projects, while maintaining high levels of regulatory compliance.

More efficiency requires significant changes. Firstly, Ontario’s regulatory system needs to be more transparent regarding agency requirements and procedures which allows industry professionals to submit complete, compliant applications as “partners in compliance.” Regulatory agencies can then shift to more of a process management and expert audit role. Efficient, client-centric regulatory agencies should be linked together with a state-of-the-art e-permitting system for faster communication and better overall service to industry clients.

You can download a full copy of the ‘Streamlining the Development and Building Approvals Process in Ontario’ report directly via RESCON, at [this link](#).