



## Building industry hopes new provincial government cuts red tape

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by Neil Sharma 06 Jul 2018



With the Greater Golden Horseshoe in the throes of a housing supply crunch, the **Residential Construction Council of Ontario** has issued a report recommending improvements.

And with a new government leading the province, RESCON is hopeful change will come in the form of a Transparency Act to improve timelines and abet information free flow. Moreover, RESCON hopes for the establishment of “a common data/file platform for electronic permitting to move Queen’s Park and its 444 municipalities to a state-of-the-art system and out of the world of pen and paper.”

The report, Streamlining the Development and Building Approvals Process in Ontario, also recommends a coordinating professional who can ensure that applicants’ submissions are complete and accurate.

“We started off with interest in how long it takes to get something fairly routine approved at site plan control,” said **Michael de Lint, director of regulatory reform and technical standards at RESCON**. “We looked at how we can streamline the overall system. Site plan control involves

planning but also various agencies. We're also looking at the quality of the applications that come in, the industry's role, the use of technology. We're looking at the broader system."

Looking to cut through the red tape once and for all, RESCON concedes other factors contribute to the supply dearth, but maintains that painstakingly slow approvals overwhelmingly contribute to it and exorbitant price points.

"You have these two worlds that collide: the world of being a developer and builder where you look at a market and you look at cost and your timeframe—and everything is sensitive to timeframe because it's a world that has to be disciplined—and the world of the regulator where it's very blasé about timeframes," said de Lint. "They're long to begin with and almost never followed at all."

Planning large-scale developments has become arduous in the region. Starlane Home Corporation's Lou Bada, vice president of low-rise construction, says the nature of the business craves predictability, but builders are instead burdened with moving targets.

"We find it very difficult to plan, because things that should take a year take two, and things that should take two take four or five years," he said. "As much as we build in a contingency in terms of time, we don't hope for the best and plan for the worst, but that's what we have to do and we still don't make our targets."

The new Progressive Conservative government of Ontario led by Doug Ford has promised to cut red tape so that industry can thrive. The report recommends that he start with the construction industry.

### **The Residential Construction Council of Ontario's president notes how poorly the region performs on a global scale, and warns the future is at stake.**

"Representing Canada, Toronto is 54th out of 190 countries assessed by the World Bank, in terms of the efficiency of its approvals process for routine building projects," said Richard Lyall. "This ranking isn't for an 80-storey mixed-development high-rise—it's for the most basic of buildings, such as a warehouse. We are a G7 nation—54th for Toronto, Ontario and Canada isn't acceptable.

"We must do something about this ranking within the next three years: delays on this scale cost the Ontario government, industry and consumers billions of dollars. If this is not addressed, we will lose out on potential international investors."