



AECO Innovation Lab, RESCON meeting with associate minister of digital government

Robin MacLennan - November 19, 2021

Two weeks after writing an open letter to Premier Doug Ford, [AECO Innovation Lab](#), along with the [Residential Construction Council of Ontario \(RESCON\)](#), has been invited to meet with Ontario's associate minister of digital government.

“Although we have not received a direct correspondence from the premier in reaction to the letter, we were invited to present to a different ministry. Digital Government falls under the mandate of the ministry of finance,” Mark Anderson, director of business development, AECO Innovation Lab said in an email. “There is no mention of the letter, but perhaps this new direction came about as a result.”

“At the same time, we continue to work to engage with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.”

The letter to the premier, sent on behalf of the [One Ontario Coalition](#), calls for immediate action to establish a development approval one window data and information exchange standard that will lay the groundwork for streamlining and digitizing the development approvals process.

“I am writing on behalf of the One Ontario coalition, representing the residential and ICI construction sector, mayors, administrators and building officials from every municipality, pertinent software providers and various applicable law agencies and ministries,” Arash Shahi, CEO of AECO Innovation Lab and principal researcher of One Ontario Initiative wrote in the Oct. 20 letter.

“We need your leadership and support for the establishment of a Development Approval One Window Data and Information Exchange Standard that will lay the groundwork necessary for streamlining and digitizing the development approvals process.”

Shahi says the One Ontario proposal is a tangible solution presented to the government by an unprecedented coalition of stakeholders who operate in this space, understand the problem and have researched best practices from around the world.

According to the World Bank, Canada currently ranks 64th out of 190 countries in the world on development approval efficiency for routine building projects, and we are behind the many jurisdictions that have taken innovative steps to modernize and digitize their systems. Research shows that streamlining and integrating the development approval process will result in up to a 70 per cent reduction in approval time to develop projects.

“While some digitization of the building permit process is occurring in various Ontario municipalities, existing e-permitting platforms are siloed, fragmented and don’t take into consideration the up to 45 applicable law agencies involved in broader development approvals,” Shahi wrote in his letter.

“While positive, this route is inefficient and incomplete in scope. The fact is no single municipality can solve this problem on its own without provincial engagement and leadership. The current patchwork of digitization efforts is hindering broader streamlining efforts as municipal, regional and ministerial agencies each pursue their own unique digital solutions that are not interconnected and therefore restrict interoperability.”

One Ontario’s proposal will lay the groundwork for a modern solution that will ensure Ontario remains a growing, economically robust, and innovative province and eliminate data silos, giving the government of Ontario the complete transparency and visibility that it needs to facilitate increased housing supply across Ontario.