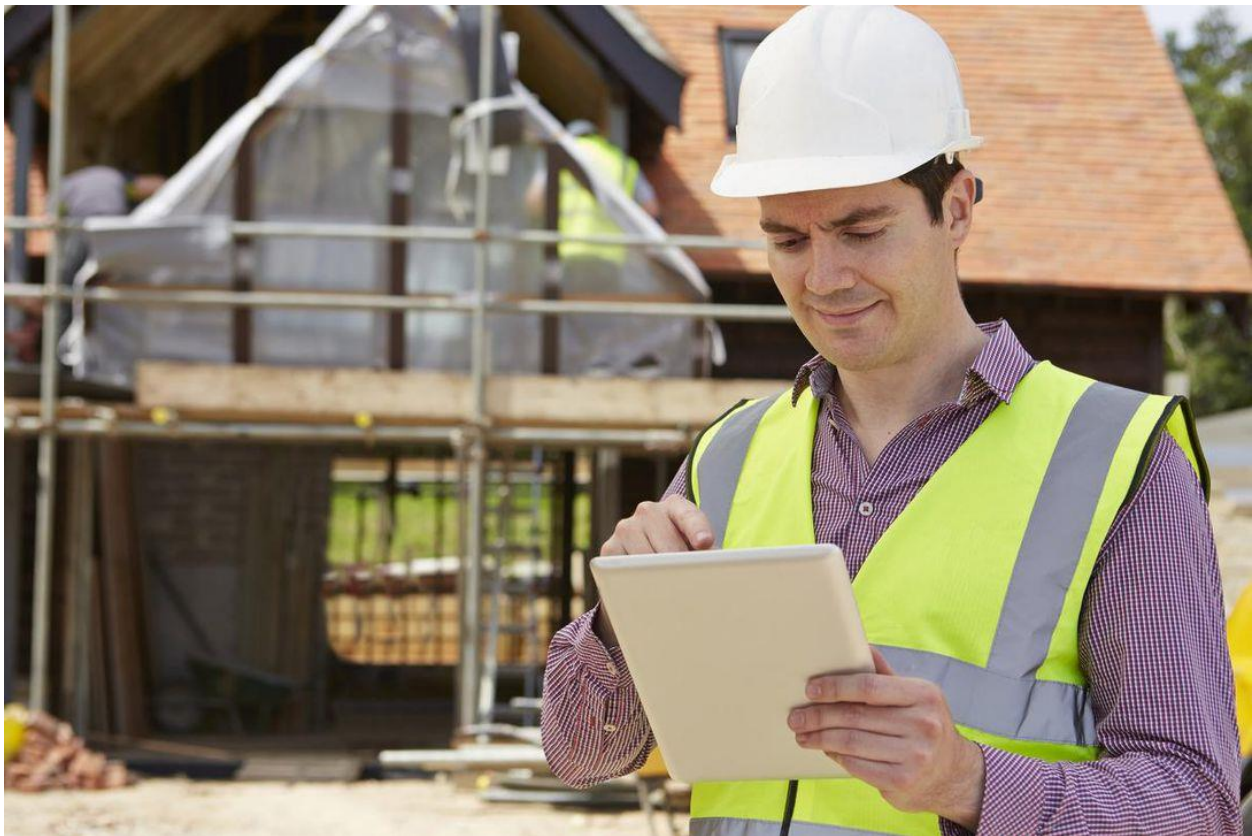


Why it is difficult to get on the housing ladder

By Dave Wilkes BILD President & CEO
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It is taking longer and longer across the GTA to get planning approval to build projects. This is due, in part, to the complex and lengthy approval process that can take up to three to four years. A typical new lowrise or highrise development in the GTA can take up to a decade to get built.

Whether you are a senior looking to downsize or a millennial looking to move to your first home, it's difficult to get on the housing ladder with the delay in getting planning approval. Complex and lengthy land planning approvals are thwarting the building industry's ability to bring new homes to market.



Expanding the ability to apply for permits online is among a list of recommendations to speed up home building in Ontario. (Dreamstime)

There are as many as 52 different studies, reports, checklists and plans that can be required of building projects seeking approval to get underway. Many are unnecessary, due to provincial and municipal duplication. Focusing conditions of approvals on what is essential, and aligning

provincial and municipal requirements, will result in efficiencies, lower costs, faster approvals and more housing.

Our association was encouraged to hear during the provincial election campaign that the Progressive Conservative party committed to streamline the province's environmental assessment process — which can delay projects for years. Premier Doug Ford also talked about requiring the environment ministry to give an answer on an application within one year, which would bring needed certainty for developers.

Last year, the Fraser Institute found that the development approval process in the GTA is lengthy and slow, and that delays play a significant role in the rapidly decreasing housing supply. The report found long and uncertain project approval timelines have the most detrimental impact on supply.

According to a new report by the **Residential Construction Council of Ontario (RESCON)**, [“Streamlining the Development and Building Approvals Process in Ontario: Good Practice Concepts and a Guide to Action,”](#) 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.

The report makes a number of recommendations that would help unlock the supply chain. BILD agrees with RESCON's recommendations to increase transparency, speeding up approval timelines, expanding the use of electronic permitting systems in municipalities and the elimination of pen-and-paper applications are just a few ideas to help this problem.

These recommendations could mean a positive impact for the building industry, municipalities and most importantly new home buyers. An improved approval processes would see more efficient use of municipal staff resources, the building industry would benefit from an efficient client-friendly regulatory environment with reduced approval uncertainty, and new homebuyers would find improved housing affordability.

We can do better if we all work together. As the municipal elections approach, we are encouraging voters to talk to their candidates about ways to bring to market different types of housing to market that people can afford to buy.

David Wilkes is President and CEO of the Building Industry and Land Development Association (BILD) and a contributor for the Star. Follow him on Twitter: @bildgta