

Municipal Red tape:

H. Supporting Ontario's Construction Sector by Streamlining the Approvals Process

Submitted by: Vaughan Chamber of Commerce and Newmarket Chamber of Commerce

Issue

Regional variances throughout Ontario and an outdated paper-based development approvals process are impacting the supply of housing availability throughout the Province.

Background

The Province and municipalities provide a comprehensive development approvals process which requires new developments to comply with technical regulations that manage the built environment while protecting the health and safety of the public. Municipalities have the delegated responsibility for the enforcement of multiple provincial regulations in their jurisdictions. The number of development applications continues to increase to meet housing demands yet limited resources at the municipal approvals level act as a bottleneck in the ability of the private sector to deliver much needed housing. Moreover, historically, municipalities have relied on antiquated paper-based submissions and review, leading to further inefficiencies in the approvals process. This reliance on paper-based submissions in the development and building approvals process has further exacerbated approval timelines as the COVID-19 pandemic has pushed municipal staff to work remotely without the necessary tools in place to do their jobs efficiently. This has led to calls from several organizations in the development industry for a more digital process for development approvals to increase efficiency.

A Fall 2020 Canadian Centre for Economic Analysis (CANCEA) [report](#) commissioned by the Residential Construction Council of Ontario (RESCON) detailed the economic and social benefits to speeding up the development approvals process by adopting a comprehensive and centralized planning and development e-permitting system across Ontario. Specifically, [regions in Ontario](#) could see thousands of additional housing units and attract millions of dollars in additional jobs and investment. The GTA alone could see an additional 100,700 housing units by 2040, and the City of Toronto seeing 21,100 additional units by 2025 if there was a reduction in delays to the approvals process by only six months and a 10-per-cent increase in investment.

While digitization of the approvals process (e-permitting) is occurring in a limited and ad-hoc fashion in various Ontario municipalities, existing programs are siloed, fragmented, and typically only focus on the processes within a municipal building department, rather than a holistic look at the entire depth of other applicable law agencies, provincial ministries, and other commenting authorities. While the efforts of certain municipalities to digitize is a step in the right direction, e-permitting systems within a municipality need to be able to seamlessly interact with all necessary approval agencies and authorities to make the overall approvals process truly more seamless.

One Ontario, an initiative through the AECO Innovation Lab, is a proposal for a common Development Approval Data and Information Exchange Standard, a Central Review Platform and Central Analytics and Reporting Platform to be used by municipalities, Provincial Ministries, and other approval agencies in Ontario for the development and building permitting processes. A fully integrated system proposed by One Ontario would enable data exchange between applicants, municipalities, and provincial applicable law agencies. A fully integrated system would considerably improve workflow efficiencies, increase transparency, and defragment the process and create a secure central source of reliable data for all permitting processes.

The One Ontario proposal has the support of organizations such as (but not limited to): RESCON, RCCAO the Ontario Building Officials Association, the Ontario Professional Planners Institute, Ontario Home Builders' Association, BILD, Ontario General Contractors Association, Association of Consulting Engineering Companies, Ontario Structural Wood Association, Home Construction Regulatory Authority, Taron, Conservation Ontario, City of Toronto, and City of Windsor.

Recommendation

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to:

1. Implement the One Ontario concept which will create a common Development Approval Data and Information Exchange Standard, a Central Review Platform and Central Analytics and Reporting Platform to be used by municipalities, Provincial Ministries, and other approval agencies in Ontario for the development and building permitting processes.

R. Bill 2, Cutting Red Tape for Motor Vehicle Dealers Act, 2018

Authored by the Newmarket Chamber of Commerce and sponsored by the Vaughan Chamber of Commerce, Sarnia-Lambton Chamber of Commerce, Greater Niagara Chamber of Commerce, Greater Peterborough Chamber of Commerce and Hamilton Chamber of Commerce

Issue

Car dealerships lose productivity and manpower every time they are required to have their paperwork processed for vehicles sold or leased. In certain cases, there is no concierge service for Car Dealerships and even worse, some Service Ontario location only allow two transactions processed at one time. These delays are at a significant cost to the car dealerships and may result in unnecessary delays for the consumer.

Background

Bill 2 was before the Ontario Legislature in 2015 – then known as Bill 152 and in 2016-then known as Bill 3. The Ontario Legislature was prorogued in 2016 as well as 2018 and the legislation, which had strong all-party support, never made it to the Standing Committee after passing 2nd reading in 2015, and 1st reading in 2016. If passed, Bill 2 would eliminate the outdated and unnecessary requirement for auto dealers to physically transport paperwork back and forth to a Service Ontario location upon completion of a sale or lease.

Instead, auto dealers could register vehicles online, from their dealership. This digitization of the vehicle sales process will cut red tape, and save dealers time and money. Furthermore, consumers would be able to take possession of their newly purchased vehicle minutes after signing on the dotted line – rather than wait hours or days and make another trip to the dealership to pick up their new vehicle.

Quebec has offered digital vehicle registrations to its new car dealers since 2002 and New York State dealers have had a similar program since the mid-1990s. New Brunswick, P.E.I., Newfoundland and Labrador, Michigan and a number of other U.S. states also provide this service.

Ontario's auto sector and consumers would greatly benefit from a digital, efficient and secure vehicle sales process while allowing them to serve their customers better. By implementing Bill 2, Ontario will follow through on its 2016 Budget statement that, "To meet the expectations of the public, government digital services must mirror the simplicity and effectiveness Ontarians have experienced using private-sector digital services. This does not simply mean putting existing processes online; it means fundamentally rethinking how government programs and services are delivered in Ontario."

Recommendations

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce urges the Government of Ontario to: 1. Pass and Implement the Bill 2 legislation as soon as possible.