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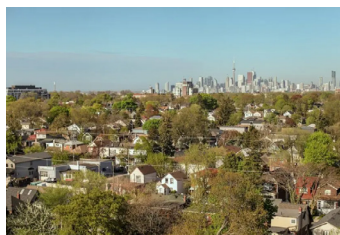


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# HOUSING SUPPLY MUST BE THE NUMBER ONE POLICY PRIORITY

*Richard Lyall*

***The biggest challenge is the still-prevailing culture that perversely continues to see builders as the enemy.***

The recent relatively positive indicators on new housing sales and construction were a welcome change. So, too, has been the apparent flattening of inflation and rates.

Our industry rightly thrives on stability and risk reduction. Yet, we are far from being out of the woods. Many challenges abound and certain public policy priorities have yet to be clarified, especially between the various levels of government, as well as others who have talked about the very real need for housing.

Make no mistake, the housing crisis is the product of failed growth planning. The devil of the fix is in the details.

Last year, a Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation report stated that government fees were crippling construction.

A month ago, a new report from the Canadian Centre for Economic Analysis pierced the veil of new housing taxes and noted that they account for 31 per cent of the total cost of a new home. That's twice the average of other industries.

And housing is a need. You can't make it up. The automobile industry isn't treated this way or expected to pay for roads.

Okay, so what is being done about it? After all, housing is the number one issue in the mayoral election in Toronto.

The Province of Ontario is steadfast in its goal of building 1.5 million homes and driving legislative change and needed minister's zoning orders. The federal government just announced a new plan is to be unveiled this fall. Can't wait to see what it is.

However, there remains a distinct lack of collective urgency in certain circles about addressing the crisis.

Part of the problem is that many people still have failed to grasp the magnitude of the numbers of new housing units needed.

RESCON continues to advocate for sensible changes on multiple levels. We have had to retain a variety of specialized lobbyists and consultants, depending on the particular problem: skilled trades, immigration, government-mandated service-delivery levels, green building challenges, and advancing safety issues, etc.

The biggest challenge is the still-prevailing culture that perversely continues to see builders as the enemy.

Our industry builds everything, but our ability to get the job done depends on the rules and building barriers arising from various levels of government.

To be sure, there are public sector leaders leading the charge, especially in the provincial government, which is most welcome. Certain municipal leaders get it. But many still don't.

Builders have been convenient scapegoats for public policy failures. Too many officials at senior levels of government, while skilled in policies, would appear to lack the technocratic subject matter expertise to manage properly. Most complex government-run projects seem to experience repeated fails in service levels, delays and cost overruns.

Consultations often pay lip service to builder expertise. Cost benefit analysis would seem at times an inconvenience.

Some candidates in the Toronto mayoral campaign are calling for the creation of a government builder, as if that would have any chance of working. Nice idea but really?

Meanwhile, the messianic pursuit of net-zero with apparent disregard to affordability and deep-core housing needs, is a mistake. If you question them, you could get labelled as a climate-change denier.

The province has legislated many positive changes to get more homes built, but it will take time for them to be absorbed by municipalities in the face of continued opposition.

Taxes on housing remain ridiculously high. They have tripled in a generation with the federal government and the HST the big "winners." Restrictions on as-of-right zoning on main arterial routes remains. Below-ground parking challenges continue, floor plate sizes are limited, and the technology used in the development approvals process remains years behind other advanced jurisdictions – with progress remaining glacial.

Housing supply must be the actual number one public policy priority. Lives are literally at stake. This is not about new programs, it's about government freeing the industry to get the job done and then focus on homelessness and providing support to those with little or no means.

All levels of government and the building industry need to work together effectively and urgently, given our rapidly rising population.



# RESCON MEMBERS CONTINUE TO LEAD IN HEALTH AND SAFETY

*Andrew Pariser*

*If you are suffering from addictions or mental health issues, tell someone. There is help available.*

On June 1, legislation kicked in that required employers who know, or ought to know that there is a risk of opioid overdose in their workplace, to ensure that, at all times while there are workers in the workplace, a naloxone kit is made available in good condition.

In residential construction, June 1 came and went without much fanfare because RESCON builders started acquiring naloxone kits and providing training as the legislation was being proposed.

RESCON builders were ahead of the curve (again), implementing best practices that exceeded the minimum standard by ensuring that naloxone kits were on all sites regardless of the outcome of the risk assessment.

As discussed at a recent RESCON naloxone webinar which featured safety experts, the chief prevention officer and a panel of builders, naloxone can save lives when it is administered, but it can also save lives by starting a conversation and getting workers, unions, employers, and government focused on mental health in construction. If you are suffering from addictions or mental health issues, tell someone. There is help available.

For the full RESCON webinar please [click here](#).

For those who aren't familiar with naloxone, please check out the following links and get a kit for your workplace. For information on:

- the Ontario Workplace Naloxone Program, [click here](#).
- resources from the IHSA, [click here](#).
- naloxone care, [click here](#).

## **Mental Health in Construction**

Mental health in construction is recognized as a safety issue and over the last half decade provincial programs, funding, benefit plans, and the industry's approach has greatly expanded. RESCON began hosting annual mental health symposiums after the issue was raised at the RESCON health and safety committee.

Our focus started with awareness-building and fighting the stigma associated with asking for help or having a mental health condition. It has evolved to include practical steps and best practice guides that members (and non-members) can use to create policy and employer practices.

However, stigma continues to be a leading issue and, while many individuals understand and accept it is okay for

others to have a mental health issue or ask for help, they are still reluctant to ask for the help they need.

Recent research has shown an increase in the number of construction worker family members accessing mental health benefits and programs. However, construction workers (who are predominately men) are still not using the mental health benefits that are made available. This means we still have a stigma issue.

Specifically, in the construction industry there is an idea or thought that it is okay for other people to have a mental health issue, but it is not okay for me (the individual to have one). With this information and as work continues, we continue to learn and are able to adjust and expand our approach.

In addition, RESCON members are continuing to learn and expand the services and benefits they offer members. I commend all members who have made mental health a safety issue, and who have invested in mental health and naloxone training.

I recognize the RESCON health and safety committee, which includes but is not limited to representatives from Brookfield, Country Homes, Daniels, Great Gulf, Mattamy, Menkes, Sorbara, Tribute Communities, Tridel, and Yorkwood, for their leadership and making mental health and naloxone an important committee issue.

Finally, I would like to highlight that member efforts include on-site safety programs, education programs and industry events. Most recently, Tridel, as part of their Built for Respect mandate, hosted an event to raise awareness about workplace mental health and wellness. Guest speakers included Education Minister Stephen Lecce, RESCON staff, Tridel senior leaders, and Dr. David Gratzner of the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.

It was a great event focused on addressing the stigma around mental health in construction, starting conversations and letting all parties know that mental health is a vital health and safety issue. [Click here](#) for the full press release and expanded coverage.

As you can tell, I am honoured to chair the RESCON health and safety committee and thank all RESCON members and everyone on the committee for the efforts they make when it comes to keeping workers safe.



# TOP TORONTO MAYORAL CANDIDATES SQUARED OFF AT RESCON DEBATE

*Grant Cameron*

*All in, it was an insightful debate with plenty of ideas and discussion around the issue of housing supply.*

They may differ on how to get there, but frontrunners in the Toronto mayoral race are intent on boosting housing supply and affordability in the city.

That was a key takeaway from a debate on housing for the candidates that was held at the George Brown College waterfront campus on May 24.

The debate, sponsored by RESCON and other industry partners, featured the six leading candidates – Ana Bailão, Brad Bradford, Olivia Chow, Mitzie Hunter, Josh Matlow and Mark Saunders – in a live session that was moderated by former city councillor Joe Cressy, a senior vice president at the college.

For two hours, the candidates squared off over their proposed solutions to the city’s housing supply crisis, lack of affordable housing and property taxes.

They offered insightful solutions and should be commended for showing up to address the critically important subject.

There were a few feisty exchanges during the event.

Saunders and Matlow clashed over the issue of how to make the city more inviting to developers. Matlow complained that Saunders only spoke about what he wants to rip out, rather than build.

But Saunders replied: “You know what your problem is Josh? You can get more bees to honey than salt my friend ... you create the environment for no government to want to come to this city.”

Bradford and Saunders took jabs at Chow, indicating she would raise taxes.

“People can not afford a 20-per-cent tax increase from Olivia Chow,” Bradford said, while Saunders quipped that she was “ready to tax.”

Bailão trumpeted her work to lay groundwork for the city’s Housing Now initiative but Chow noted no projects have yet broken ground, and called it Housing Never.

Hunter, along with Chow and Matlow, promised to set up new housing agencies but Bradford and Saunders criticized the idea, indicating it would only be an unwelcome new layer of bureaucracy.

On the critical issue of housing, however, they all agreed that Toronto needs a greater supply in order to meet the escalating demand. They also supported streamlining the

approvals process and the need for greater densification, especially in areas such as transit corridors. Here are some highlights:

- Bailão would prioritize working with non-profits and other players in the housing sector to create more options for people. She is proposing a housing plan to get more homes built, including missing middle and laneway housing, through reforms to planning, zoning and land-use regulations.
- Bradford proposes to cut red tape that slows down the process of approving new builds.
- Chow wants to implement a plan that would see the city act as developer in building 25,000 rent-controlled homes over eight years.
- Hunter wants to create the Toronto Affordable Housing Corporation that would build 108 new developments that are affordable and priced below market on land owned by the city.
- Matlow would establish Public Build Toronto which would develop 15,000 rent-controlled market and affordable apartments and also make it easier for homes to be broken up into multiple units.
- Saunders pledged to not raise taxes above inflation and was critical of calling on higher levels of government to solve the city’s housing woes. He supports mixed-income housing with non-profit involvement.

The by-election is slated for June 26 and 102 candidates are on the ballot. Advance voting is being held June 8 to 13 at 50 locations across Toronto. [Click here](#) for more information.

Plenty of media covered the event, including:

- [CBC News](#)
- [The Toronto Star](#)
- [BNN Bloomberg](#)
- [Storeys](#)
- [Daily Commercial News](#)
- [Ontario Construction News](#)

To watch a video of the debate, [click here](#).

All in, it was an insightful debate with plenty of ideas and discussion around the issue of housing supply.

Hopefully, the issue will remain on the front burner – both during the rest of the campaign and once it is over.



# THE GROWING PAINS OF VERTICAL LIVING

*Paul De Berardis*

The inception of the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe in 2006 marked the first framework to guide development and growth in Ontario, laying the future vision for communities in the region. The plan established the long-term vision for where and how the region will grow, with the priority of intensification and higher densities in strategic growth areas to make efficient use of land and infrastructure, while supporting public transit viability.

Looking back from 2006 to now and seeing how the Growth Plan has impacted the housing market is substantial. In 2006, there was nearly a 50/50 split in housing starts when comparing ground-related low-rise housing typologies to multi-unit residential buildings (MURBs).

Fast forward to the present day and there has been a drastic shift in the market with multi-unit starts outpacing ground-related homes by nearly three to one. This is further evidenced by stats such as the Rider Levett Bucknall (RLB) Crane Index released in April that shows Toronto way ahead of the pack, with 238 cranes in the sky, the vast majority on residential projects, and almost five times more than second-place Seattle.

It is clear the Growth Plan has shifted and shaped housing policy, further exacerbated by affordability issues, driving greater numbers of home buyers and renters into MURBs across the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

With the notable shift to vertical living and MURBs, one growing area of frustration amongst current occupants in high-rise buildings relates to elevators. A recent article by The Toronto Star has garnered attention as it highlighted the trend of elevator downtime due to being out of service, pointing the blame to the four or five elevator companies that control most of the market and poor oversight by the regulator, the Technical Standards and Safety Authority (TSSA).

This is not a new issue, as a 2018 auditor general report found large elevator companies are the primary cause for worsening levels of service. The regulator says it's gathering data on the issue and plans to issue fines in the future.

Industry experts point to several reasons for the growing challenges with elevators, from aging building stock, a lack of elevator mechanics due to an ongoing labour shortage, and condo boards that fail to maintain elevators properly. However, the near monopoly that exists when it comes to elevator installation and repair in Toronto is not helping, with four major companies installing 90 per cent of the elevators in Ontario, while also maintaining more than half of them, limiting market competition.

It doesn't help that those four companies build the elevators

in such a way that only they can supply many of the parts to repair them. As a result, large numbers of high-rise residents are finding long elevator wait times as one or more building elevators are out of service.

Since the auditor general's investigation, little progress has been made by the regulator, and the problem is becoming increasingly urgent as more residents rely on elevators and new buildings are getting taller. With so many residents living in high-rise buildings and this trend growing, the elevator industry needs to ensure more prompt service standards for maintenance and repairs.

In 2017, the TSSA commissioned an independent report on elevator availability, which identified several recommendations, including addressing the elevator mechanic labour shortage, creating standards for elevator repair timelines, and collecting data on elevator outages to be made publicly available.

In Ontario, the major international elevator companies maintain more than half of the market, namely ThyssenKrupp, Otis, Kone and Schindler, according to the TSSA. Condo boards find it too costly to take legal action against large maintenance companies that don't fix elevators in a timely manner and also find it difficult to switch to different maintenance companies due to long-term service contracts and elevator systems that require the use of proprietary technology.

Going forward, the TSSA will be grouping inspection orders into three categories: low risk, medium risk and high risk, and each category will have a set timeframe in which to be addressed. Without adequate regulations and enforcement of service standards, it is unclear if the elevator industry will be incentivized to address these issues. Which is why in 2007, the European Commission fined Otis, Kone, Schindler and ThyssenKrupp 992 million euros "for operating cartels for the installation and maintenance of lifts and escalators" and upholding restrictive business practices in select countries.

Larger fines here in Ontario could create better checks and balances on the elevator companies, experts say. However, on July 1, 2022, the government approved changes that allow the TSSA to issue fines to contractors and licence holders for non-compliance with safety laws, but the fines only range as high as \$5,000, depending on the issue. Furthermore, the TSSA has yet to issue a single penalty, as it's been reported that more data needs to be collected on elevator maintenance, which is under way.

As more and more Ontario residents continue to embrace vertical living, we need the necessary regulations to improve service standards and meet the growing demand on the elevator industry.



# NEW GUIDE WILL HELP NEWCOMERS TO INDUSTRY

**Amina Dibe Ahd AlAshry**

***We plan on releasing the guide later this summer, so stay tuned to our Twitter platform and website.***

It's been a big month in the health and safety world, with naloxone requirements in place as of June 1 and RESCON's crane safety webinar.

Also related to health and safety, is anti-violence and anti-harassment.

Under the Occupational Health and Safety Act, employers are required to protect workers from violence and harassment in the workplace.

Bullying, racism and discrimination are forms of harassment and violence and, since 2020, RESCON has strategically focused on eliminating racism and discrimination within the construction industry.

As most of us know, within the next decade, close to 100,000 construction workers will need to be hired, trained and retained to offset retirements from the industry and to meet the demand for new housing and infrastructure.

As an industry, we can't afford to make anyone feel excluded; rather, we must ensure that everyone feels welcomed and that everyone recognizes the countless fruitful career opportunities the industry has.

Through our CARE (Construction Against Racism Everywhere) Roundtable, we have created the Best Practice Guide. The idea for the guide came from roundtable members who were overwhelmed by the number of resources out there (policy templates included) and didn't know how to best use and implement them.

The guide is not meant to replace existing efforts, rather to complement them and be used as a "check-in" to improve implementation.

Target audiences for the guide include DEI culture representatives, labour forepeople, HR directors, project supers, health and safety reps and generally anyone who holds influence over workers on site.

We've also heard from smaller- to medium-sized builders and sub-trades that they are eager to start their DEI efforts, but do not have the capacity to do so and don't know where to start.

The guide will help them approach DEI in an implementable way without overwhelming them.

The structure of the guide is made up of four sections and is as follows:

## **Section 1: Best Practice Guide Overview**

This section highlights the importance of DEI and why it's necessary for all employers to have a DEI strategy. It covers DEI's recruitment and retention benefits and the employers' legal requirement to create a workplace safe from all types of harassment.

## **Section 2: Building your DEI Plan**

Here, we cover three core parts of starting DEI efforts. 1) Building self-awareness and understanding organizational culture, 2) identifying applicable policies and programs for your employees, and 3) getting ahead of racism.

The benefit of this section is that it requires the user, whether it's an H&S representative or a DEI manager, to reflect inwardly and on the workplace culture they are a part of. It's interactive and it guides them through the process of building policies that apply to their specific workplace, whether that be on site or in-office.

## **Section 3: Talking to Employees**

This section is the heart and soul of the guide because it's all about effective implementation methods.

Once you've built a DEI plan, section three helps you create an implementation strategy. It covers creating buy-in and the importance of messaging, provides tips and tricks on approaching contentious topics, and recommends a few good "first steps."

The benefit here is that anything you learn in the section is applicable to many other topics (especially contentious ones).

## **Section 4: Measuring Progress**

Lastly, we ask the user to measure progress to review and assess (benchmark) what they have done, find existing gaps, and establish measurable (quantifiable) goals.

To ensure the tips and tools in the guide are palatable both on site and in the office, RESCON has engaged developers, DEI experts as well as health and safety leaders to review initial drafts.

We plan on releasing the guide later this summer, so stay tuned to our Twitter platform and website.



# TORONTO'S NEXT MAYOR MUST SHOW LEADERSHIP ON THE HOUSING FILE

*Michael Giles*

***What is at stake is no less than the future prosperity of this city. This is not hyperbole. It is reality.***

The English writer G.K. Chesterton once noted that, "I've searched all the parks in all the cities and found no statues of committees." His inference is clear; the greatest accomplishments are attributed to individuals who embraced change, progress and innovation to meet a generational challenge.

On May 24, RESCON, along with nine other partner agencies from across the housing and educational spectrum, hosted the Toronto Mayorality 2023 Housing Debate.

Critically, this debate, unlike others before it or likely to follow, focused exclusively on housing issues. The debate was of critical importance because the housing affordability and supply crisis is the most compelling issue facing the people of Toronto. Polling throughout the campaign has identified housing as the first issue of importance for city residents.

One observation from this debate was that all of the major candidates (there were six at this event) recognized that housing affordability and supply is a crisis that needs major public policy initiatives to resolve.

What was heartening is that several candidates among the six that are likely to win this mayoral election all recognize the need to address bureaucratic gridlock and get development applications approved within reasonable time frames, and not the current abysmal 32-month approval process that often accompanies residential projects.

There is also a recognition that housing in Toronto is much too expensive for most people entering the market.

Whether they are aware of it or not, there is a concurrent understanding that if people can't afford to live in Toronto, they won't.

They'll leave and this city can not afford to lose its young people, innovators and future generations of city builders who'll just find somewhere else to live if they can't secure an affordable and stable home in Toronto.

While each candidate has enunciated their plans to address the housing affordability and supply crisis, some have put forth more realistic and implementable visions than others.

This being said, and reverting back to Chesterton's comments, the next mayor of Toronto is going to need to be an outstanding example of political leadership if they are

to successfully begin the process of addressing Toronto's housing crisis.

There is a long history in politics across the world where politicians seeking office make all kinds of promises but the delivery on these commitments can often slide once office is assumed. In the context of our housing crisis, this is simply not an option for the next mayor of Toronto.

What is at stake is not just the noble objective of working towards creating an environment where people can afford to live in Toronto.

What is at stake is no less than the future prosperity of this city.

This is not hyperbole. It is reality.

When rents for one-bedroom apartments in Toronto are pushing over the \$3,000-per-month mark that's simply beyond affordability.

When the ability to afford to buy a home is slipping further and further away from most people, that is indeed a crisis.

When development applications are mired in incomprehensible bureaucracy, that's totally unacceptable.

As noted, many times before, if young people can not afford to live in this city, or new immigrants find it beyond affordability, then they will do what is logical for them and that is simply to leave.

Without these demographics being able to live in Toronto, it won't be long until the broader economic and quality of life impacts begin to be felt. This will manifest itself in a shortage of workers, reduced economic activity and hollowed out parts of the municipality.

All of this means that leadership is needed on the housing file at the City of Toronto to a degree not seen in generations.

The new mayor of Toronto will need to show no hesitation in using strong mayor powers on issues related to housing. There will also need to be difficult decisions about who leads the city's divisions working on planning and development issues and, if change and renewal is needed, the new mayor will need to lead it.

We hope that the next mayor will show this strength of leadership, and maybe one day while there will not be a statue in one of the city's parks for a committee, there will be one for the mayor that did what had to be done to address the city's housing crisis.





## CANDIDATES DEBATE HOUSING SUPPLY & AFFORDABILITY

By Holly McKenzie-Sutter  
BNN Bloomberg  
May 24, 2023

Toronto mayoral hopefuls squared off Wednesday in a [debate over their proposed solutions to the city's housing supply and affordability challenges](#), with candidates clashing over the government's role in getting more homes built.

Hosted by the Residential Construction Council of Ontario and several other housing sector organizations, the debate at George Brown College heard from the six frontrunners in the crowded race ahead of the byelection voting day set for June 26.

With sky-high rents [priced higher than \\$2,500 per month for a one bedroom](#) and average home prices pegged at around \$1 million, Toronto is a case study for the housing issues plaguing cities across Canada. Experts have pointed to the need for [more supply as one means to help address housing costs](#).

All the mayoral candidates on Wednesday appeared to agree that Toronto needs greater supply of housing to meet demand. However, they disagreed about how the municipal government should be involved in the process of building more homes.

Olivia Chow and Mitzie Hunter presented plans that would see the city play a role in building more affordable housing supply. Hunter, a former Liberal MPP, said she would have the city build homes on land it owns to ensure units are affordable and priced below market.

"We cannot give everything over to developers to solve for us," she said. "This is something we have to do ourselves."

Former NDP parliamentarian Chow said her plans also include a role for the city to build affordable housing. She said her priority is to build units that have rents geared to

tenants' income, but she supports buildings that include multiple types of units and a range of housing options.

Opponents were critical of that approach, however, arguing for less involvement from the government.

City councillor Brad Bradford said he would strive as mayor to reduce "red tape" that he argues has slowed down the process of approving new builds. He suggested city-developer plans would "build more bureaucracy."

Former police chief Mark Saunders was also opposed to what he called "adding another layer of government."

Former deputy mayor Ana Bailão said she would prioritize working with non-profits and other players in the housing sector to create more options for people. She also proposed establishing a "land economist" role at the city to figure out how best to approach the supply issue, accusing her opponents of having plans that "don't add up."

"We need to have real plans for a real crisis that we have on our hands," she said.

City councillor Josh Matlow argued that city rules should be adapted to make it easier for homes to be broken up into multiple units and eliminate fees for such changes.

Candidates also clashed over property taxes, some arguing they would be a crucial avenue to getting more housing supply built.

Chow said she would raise the land transfer tax on home purchases higher than \$2 million in order to fund her planned program to build more rent-controlled and affordable housing. She also said she would use revenue from the [tax on vacant homes](#) to support her plans.

Matlow also said he would raise property taxes two per cent above inflation in order to improve services, including housing programs, as the city faces a major budget shortfall.

The other candidates said they were concerned about raising taxes, with Bradford and Saunders expressing worry that it could drive people to leave the city.

# KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM MAYORAL DEBATE



By Joshua Chong & David Rider  
The Toronto Star  
May 24, 2023

**P**rominent Toronto mayoral candidates battled it out over housing policy and support for the arts in the first two of three debates being held Wednesday.

Coun. Brad Bradford, Coun. Josh Matlow, former Liberal MPP Mitzie Hunter, former NDP MP Olivia Chow and former councillor Ana Bailão squared off in the morning at Young People's Theatre over the city's arts and culture sector.

Hours later, they gathered again at George Brown College's waterfront campus, with the addition of former police chief Mark Saunders, to debate solutions to Toronto's affordable housing crisis that is forcing people out of the city.

All six candidates were set to gather for a third Wednesday debate at University of Toronto's Scarborough campus, vying for an edge in the June 26 mayoral byelection.

Here are key take-aways from the first two clashes:

Chow, Matlow and Hunter all touted platforms involving the city and other governments getting more directly involved in building new affordable homes. After Chow heralded city-developed co-ops in the St. Lawrence neighbourhood Saunders replied: "First off I'm not moving into buildings built by government." The comment drew some boos from the crowd. Asked later how residents of city-built Toronto Community Housing or supportive modular housing should take his remark, Saunders said governments have a role creating the conditions to spur development but "builders build."

In one of many scrappy exchanges, Saunders said Matlow's criticism of Premier Doug Ford won't help get new housing built. "You're going to get more bees with honey than salt ... it starts with building relationships," Saunders said. Matlow replied: "Is Doug Ford the bee or the honey — I don't understand."

Candidates were asked how old they were when they first bought a home. Chow was in her forties but had to rent out

a "few rooms" to afford it. Hunter bought a condo at 27 but many young people have given up on that dream. Matlow "barely" got into the market at 36 and still has a mortgage. Saunders was in his 20s but most of his pay went to the mortgage. Bailão said she was about 26.

Bailão, who has the most experience with homebuilding as council's longtime housing advocate, trumpeted her work stopping the sale of TCHC homes and laying groundwork for the city's Housing Now program. As mayor she would build on that, she said.

But Chow, noting no projects have yet broken ground, called it "Housing Never" while Matlow said her criticism of Ford on housing rings hollow when her campaign team includes Ford adviser Nick Kouvalis.

Asked how much they would raise property taxes, Bailão, Bradford and Saunders said annual hikes won't exceed the rate of inflation.

Matlow, noting the city's massive pandemic-triggered budget shortfall, said he would add a two-per-cent "city works fund" on top of his undetermined hike to improve deteriorating services and infrastructure. Hunter says it's about the city balancing "livability and affordability" but didn't give a figure. Chow notes she wants to raise the land transfer tax on homes over \$3 million but doesn't give a property tax figure.

Bradford, a former city planner who says he would dismantle bureaucracy that slows housing development approvals, said Chow as mayor would make home ownership unaffordable by "jacking" property taxes as much as 20 per cent. She called his math ridiculous, later telling reporters "Keeping life affordable is one of my core priorities" and she has no intention of imposing "huge" tax increases.

Hunter waved a glossy printed version of her housing policy and touted her past experience as a senior TCHC executive. Arguing she has the most comprehensive plan to stop young people from abandoning Toronto for lower-cost communities, Hunter repeated her favourite campaign slogan: "Let's fix the Six together!"

# TOP MAYORAL CANDIDATES CLASH OVER HOUSING

By Olivia Bowden  
CBC News  
May 24, 2023

Clashes over who would raise property taxes and who wouldn't, along with how to actually build affordable housing, took centre stage at the first major debate featuring the top six candidates running for mayor of Toronto — with several attacks aimed at Olivia Chow.

Chow, Brad Bradford, Mark Saunders, Josh Matlow, Mitzie Hunter and Ana Bailão were all in attendance for Wednesday's debate on housing affordability hosted by George Brown College and the Residential Construction Council of Ontario (RESCON).

Those six candidates have [emerged as frontrunners](#) — a designation CBC Toronto is basing on a combination of factors including polling data, policy releases and past leadership experience — in a crowded campaign that features a record 102 candidates ([you can find the full list here](#)).

Saunders, in his first major debate, was the first to target Chow on taxes, saying: "Olivia Chow is ready to tax. So let's stop dancing around this and get right to the point."

Saunders, Bradford and Bailão all vowed to hold property tax at or below the rate of inflation, something John Tory routinely campaigned on during his mayoral runs.

Bradford, who has been regularly posting on social media demanding Chow release her taxation plans, said a tax hike would lead to people paying thousands of dollars a year more and "that makes life less affordable in the city of Toronto."

"People cannot afford a 20 per cent tax increase from Olivia Chow," he said.

In response, Chow said what she is looking for is a vacancy tax hike, that the provincial government has a role to play and the city should work on getting a "fair deal".

Chow said a three per cent vacancy tax hike would generate \$45 million, which Bradford said was an incorrect figure.

Cutting through the back and forth, Hunter held up the package for her own plan, saying Toronto has to solve its problems and that the city can't count on the province to help.

The debate was the second of three happening Wednesday. Earlier Wednesday, there was a debate on the arts.

Candidates were also meeting in Scarborough Wednesday night for a debate on that community.

After a question on delays in building affordable housing, the debate went off the rails slightly when Bradford and Saunders pressed Matlow on his past decisions on the topic.

Hunter answered the question by discussing the need for transitional shelter beds, saying people cannot be put back on the streets when shelter hotels are taken back for their



original purpose, she said.

That led Matlow to explain there needs to be a clear, viable plan for those in shelter housing before they are pushed out.

"We cannot evict anyone in the shelter hotels today without knowing where they're going to go tomorrow. That's inhumane," said Matlow. He referenced controversial park encampment evictions that made headlines in 2021 due to violence and scenes of police [forceably removing people from homes](#).

And while Chow mentioned creating an interactive map to indicate wait times to make the affordable housing application more transparent, Saunders told her she won't be able to do that without more taxes.

Instead the city should be more "inviting" to make builders want to develop, and leadership is needed to execute that, said Saunders.

Then, some cross talk started to distract the candidates from the question.

"I only hear about what you want to rip out, rather than what you want to build though," Matlow interjected.

Saunders replied: "You know what your problem is Josh?...You can get more bees to honey than salt my friend... you create the environment for no government to want to come to this city."



# CANDIDATES SPLIT ON NEED FOR A NEW HOUSING AGENCY

By Don Wall  
Daily Commercial News  
May 25, 2023

A clear philosophical split has emerged among the top-tier Toronto mayoral candidates over how to spearhead a new age of housing in the city.

The divide was highlighted at a recent Toronto mayoral debate focused exclusively on housing.

Three contenders — former MP and city councillor Olivia Chow, fourth-term councillor Josh Matlow and former Liberal cabinet minister Mitzie Hunter — promise to set up new city housing agencies.

Two others — councillor Brad Bradford and former Toronto police chief Mark Saunders — were sharply critical of what they said would be an unwelcome new layer of bureaucracy.

“I’m not moving into a building built by government,” said Saunders to a smattering of jeers.

“Government’s role is to create the environment for building now for these affordable places to take place and government has failed,” he also said. “When you look at the average age of purpose-built rentals in Toronto, 90 per cent of purpose-built rentals are over 40 years old. It’s because people have done a lot of talking and not executing.”

The May 24 debate was hosted by the Residential Construction Council of Ontario with other partners. The top six mayoral candidates as determined by polls were invited, with former councillor Ana Bailao joining Chow, Saunders, Hunter, Bradford and Matlow.

The byelection to choose a successor to former mayor John Tory is set for June 26.

Chow is proposing a City Homes Plan that would see the city acting as a developer, building 25,000 rent-controlled homes over eight years. Matlow would establish Public Build Toronto, which would develop an initial 15,000 rent-controlled market and affordable apartments. Hunter would create the Toronto Affordable Housing Corporation, which over its first six years would build 108 new developments on city-owned land.

“We talked about the supply challenges, there is just a whole apparatus of bureaucracy that slows things down and I’m pointing to three candidates on the stage that think the answer to building more housing is building more bureaucracy,” said Bradford, noting Toronto has one of the slowest housing approvals processes in North America.

“What we need to do is streamline the process to get the approvals done faster, get shovels in the ground and work with our nonprofits.”

Matlow denied his new housing agency would represent



a new level of bureaucracy, suggesting he would reposition existing housing staff. He said the city’s Housing Now initiative has been a failure, with not a single shovel in the ground after six years.

“We have to move forward with affordable housing, deeply affordable housing,” said the councillor.

Bailao is proposing a Housing Plan that would build 285,000 new homes by 2031 including 57,000 purpose-built rentals.

She said she would get more homes built including missing middle, laneway and coach housing through reforms to planning, zoning and land use regulations.

“You might not be able to buy the \$1.5 million (home but) maybe getting together with your brother or sister you might be able to afford the \$750,000,” said Bailao.

Frequent themes during the afternoon session were leadership, government intervention, taxes and knowledge of the housing file. Bailao, who served as chair of the city’s planning and housing committee, was one of several who accused other candidates of having unrealistic objectives.

“The first hire I’m going to do when I get elected mayor is a land economist for the City of Toronto,” she said. “So people learn how to read pro formas and actually stop making feel-good policies that will not put shovels on the ground.”

Hunter also highlighted her credentials, noting her experience as CAO for the Toronto Community Housing Corporation, “and I understand how to get things done. And so this is about making sure that we actually invest in neighbourhoods in mixed communities. It’s a spectrum of housing.”

Saunders and Bradford both criticized Chow’s plan to raise money through what she called a mansion tax — hiking the land transfer tax on the richest two per cent of deals — and a speculator’s tax.

Saunders referred to “fancy stuff” from Chow, who is leading in the polls by a large margin.

“She will raise taxes,” said Saunders. “You will hear the sounds of cranes leaving the city of Toronto and going to other jurisdictions.

[Click here](#) to continue reading.

# HOUSING ISSUES ARE CRITICAL

By Richard Lyall  
for *The Toronto Sun*  
May 13, 2023

It is unconscionable that when buying a new home in Toronto, nearly 31 per cent of the price goes to taxes, fees, development charges and levies. On a \$1-million home, that's \$310,000.

Housing is being taxed the same as alcohol or tobacco which is absolutely crazy as a home is a basic need, not some luxury choice you can take or leave.

It's just one of the reasons we are facing a housing supply crisis. There are myriad other causes such as the insane labyrinth of approvals that must be navigated to get shovels in the ground on residential projects.

Sadly, from some candidates vying to be Toronto's next mayor we're hearing much of the same old politically safe rhetoric that doesn't actually deliver housing. It is good to hear from some other candidates in the last day or so, sound and hard commitments to finally get things done at city hall.

Mark Saunders has come out with strong commitments to demand that residential development projects be approved within one year. Right now, it takes four or more years. He's also committed to tear down the silos that exist between city divisions that delay approvals. Saunders also pointed out that there's been no progress on the city's Housing Now initiative. Nothing is actually being built under it.

Brad Bradford has also referenced the silos. He, too, pointed out that Housing Now is delivering nothing even though it was launched in 2019 and acres of city-owned land sit vacant growing weeds.

Ana Bailão has indicated she will lead an initiative to develop incentives and launch new policies to support the delivery of 285,000 new homes by 2031.

Of the 100 or so candidates running for the job, though, none have addressed why the federal government is allowed to collect billions of dollars in tax from new housing without returning a reasonable amount of it for infrastructure and housing supports, as was noted in a report released recently. The report showed the federal government is the biggest beneficiary and profiteer off the new housing market, collecting 39 per cent of the taxes, but the feds only reinvest 7.1 per cent of that in infrastructure.

The City of Toronto is at a critical turning point. We're not building enough housing to meet the need. With anticipated population growth, the situation will only get more dire. We need 1.78 million new homes in Ontario in the next decade. To reach that figure, we must double production.

The situation is serious. With the cost of housing and rents, soon only the wealthy will be able to live in Toronto. This, too, is an equity issue. House hunters need to make more than \$200,000 a year just to buy a home.



Systemic issues are slowing down new housing. Up to 45 government bodies and agencies can be involved in the building permit process. When it comes to development approvals, we're ranked 34th out of 35 countries by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, just ahead of Slovenia. The system is broken. We need a modern, streamlined, digitized system.

The provincial government has taken legislative steps to tackle the issues, but there is more work to be done. Implementation of policies is key to get the ball rolling on more development approvals.

The City of Toronto has passed a badly needed 2023 Housing Action Plan. It is ambitious and desperately needed but it could now be in jeopardy as some leading candidates in the mayoralty race are clearly opposed to critical elements of the blueprint. Stalling these long-overdue changes, and failing to address decades of botched policies, would be an absolute disaster, in my opinion.

It seems the proposal to move the Ontario Science Centre to Ontario Place and ideas to address safety on transit are the most talked about issues. The housing crisis seems to have taken a back seat while many city politicians are pandering to NIMBY groups instead of taking steps to fix the problem.

RESCON and other industry partners are sponsoring a live debate May 24 at the George Brown College waterfront campus for mayoralty candidates to address the housing supply shortage and affordability crisis facing the city. It will be a forum for candidates to share their ideas and proposals.

We believe the housing crisis needs to be top of mind among candidates. Toronto is Ontario's engine of growth. About 90 per cent of the housing in the province is built by the private sector, so it is critical that we get the market working. The issue is too important to be left on the backburner.

# TORONTO MAYORAL CANDIDATES STARTING TO ADDRESS THE HOUSING CRISIS

By Richard Lyall  
for Canadian Real Estate Wealth  
May 11, 2023

Candidates vying to become the next mayor of the City of Toronto are now beginning to address the housing supply and affordability crisis.

Until recently, the number one election issue was not getting the play it deserved. The proposal to move the Ontario Science Centre to Ontario Place and ideas to address safety on transit were the most talked about issues.

But a few candidates are now making some noise.

Mark Saunders has committed to tearing down silos that exist between city divisions and delay projects. He wants approval times for residential development to be reduced to one from four or more years. He's also noted the lack of progress on the Housing Now initiative which has resulted in nothing being built.

Brad Bradford has also referenced the silos and pointed out that Housing Now is delivering nothing even though it was launched in 2019 and acres of city-owned land sit vacant growing weeds.

Ana Bailão has indicated she will lead an initiative to develop incentives and launch new policies to support the delivery of 285,000 new homes by 2031.

Olivia Chow, meanwhile, has promised to build 25,000 rent-controlled housing units over eight years.

And Chloe Brown is pushing to use technology to make the procurement and permitting systems more user-friendly.

The serious candidates have attended informative tours of affordable housing projects on government lands by HousingNowTO, a volunteer organization.

Josh Matlow has proposed a \$300-million program, dubbed Public Build Toronto, to develop housing on city-owned lands, rather than partnering with private sector developers.

However, it has yet to be explained how we get to the target of 285,000 homes.

Urgent action is needed now, not tomorrow. Ironically, the



Housing Now Program of 2019 is still in the tomorrow phase as no shovels are in danger of hitting the ground.

For many young people today, the thought of owning a home remains a pipe dream and rents are far outpacing incomes. That should not be the case.

And there are the taxes. Alarming, when you buy a new house in the City of Toronto, roughly 31 per cent of the cost is due to taxes, fees, development charges and levies. On a \$1-million home, that works out to \$310,000.

We presently tax housing much the same as we do alcohol or tobacco. However, the difference is that a home is a need, not a luxury like the other products.

Up to 45 government bodies and agencies can be involved in the building permit process. When it comes to development approvals, we're ranked 34th out of 35 countries by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, just ahead of Slovenia. We need a modern, streamlined, digitized system.

The provincial government has taken legislative steps to tackle the issues and the City of Toronto has passed a badly needed 2023 Housing Action Plan. However, the recently approved plan is now in jeopardy as some leading candidates in the mayoralty race are clearly opposed to critical elements of the blueprint. Any delays to these long-overdue changes would be an absolute disaster.

Meanwhile, the federal government is allowed to collect billions of dollars in tax from new housing without returning a large chunk of it for infrastructure and housing supports. This was one of the findings in a report done recently by the Canadian Centre for Economic Analysis.

The federal government collects 39 per cent of the taxes from new housing but is only reinvesting 7.1 per cent of that in infrastructure. It's outrageous but thus far not broached.

House hunters need an income of more than \$200,000 a year to get into the current market or be left to an increasingly restricted rental market. If the situation continues, only the wealthy will be able to live in Toronto.

The present system is broken, and the only solution is supply. What's the answer?

# WISHLISTS

## HOUSING AND REFORM OF APPROVALS AT THE TOP



By Don Wall  
Daily Commercial News  
May 15, 2023

Construction stakeholders have developed long wishlists of demands as the 2023 Toronto mayoral byelection day approaches, with project approvals, housing and project procurement mentioned several times by policy watchers in the sector.

The byelection will be held June 26, a vote necessitated by the resignation of Mayor John Tory on Feb. 10. The winner will serve out the remainder of the 2022–2026 city council term.

### RESCON

Richard Lyall, president of the Residential Construction Council of Ontario (RESCON), says top priorities for the next mayor are not only to increase efficiencies in Toronto's development approvals process but also address municipal government "culture."

"We've just got a really inefficient process that needs to be looked at," he said, citing cumbersome or obtrusive zoning, fees and permitting practices.

But the culture problem, Lyall said, is the overriding problem that needs fixing from the top.

"Put it this way, the attitude in the bureaucracy is that the building industry is the enemy, which is odd because we build everything. We build the social housing, we build the non-profits, we build the condos, we build the low rise, the highrise. It's the industry that builds everything. We're not the enemy."

Changes to planning approvals urged by RESCON would

bring efficiency, responsiveness and predictable timelines.

Lyall said RESCON also wants to see mitigation of "exorbitant" taxes, fees, development charges and levies, which now represent 31 per cent of a new-home purchase price in Toronto.

The council would also like to see the mayor champion zoning changes with more as-of-right zoning on corridors and avenues. Lyall said he fully supported city council's vote on May 10 to permit fourplexes on single-family sites.

RESCON will be hosting an election debate May 24 focused on housing.

### RCCAO

The Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario (RCCAO) is prioritizing housing, state-of-good-repair projects and long-term infrastructure planning on its mayoral wishlist.

RCCAO executive director Nadia Todorova said Toronto municipal leaders must do everything possible to ensure the city can address the housing supply shortage and ensure continued investment in critical infrastructure to keep up with growth.

"Key things we know will help reduce wait times and costly delays are to speed up the development approvals process and embrace innovative concepts like electronic permitting," she said.

The new mayor should collaborate with the federal and provincial governments to ensure appropriate funding in response to the pandemic's impact on Toronto's capital budget, ensuring state-of-good-repair projects are not dropped. Similarly, collaboration is required to ensure mobility on roadways and public transit remains a top priority.

# ALLOWING MULTIPLEXES IS A GOOD START, BUT IT'S NO SILVER BULLET

By Richard Lyall  
for Storeys  
May 17, 2023

Large swaths of residential land in the City of Toronto – commonly referred to as the Yellowbelt – have typically been reserved for single-family detached or semi-detached homes. That is about to change as a result of council's decision to allow duplexes, triplexes and fourplexes in all low-rise residential areas.

It's about time.

We're expecting at least 700,000 new Torontonians by 2051, and they will need a diverse range of housing options.

Plenty of work remains to be done to make meaningful inroads into the housing supply crisis, but allowing more multiplexes – defined as low-rise housing with two, three, or four units in a single building – will help.

There are already multiplexes in some Toronto neighbourhoods and are a viable option for many different types of households.

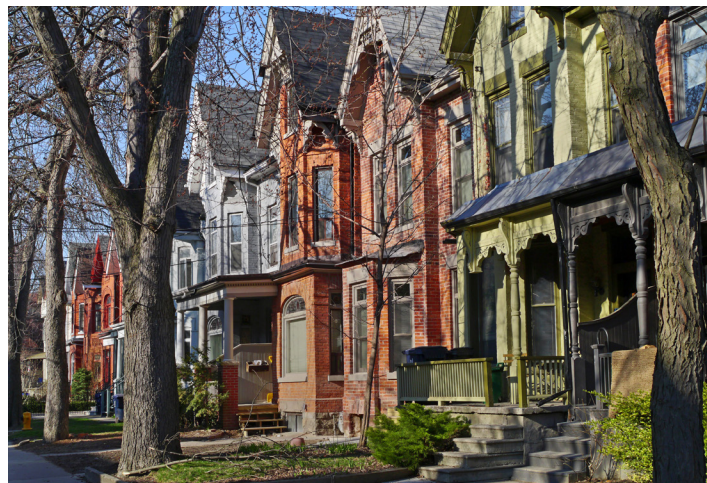
The proposal which was passed by city council will remove barriers and enable the creation of more low-rise housing. Amendments will be made to the Official Plan and city-wide zoning bylaw to permit the development of multiplexes of up to four units in a single building in all neighbourhoods.

In effect, the changes will allow more housing density in all low-rise neighbourhoods city-wide while ensuring they largely maintain their built form and landscape amenities.

It is in line with one of the recommendations to tackle the housing supply crisis that RESCON laid out in a 15-point plan released last fall. We felt it was necessary to end exclusionary zoning regulations within the City of Toronto to permit “as-of-right” light density and reasonable densification.

The change goes beyond provisions in the More Homes Built Faster Act passed by the provincial government last November, which allows up to three units on all residential properties in Ontario.

The decision was the right one. We are in an unprecedented housing supply and affordability crisis. We must get more housing built quickly. There has been an uptick in the city's mid- and high-rise housing development, but the amount of



low-rise housing like multiplexes has lagged actual demand.

Current and future residents of the city will need homes of different sizes to meet their needs. Most of the residential development has been in mid- and high-rise apartment buildings. The supply of multiplexes has not kept up with demand. Allowing more multiplexes will help the situation by enabling property owners to create housing for extended families or rental units for tenants.

As the city's planning staff noted in a report, multiplexes support climate goals by enabling less carbon-intensive construction. Importantly, they provide a housing option that can fit the needs of families, large households, people who want to live in ground-level housing and age in place in their neighbourhoods.

With as-of right zoning permissions, this type of housing can be delivered relatively quickly as owners will only be required to obtain a building permit rather than Official Plan or zoning by-law approvals.

Support for the changes was overwhelming. A survey of feedback on the policy changes done by city staff showed that the majority of respondents supported allowing multiplexes of four units across all neighbourhoods in designated areas. Many respondents indicated there is a need for more than four units to adequately solve the lack of housing options.

Eighty-three per cent of the respondents supported the proposal to amend the Official Plan, and 87 per cent were in favour of amending the permitted building types in all residential zones to permit multiplexes.

Meanwhile, 81 per cent were supportive of removing the proposed restriction on the maximum number of storeys allowed in a multiplex.

The city is planning to build 285,000 new housing units by 2031. The figure represents a 23-per-cent increase in Toronto's housing supply within 10 years. To reach that, 31,050 homes a year would have to be completed, approximately double the average number of units built annually between 2017 and 2021.

As city councillor Brad Bradford has rightly noted, allowing more multiplexes will not be the silver bullet to solve Toronto's housing problem. The city faces a formidable task, but permitting more multiplexes is a good start.



# REPORT

## CARBON REDUCTION TARGETS UNREALISTIC, HINDER HOUSING DEVELOPMENT



By Richard Lyall  
for Daily Commercial News  
May 19, 2023

**W**e all want to build green to reduce carbon emissions and better protect our planet from climate change. However, the targets being set by both the Province of Ontario and City of Toronto are unrealistic.

The two levels of government are intent on rushing to implement new green building standards and emissions targets at a time when the housing industry is dealing with myriad other issues such as high interest rates, inflation, supply chain and labour shortages, and escalations in the cost of materials.

Piling on additional regulatory requirements to make buildings greener and emit less carbon will only add to the difficulties facing the residential construction industry – at the very time we need more housing.

Presently, we are not building anywhere near the amount of housing that we need to meet demand. Our population is growing and there is a very large gap between demand and what's being built.

We need 1.78 million new homes in Ontario in the next decade. To reach that, we must double production. Homes have become unaffordable. Individuals need to make more than \$200,000 a year to buy a home.

Developers and builders are already doing everything

they can to mitigate the impact of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and be part of the solution to climate change, but in the midst of a generational housing supply crisis it doesn't make sense to jam new restrictions down the throats of developers.

If provincial and municipal politicians are truly serious about getting more housing built, they should stop meddling with the present standards and instead focus on clearing the path to facilitate construction of much-needed housing.

In Toronto, the city has accelerated its Transform TO Net Zero Climate Strategy, which aims to achieve a community-wide GHG emissions target of net-zero by 2040. As a result, under the Toronto Green Standard (TGS), buildings must achieve net-zero emissions by 2028. But there's no firm estimate of the cost and consequences this will have on house prices and electricity costs.

Most of the housing built in Toronto is high-rise towers made of concrete, glass, aluminum and pre-cast elements which are carbon intensive. This poses a problem when it comes to reducing embodied carbon.

The strategy calls for 27,000 homes in Toronto to be retrofitted by residents each year at their own expense until 2040.

We question how that will happen and how installing electric vehicle charging stations for residential units will be possible when the grid simply won't be able to meet energy demand.

See *Energy Grid* on Page 18

# ENERGY GRID

To obtain a site plan approval in 2028, buildings must be fully electrified. TGS requirements will effectively ban new natural gas-fired equipment for space heating and domestic hot water heating. This will put more demand on aging distribution infrastructure and the province's electrical generation capacity.

An analysis has shown that phasing out natural gas by 2030 would result in frequent and sustained blackouts and add \$100 to the monthly electricity bill for the average homeowner.

The province, meanwhile, is rushing to implement certain green building standards related to building construction into the Ontario Building Code (OBC) by this summer, with them coming into effect in 2024.

Meetings are being set up to begin developing a new province-wide approach for interested municipalities and other stakeholders on transitioning to certain green building standards related to building construction into the OBC. But the timetable for the changes is unrealistic as it means that the building industry and practitioners would have less than 12 months to put them into practice.

Construction planning cycles are long and complex.

Instead of a hasty approach that will hurt the home building industry, the province and municipalities should move forward in a predictable and measured manner towards sensible and achievable action that will consider the capacity of the industry.

Rushing the process will merely throw a wrench into the works. It would be a nightmare for the residential construction industry and result in more hurdles and delays in building permit applications while developers and builders and building code officials get acquainted with the new standards.

The residential construction industry is treated like it's anti-green, with no desire to reduce carbon emissions. However, builders are concerned and the industry is moving towards more green practices. Residential construction is a family industry. Many employers have children and are worried about the future. But we are in a housing crisis and the industry is facing a perfect storm of issues.

The residential construction industry should not be cast as the bad guys and gals in all of this and should not be forced to take actions that will bring much-needed construction of vital housing to a virtual halt.



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# SLOW APPROVALS, HIGH FEES TOUGH ON HOUSING



By Richard Lyall  
for Canadian Real Estate Wealth  
May 25, 2023

A recent report on Toronto's Housing Now initiative sheds valuable light on just how difficult – and expensive – it is to build in the city.

It serves as proof-positive that a slow approvals process, and exorbitant taxes, fees and levies which account for 31 per cent of the cost of a new home, are making the act of building market housing more challenging by the day.

Specifically, the report notes, construction costs have increased by more than 63 per cent, or more than 20 per cent year over year since 2019, making Toronto the most expensive city in Canada to build high-rise residential. In fact, construction costs have increased nearly four times faster than rents over the last three years.

The findings in the report should serve as a wakeup call to councillors. It is ironic that at the same time construction costs are escalating, the city expects the industry to nonetheless do more in the face of obstacles which have stalled Housing Now.

City leaders need to introduce performance standards on approvals reviews and staff need to work with the residential construction sector to introduce and implement municipal policies that actually support new home construction rather than create often insurmountable hurdles.

Housing Now, a component of the city's HousingTO 2020-2030 Action Plan, is an initiative to activate city-owned sites for the development of affordable housing within mixed-income, mixed-use, transit-oriented communities.

Phase one was launched in 2019 with 11 sites, phase two added six more in 2020, and phase three added four in 2021. To date, the city has committed more than \$1.3 billion in land value, capital funding and financial incentives to the program, making it one of the biggest municipal financial investments in housing underway today.

But wait for it. More than four years from the date the initiative was first approved by council, construction has not yet started on any site. Ten sites have been rezoned, with six market offerings completed. Some are expected to begin late this year.

According to the report, slowdowns resulting from COVID, interest rate hikes, labour shortages and supply chain disruptions have been a factor. Changes to federal National Housing Strategy programs, and the provincial More Homes Built Faster Act which has eliminated development charges on some projects, are others.

However, the summation of the report is that significantly increased costs associated with the construction of housing in Toronto are impacting the ability of the municipality to deliver on the Housing Now initiative.

It is imperative that the city pivot as the industry has done to meet these ongoing and new challenges because the problem is not going away. In fact, it is getting worse. We need 1.78 million new homes in Ontario in the next decade. To reach that, we must double production.

Presently, individuals need to make more than \$200,000 a year to buy a home in Toronto. The average monthly rent in the city is \$3,122 per month, a 13-per-cent increase from just one year ago. With 700,000 new Torontonians expected by 2051, it's not going to get better – without bold action.

According to the city's own figures, about 40 per cent of the city's renter households are living in unaffordable housing, and home ownership rates are dropping as affordability falls to the lowest level on record.

So, we must speed up the approvals process and reduce the taxes, fees and levies on new home construction.

These factors are having a massive impact on Housing Now and have much the same impact on market-built housing. Why wouldn't they? The same challenges confront the market residential sector.

Rather than create insurmountable hurdles to success, city leaders must implement municipal policies that actually support new home construction – not stymie that effort.

Having a place to call home, whether for an individual or a family, is the foundation upon which all success in life is based. It is difficult to be a successful employee or students without a secure home.

Consequences of the housing affordability and supply crisis are the greatest threat ever to Toronto's future. If we don't effectively and quickly address the housing supply and affordability crisis, young people will choose to leave the city. If they do, then sadly, all aspects of our province, from our diversity to our economic prosperity, will be affected for generations to come.

RESCON wants to work with the city to help fix municipal policies and governance that are contributing to the current situation. Our goal is to build more of the much-needed housing that we need.

# 4 YEARS AFTER TORONTO'S HOUSING NOW PLAN THERE ISN'T A SINGLE NEW AFFORDABLE UNIT



By Michael Smee  
CBC Toronto  
May 17, 2023

When Toronto launched its ambitious new housing strategy in 2019, it aimed to transform valuable city-owned lands into 10,000 affordable homes — but more than four years later, not a single shovel is in the ground.

Housing Now was designed to convert surplus city-owned properties, such as parking lots, into new housing developments, with a minimum one-third of those units affordable or at no more than 80 per cent of market rent.

The first 11 properties, all near transit nodes, were identified in early on. The plan was to build and hand back the projects to city-aligned housing agencies for management within four years through a fast-tracked approval process.

So far, that hasn't happened. Now, some developers blame what they're calling the city's onerous construction approval process — including the Toronto Green Standard (TGS), which adds several levels of new regulation, on top of the provincial building code.

"We're calling it 'Housing Later,' or 'Housing Maybe,'" said Richard Lyall, of the Residential Construction Council of Ontario (RESCON). "It's not a surprise, in a sad kind of way."

Since 2019, the original list of 11 city-owned sites has grown to 21. But the city has only contracted six of those projects to developers so far. Even so, CreateTO, the city agency that's overseeing Housing Now, denies there has been any problem getting developers on board.

"There is no problem at all in terms of interest level on most of our sites," said Vic Gupta, CEO of CreateTO, "because they are really strong, transit-oriented sites where the developers see an opportunity to have their small return."

He said the reason projects haven't evolved as quickly as

anticipated has to do with the pandemic. The consequent increase in construction material costs and interest rates have made the projects much more difficult for the city to finance, he said.

He also blamed the province's Bill 23, which denies cities the ability to collect development fees on affordable housing projects. Gupta predicted construction on three of the sites — at Bloor Street and Kipling Avenue, Wilson Heights Boulevard and Merton Street — will begin before the end of this year.

Paul De Berardis, director of building innovation for the Residential Construction Council of Ontario agreed financing has helped to slow down Housing Now.

But he also said the city is not doing itself any favours.

"There's no clarity on when these projects will actually move to building permit and construction. So there's a lot of uncertainty there, and also just some of the additional requirements that come with city projects, some of the higher levels of the Toronto Green Standard that need to be met."

The Toronto Green Standard, introduced in 2010, lists roughly 20 measures that builders must satisfy in order to be allowed to build in the city. They include things like installing electric vehicle charging stations in each parking spot, adding green roofs, or solar panels, and using windows and doors that help regulate indoor temperatures — measures that can be especially expensive for builders and, eventually, buyers.

Although those standards are, in some cases, voluntary on privately-owned properties, they're all mandatory on city-owned projects like Housing Now. And the list of TGS requirements recently got longer, with builders now expected to take into account what the requirements call "embodied emissions."

See *Emissions Produced* on Page 21

# EMISSIONS PRODUCED

They include the emissions produced when a particular building material is manufactured, for example, during the making of a steel beam, or concrete for footings.

But Gupta denies that meeting new, higher green standards is hobbling developers.

“Our sites, as directed by council, do have a have the higher-tier standard of the Toronto Green Standard, so our sites are closer to net-zero,” he said. “It is a a slight additional cost, but again bidders know that as they go into these projects.”

Gupta said the city agreed to some contracts with developers initially. But now, several years later, it’s finding that paying those developers is a challenge thanks to rising interest rates, increased construction costs and a lack of help from the federal government and its agencies.

That, he maintains, is why the projects have been slow to get off the ground.

“Nothing is perfect, but I’ll say this: Our projects have very, very skinny returns for the developer,” he said. “They’re three and three quarters, four and a quarter-per cent yields. That’s not a huge return for them to take on all the risk.

The Housing Now model demands that a minimum 33

per cent of the units built be city-owned and operated by city agencies, while the rest of the project — including retail spaces and condo units — would be left to the developers.

“The numbers have got to work for them,” Gupta said referring to developers’ bottom lines. “Hopefully the federal and provincial government will step up as well.”

Last week, city council agreed to press the federal and provincial governments to add more funding to Housing Now.

Mark Richardson, HousingNowTO.com’s technical lead, told city council that the Housing Now projects’ densities are too low to make them financially viable. The sites, with their easy access to transit, are very valuable, and there is “a limited pool of developers” with pockets deep enough to take on such sizeable projects.

Meanwhile, RESCON’s Lyall said the construction industry needs more consultation between planning bureaucrats and builders.

“There is a zealotry,” he said. “And there’s this belief that the industry can absorb just about anything, and the industry is going to pay for it — not the consumer.

“But it is the consumer that pays for it at the end of the day.”

***Coming soon!***

## **HOUSING SUPPLY SUMMIT 3.0**

**Thursday, Oct. 12, 2023**



***Speakers and panelists to be announced***

RESCON will hold its third housing supply summit on Thursday, Oct. 12, 2023. More details to come.

# ADVISORY



**PRESS RELEASE**

## CONSTRUCTION EMPLOYERS MUST HAVE KITS

**M**ay 26, 2023, Vaughan, Ont. – The Residential Construction Council of Ontario (RESCON) is advising builders that new legislation kicks in June 1, requiring employers to have life-saving naloxone kits on construction sites.

“Most RESCON members are already ahead of the game and have included naloxone kits on site as part of their health and safety protocols, but we want to make sure everybody is aware of the deadline,” says RESCON VP Andrew Pariser who is chair of the association’s safety committee. “This is an easy best practice that can save lives.”

Under the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA), all Ontario employers who know, or ought to know, that there is a risk of an opioid overdose in their workplace, are required to ensure that, at all times while there are workers in the workplace, a naloxone kit is made available in good condition.

The naloxone kits are important because they have medication that can temporarily reverse the effects of an opioid overdose and allow time for medical help to arrive. Ensuring there are kits on hand will also help to reduce the stigma around opioid abuse and raise awareness about the risks of accidental overdoses.

About 2,500 people in Ontario died from opioid-related causes between March 2020 and January 2021. Of the victims who were employed, 30 per cent worked in the construction industry.

Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development Minister Monte McNaughton has indicated that the province is bringing naloxone kits to high-risk settings and making them free because it must do everything possible to save lives.

The ministry’s first approach is education, but under the OHSA more significant fines can now be imposed on poor performers and repeat offenders.

“Safety and providing a safe work environment have always been a priority of RESCON and its employers,” says RESCON president Richard Lyall. “Builders must make sure they have the proper worksite health and safety protocols in place to deal with opioid abuse and the appropriate tools available on site in the event of an unfortunate situation.”

The province is making the naloxone kits and training available at no cost through Ontario’s Workplace Naloxone Program. [Click here](#) to sign up for training or to receive a kit. [Click here](#) for a reference guide for employers published by the Infrastructure Health and Safety Association.



# EMPLOYERS REQUIRED TO HAVE KITS ON SITE

By Daily Commercial News  
May 30, 2023

New legislation requiring employers to have naloxone kits on construction sites will kick in June 1, said the Residential Construction Council of Ontario (RESCON) in a reminder to builders.

Under the Occupational Health and Safety Act, all Ontario employers who know there is a risk of an opioid overdose in their workplace are required to ensure that at all times while there are workers in the workplace, a naloxone kit is made available in good condition, indicates a release.

The naloxone kits have medication that can temporarily reverse the effects of an opioid overdose and allow time for medical help to arrive.

Ensuring there are kits on hand will also help to reduce the stigma around opioid use and raise awareness about the risks of accidental overdoses.

According to data, about 2,500 people in Ontario died from opioid-related causes between March 2020 and January 2021.

Of the victims who were employed, 30 per cent worked in the construction industry.

Monte McNaughton, minister of labour, immigration, training and skills development, indicated the province is bringing naloxone kits to high-risk settings and making them free because it must do everything possible to save lives.

“Most RESCON members are already ahead of the game and have included naloxone kits on site as part of their health and safety protocols, but we want to make sure everybody is aware of the deadline.”

The ministry’s first approach is education, but under the act, more significant fines can now be imposed on poor performers and repeat offenders.

The province is making the naloxone kits and training available at no cost through Ontario’s Workplace Naloxone Program.

“Most RESCON members are already ahead of the game and have included naloxone kits on site as part of their health and safety protocols, but we want to make sure everybody is aware of the deadline,” said RESCON vice-president Andrew Pariser, who is chair of the association’s safety committee.

“This is an easy best practice that can save lives.”

For more information visit [Naloxone in the workplace | ontario.ca](https://www.ontario.ca)

A reference guide for employers published by the Infrastructure Health and Safety Association can be found [here](#).

# NALOXONE KITS AVAILABLE FREE OF CHARGE

**“ Builders must make sure they have the proper worksite health and safety protocols in place to deal with opioid abuse and the appropriate tools available on site in the event of an unfortunate situation.**



*By On-Site  
May 26, 2023*

Legislation requiring employers to have life-saving naloxone kits on construction sites kicks in on June 1. The Residential Construction Council of Ontario (RESCON) issued a reminder for to builders earlier this week about the upcoming change.

“Most RESCON members are already ahead of the game and have included naloxone kits on site as part of their health and safety protocols, but we want to make sure everybody is aware of the deadline,” said RESCON vice-president Andrew Pariser. Pariser chairs the association’s safety committee. “This is an easy best practice that can save lives.”

Under the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA), all Ontario employers who know, or ought to know, that there is a risk of an opioid overdose in their workplace, are required to ensure that, at all times while there are workers in the workplace, a naloxone kit is made available in good condition.

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“Safety and providing a safe work environment have always been a priority of RESCON and its employers,” stated RESCON president Richard Lyall.

“Builders must make sure they have the proper worksite health and safety protocols in place to deal with opioid abuse and the appropriate tools available on site in the event of an unfortunate situation.”

The province is making the naloxone kits and training available at no cost through Ontario’s Workplace Naloxone Program.

[Click here](#) to sign up for training or to receive a kit.

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# RESCON STAFFERS ATTEND TRIDEL EVENT

By Tridel  
May 19, 2023

Tridel, Canada's leading condominium builder, alongside government and industry stakeholders, came together for an event today focused on Mental Health in the Workplace, held at Tridel's Auberge on the Park community in North York.

This event aimed to raise awareness about workplace mental health and wellness, focusing on addressing the stigma around mental health in the construction industry. Guests included Stephen Lecce, minister of education for the Province of Ontario, Andrew Pariser, vice president of RESCON, Dr. David Gratzler, medical doctor and Centre for Additional and Mental Health (CAMH) psychiatrist, and other industry and Tridel guests.

This event was part of Tridel's Built for Respect mandate, first launched in 2020, as a collective effort by industry, union, and government stakeholders to create safe, healthy, and inclusive workplaces.

*"Mental health is just as important as physical health. At Tridel, we believe that creating a safe and supportive environment is crucial for the well-being of our employees. We've learned that the pandemic and social isolation have drastically affected people's mental health and well-being. This event and our Built for Respect initiatives continue to raise awareness and expand the topic of safety to include mental health. Standing alongside members of the home-building industry and government officials who share our dedication to safe communities, we are committed to providing the necessary resources to support the mental well-being of our employees."* - Jim Ritchie, president, Tridel.

Tridel has invited government officials and industry associations to help amplify the conversation in support of mental wellness, noting that the ability to work collectively and reach a wider audience can bring change to this large-scale issue.

Tridel took proactive steps over a year ago to ensure all its active construction sites have naloxone kits and personnel trained to administer the doses if needed – one of the first builders in the industry to do so. Tridel has also implemented several programs to support mental health, including an Employee and Family Assistance Program and self-directed courses through its SiteDocs Safety application and Learning Management System.

*"Safety is a core value at Tridel, and introducing new, comprehensive training intended to protect the overall health of our employees will play a critical role in keeping our workplaces safe. Just as we have physical safety training on-site, mental and emotional safety training is just as important. We are looking forward to the information the experts from CAMH will provide our staff, so they will be equipped with the tools and knowledge to support their*



*team members' mental health."* – Peter Meneguzzi, senior vice president, construction at Tridel.

Tridel is starting to work with CAMH to educate its people managers to identify signs of crisis, create safe spaces for difficult conversations, and know when to seek additional help.

RESCON, Ontario's leading association of residential builders, recently hosted its fourth Annual Mental Health Summit, citing that work-related stress, depression, and anxiety have surpassed musculoskeletal injuries in the construction industry.

*"RESCON is at the forefront of prioritizing mental health in the construction industry. Through pioneering initiatives like our inaugural industry-wide mental health symposium in 2018 and ongoing annual symposiums, RESCON has consistently focused on the well-being of workers in the construction industry. By integrating mental health considerations into industry best practice guides and maintaining a resolute focus on education, awareness, and destigmatization, RESCON is driving positive change. With continued dedication, RESCON ensures that every worker has equitable access to the essential resources for their mental well-being. We applaud Tridel, the founding member of RESCON's Health and Safety Committee, for demonstrating leadership in all areas, especially mental health."* – Andrew Pariser, vice president, RESCON.



# ONE ONTARIO IS REVOLUTIONIZING APPROVALS

By Mark Anderson  
 Director of Business Development  
 AECO Innovation Lab

The development approvals process is a challenge for everyone involved – especially on the industry side. It is a complicated, lengthy process that involves many stakeholders, including applicants, municipalities, conservation authorities, Indigenous groups, and others that have jurisdiction. On a complex application there could be up to 45 agencies or groups involved in evaluating, each with its own set of rules and regulations. This complexity is a big contributor to long development timelines.

These long, lengthening timelines have an increasingly significant impact on the development of new housing and increased costs for developers. A 2020 report suggests that every month a 125-unit low-rise development project is delayed developers incur \$456,000 in extra cost due to loan carrying costs, increased municipal charges and inflation. Due to supply chain issues and high inflation, these numbers have likely increased over the past three years.

Contrastingly, many international jurisdictions have already successfully utilized technology to streamline their development approvals processes, resulting in substantial time and cost savings – up to 72 per cent shortened timelines. It's important to note that successful jurisdictions did not simply digitize their existing processes like is happening in Canadian municipalities currently, but instead, they effectively leveraged digital tools to revolutionize the way they intake, collaborate and make decisions on development applications.

As a digital transformation partner, AECO Innovation Lab's collaborative research-driven approach to industry challenges has led to the creation of One Ontario – the next generation development approvals platform built for industry, by industry.

The standardized data exchange platform will streamline the notoriously complicated development approvals process, ensuring projects get built faster and the process is more consistent and transparent, alleviating the frustration and financial stress that developers face.

The team at AECO has been working closely with RESCON for nearly a decade, driving research initiatives advocating for increased transparency, innovation and efficiency in the development approvals process, and working together to address the nationwide problem of slow development and the housing crisis in the AEC industry. RESCON has also been a long-time supporter of One Ontario.

Built in collaboration with government, industry and academia, One Ontario will simplify the complexities of the approvals process and enable faster and smoother project development. Being piloted now, the platform offers a range of features designed to standardize and streamline the development approvals process, benefiting both applicants and regulatory agencies.

Some notable features include:

- 1. Application Dashboard:** One Ontario provides applicants with a comprehensive dashboard that allows them to track the progress of their projects, including pending approvals, document reviews and potential delays. This transparency empowers developers to manage their projects effectively and provides better estimates of approval timelines.
- 2. Requirements Menu:** One Ontario automates the process of determining project requirements by providing a list of requirements based on the project's location, characteristics and local authorities' regulations. This eliminates delays caused by coordinating multiple requirements and provides industry professionals with prompt answers.
- 3. One-Window Submission Portal:** The platform's one-window submission portal replaces outdated methods such as email, fax and paper. By automatically generating a list of all authorities that must review the application and sending the application to the appropriate authority, One Ontario eliminates inefficiencies and ensures seamless communication between stakeholders – on the applicant side and regulatory side alike.
- 4. Consultee Hub:** One Ontario centralizes the comments and feedback from all authorities in one place, eliminating the need to wait for all parties to respond before receiving comments. This will significantly reduce delays and enables applicants to address issues promptly, leading to faster approvals.

The benefits of adopting One Ontario are significant and wide-ranging, offering a transformative shift in the development approvals process. With One Ontario, Canada's AEC industry can achieve standardized and transparent processes, resulting in consistency, and cost efficiency for the development community, while providing true value to government partners.

The current inefficiencies in Ontario's development approvals processes are not sustainable. They must be urgently addressed to improve delays and allow for faster development at lower cost, and ultimately address the government's own goal of building 1.5 million new homes over the next 10 years.

One Ontario is the industry's answer to the opaque, convoluted, expensive, and inefficient process that exists today. AECO would like to invite industry leaders to join us in endorsing and adopting One Ontario. We are looking for industry partners to form a steering committee, which can collectively push for change and bring about a faster, greener and better building future for society. Get involved by contacting us at [info@aecoinnovationlab.com](mailto:info@aecoinnovationlab.com). Let's revolutionize the development approvals process, help the development community, and build a better Ontario for all.

# MEDIA REPORT

## PODCAST



### **Altus Podcast**

RESCON president Richard Lyall joins Marlon Bray and Raymond Wong to dig into the question: Can 1.5 million homes be built in Ontario within the next 10 years?

[Click here](#) to listen.

## RADIO



### **The Jerry Agar Show**

RESCON president Richard Lyall talks about the 2023 Toronto Mayoralty Housing Debate.

[Click here](#) to listen.

### **CKLW AM 800**

Kyle Horner is joined by RESCON VP Andrew Pariser to talk about new legislation that requires employers to have life-saving naloxone kits on construction sites.

[Click here](#) to listen.

## PRINT & ONLINE



### **Daily Commercial News**

A “fix-it-first” approach and better decision-making are key to better highways, according to a panel.

[Click here](#) to read the article.

### **Storeys**

RESCON president Richard Lyall says a decline in residential building permits at this time of the year is “atypical,” as the spring market usually sees activity increase.

[Click here](#) to read the article.

### **London Free Press**

With Toronto planning to meet or exceed the provincial target of building 285,000 homes over the next 10 years, housing is a critical issue, says RESCON president.

[Click here](#) to read the article.

### **Cornwall Standard-Freeholder**

The housing affordability and supply crisis is one of the most pressing issues facing the next mayor of the City of Toronto, says Richard Lyall.

[Click here](#) to read the article.

### **Daily Commercial News**

Most major Toronto mayoralty candidates have confirmed they will be attending a debate on May 24 sponsored by RESCON and industry partners.

[Click here](#) to read the article.

### **Storeys**

Candidates vying to be Toronto’s next mayor will face off in a debate concerning the city’s housing crisis next week.

[Click here](#) to read the article.

See *Media* on Page 28

# MEDIA

## **The Toronto Star**

Clashes over housing, a budget crisis, and awkward scrums: Key take-aways from a day of mayoral debates.

[Click here](#) to read the article.

## **Northern Miner**

RESCON VP Andrew Pariser explains why construction sites must have naloxone kits as of June 1.

[Click here](#) to read the article.

## **Ontario Construction News**

Naloxone kits are mandatory on construction sites as of June 1. [Click here](#) to read the article.

## **BNN Bloomberg**

Toronto mayoral candidates debate housing supply, affordability solutions.

[Click here](#) to read the article.

## **CBC News**

Top mayoral candidates clash over how to build affordable units, taxes at housing debate.

[Click here](#) to read the article.

## **Storeys**

Property taxes, affordability key issues in Toronto mayoral housing debate.

[Click here](#) to read the article.

## **NRU GTHA**

RESCON officials are concerned that without further study, a new plan to reduce carbon emissions in the concrete sector might result in increased material costs for developers or lack of availability of concrete.

[Click here](#) to read the article.

## **Welland Tribune**

Naloxone kits are required on construction sites starting in June.

[Click here](#) to read the article.

## **On-Site**

Safety and providing a safe work environment have always been a priority of RESCON and its employers,” says RESCON president Richard Lyall.

[Click here](#) to read the article.

# RCCAO REPORT

- On May 11, in a [joint letter](#), the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery and the Ministry of Energy advised that the government will be undertaking consultations on enhancing the locate delivery requirements and will consider a range of options to build flexibility into the current locate delivery system.
  - As a result of these consultation efforts, the effective date of the administrative penalty regulation administered by Ontario One Call will now be April 1, 2024.
  - RCCAO attended the launch of consultations on May 29 and will [continue its leadership on this file](#) through advocacy and close collaboration with our industry partners, particularly in the residential sector, stakeholders and government officials.
- [This year for the first time](#), RCCAO was proud to partner with the CAA and provide technical analysis for their annual Worst Roads Campaign.
  - [This campaign raises awareness](#) about the state of road infrastructure in the province and serves as an important reminder of the impact that infrastructure has in the daily lives of Ontarians.
    - The results of the campaign were announced on May 30 and featured roads in [Toronto](#) and [Windsor](#).
- On May 16, RCCAO executive director Nadia Todorova penned [an op-ed for the Toronto Sun](#), focusing on [RCCAO's recent report](#), which indicated that the federal government is [underfunding municipalities and public infrastructure](#), while reaping the greater proportion of tax dollars from high-tax policies on home building.
- On May 24, [RCCAO was pleased to attend](#) the industry mayoral housing and infrastructure debate at George Brown College.
  - RCCAO is prioritizing housing, state-of-good-repair projects and long-term infrastructure planning on [its mayoral wishlist](#).
- RCCAO Golf Day will take place on Monday, June 19. We look forward to seeing members, industry and government partners on the green.
- RCCAO remains active on social media – make sure to follow us to stay on top of infrastructure-related news.
  - [Twitter](#)
  - [LinkedIn](#)