

ISSUE
56



**MASONRY
WORKS**
Council Of Ontario

**BRICK
BLOCK
STONE**

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MASONRY

&

SUSTAINABLE

HOUSING

AFFORDABILITY

“Taking away the ability of Ontario's municipalities to exercise control over urban design will in fact make housing more difficult to build and more expensive over the long term.”

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MASONRY & SUSTAINABLE HOUSING AFFORDABILITY



The recommendations of Ontario's Housing Affordability Task Force (OHATF) brings troubling prospects for municipalities more specifically, the loss of local control over design and community character at the expense of communities and residents. The OHATF has made several recommendations in an attempt to speed up an increase in Ontario's housing supply. Many of these goals are worthy of discussion, particularly given that the housing crisis shows no sign of slowing down. Entry and upward mobility in the Ontario housing market has become near impossible for many Ontarians. It is well documented in the OHATF report that the housing crisis does not affect all Ontarians equally. In particular, young people, new Canadians, racialized, marginalized and Indigenous communities are increasingly faced with the reality that home ownership in the province is not realistic. The masonry industry supports the ongoing efforts by the government to begin addressing the housing crisis and many of the recommendations of the OHATF report provides good concrete steps to do just that. However, some recommendations in the report suggests removing municipal control over matters of design wherein, municipalities use design policy to ensure that neighbourhoods fit a community vision. They offer an important tool to planners to neutralize "NIMBYISM" allowing for more housing to be built. Furthermore, building design can play a critical role in ensuring that housing is durable and resilient, ensuring that home prices remain sustainable over time by cutting down on the need for maintenance.

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Ontarians deserve to have an input into how their neighbourhoods are planned and designed. New homeowners, especially those from vulnerable and disadvantaged communities deserve to live in homes that are both affordable and well-designed. Just as these communities are disproportionately affected by the housing crisis, they also bear the brunt of the increased frequency of extreme weather events, underscoring the need for durable and resilient urban design. Removing local control over urban design from communities is a top-down, one-size-fits-all approach of which the negative impacts will be felt by municipalities generally and home-buyers specifically.

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Sustainable housing affordability is benchmarked at housing costs of 30% or less of household income. This can be achieved with attention to exterior design for sustainability and durability over the long term, particularly in the face of climate change. As severe weather events increase, short-lived and fragile cladding systems may be damaged and require repair or replacement, increasing cost of living down the road. Furthermore, in jurisdictions where lower-performance cladding is in widespread use, such as some communities in Alberta, building envelope failure has been widely documented. These failures can drive costs upwards to \$50,000 per wall face for replacement, plus costs to the community from building inspections and court cases.

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MASONRY & SUSTAINABLE HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

Removing design controls will only create durability issues for homeowners while making virtually no impact on approval turnarounds and timelines for new developments. Matters of design are not a major cause of development delays or cost escalations like time lost circulating proposals between departments according to a 2018 report for the Ontario Association of Architects. Many of the Task Force's recommendations will help all Ontarians by delivering needed intensification and streamlining approvals while cutting down on misuse of the appeals process to stall developments. The masonry industry wholly supports many of these recommendations that would increase both density and supply. However, it is important that affordable housing remains affordable for generations to come.

There is substantial room to reduce the regulatory burden on homebuilders while still building beautiful and sustainable neighbourhoods. The Province will not solve the housing crisis by sacrificing good design. All Ontarians deserve to live in well-designed, beautiful and sustainable communities, not homes built to standards low enough that hidden costs will be inevitable for the next generations of home-buyers and homeowners.

GRAPHICAL FACTBOX: Top three causes of approval delays

1. Time lost circulating submissions between city departments **(23.6%)**
2. Slow municipal response times **(19.1%)**
3. Disagreements between different departments and agencies **(16.1%)**

GRAPHICAL FACTBOX: Top three issues planners comment on during approvals

1. Grading and servicing **(19.5%)**
2. Landscaping **(13.8%)**
3. Loading and parking **(11.7%)**

