bill 109

IT'S NOT ENOUGH

Did you know Ontario has made some big changes to how planning works?

The government of Ontario has introduced Bill 109, More Homes for Everyone Act as it's first step implementing the Housing Affordability Task Force's report. Here's our crib notes of what the Task Force recommended - what they got wrong . . . and what we can do!

An explainer from **West End Coalition For Housing Justice**

Ontario has an affordable housing challenge, not a housing supply challenge!

Taskforce Claims

"We do not have enough homes to meet the needs of Ontarians today...If this problem is not fixed – by creating more housing to meet the growing demand – housing prices will continue to rise." (pg 4)

The report narrowly focuses on creating housing supply, which is not the same as creating affordable housing supply. In 1982, an average of 20 social housing units were built for every 100 market homes, creating affordable housing that Ontarians enjoy to this day. A 2021 inventory of 53 development proposals in the West End of downtown Toronto revealed that only 257 of the 18808 units to be built - 1.4%! - will be affordable. Housing supply has outpaced population growth in Canada, but these homes favor investor pockets rather than decreasing the cost of housing. We've been chasing more private 'supply' for 35 years, and it's never paid off.

Ontario can stop existing affordable units from being lost.

Ontario must protect tenants from renovictions and prevent speculative investors from purchasing existing affordable housing. Ontario could take a lesson from British Columbia and end rental vacancy decontrol. This would regulate 'renovictions' by creating defined categories of major renovations and would stop landlords from evicting tenants in order to increase rent.

Ontario should support nonprofits and co-ops with buying private rental buildings at the lower-end of the market and turning them into community-owned, permanently affordable housing. The City of Toronto's new Multi-Unit Residential Acquisition (MURA) program is a great example of this strategy, but the program requires co-investment from the Province to make a real impact.

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More private development does not necessarily bring prices down!

Taskforce Claims

> **"Scarcity breeds price increases. Simply put, if we want more Ontarians to have housing, we need to build more housing in Ontario." (pg 7)**

There is no evidence that increasing unregulated housing supply alone will deliver affordability for all. CMHC data shows home completions outpaced population growth last year. In fact, developers completed a record level of new homes in the last quarter of 2021, matched by a record 17% increase in the average price of homes sold. The Taskforce ignores evidence that increasing the supply of private, for profit development drives local housing prices up.

Ontario can directly create affordable housing instead!

Private developers are not the only ones who can build housing. Ontario has thousands of non-profit housing organizations and cooperatives, a majority of whom specialize in building and operating permanently affordable homeownership, rental housing, supportive housing, and transitional housing.

Public incentives and subsidies should go towards permanently affordable housing projects instead of private developers who profit when housing costs increase. We need to create an environment where non-profit providers are amplified and have the resources to build affordable housing.

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Ontarians cannot afford to keep subsidising profit driven, private developers!

Taskforce Claims

"The ability to by-pass long, drawn out consultations and zoning by-law amendments – is the most effective tool in the provincial toolkit." (pg 10)
"Government fees ...create a disincentive to affordable housing." (pg 18)

We already offer private developers fast-tracked approvals and waive their development fees, often with little in return. The province proposes Ontarians pay for development burdens on neighborhoods, while developers realize high profit levels. Development fees are needed to improve public infrastructure and services as our communities grow in addition to adequate, affordable housing. Proposed cuts to community participation and involvement in the planning process further threaten the ability of communities to ensure affordable housing, community benefits and green spaces are included as part of new developments in our neighbourhoods.

Ontario can expand community benefits negotiations as part of all new developments.

As our city grows, we need more resources available for all of us. Shifting towards equitable planning so that development supports mixed-income neighbourhoods and housing diversity that allows for many different needs.

This requires increasing opportunities, spaces, and resources for community involvement in the development process so neighbours can realize community benefits that truly contribute to much needed public goods and infrastructure. Local communities should be engaged in the planning stages as early as possible and provided resources to help understand and navigate the development process. This approach can actually help to build community support upfront and mitigate delays in planning approvals.

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Profit-driven private developers will not stop displacement from happening in our neighbourhoods.

Private developers simply stay out of the market and won't build if housing prices fall to less than the cost of construction. A recent report by Mississauga's planners indicates that private developers delay building until prices soar like they are now.

Additional supply alone, created by private builders, will never lead to housing prices dropping as far as most Ontarians need to stay in their neighbourhood. The reality is that the high costs of land and building right now translate into housing prices far beyond what the average Ontarian can afford. The solution is not reducing red tape so we can build more, fueling speculation that drives prices up, but rather figuring out levers that increase income and affordability to guarantee housing for everyone instead of encouraging investors.

Ontario can activate a no-net-loss policy to protect affordable housing.

Ontario can stop the loss of affordable housing with policies like an extended Tower Renewal Mandate that protects affordable high rise towers from conversion to luxury units. We must make our affordable units relevant to more people, including essential workers, by redefining affordable housing as deeply affordable and permanent, not just "market rate" for a limited number of years. In Ontario's housing crisis, market rate already exceeds what most households can afford.

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Market speculative demand for housing is too massive and elastic to meet.

The amount of housing we would need to overwhelm the global speculative investment demand and thereby bring costs down is massive. Creating that level of over-supply is impossible with the amount of land and resources available and it is irresponsible of the Taskforce to promise it will amount to a housing affordability solution. CMHC data shows that nearly 30% of homes are being purchased by investors who own multiple properties, not by those who need to live in them. The province has to stop fueling this market.

Ontario can mandate private developers include affordable housing units in every development.

Inclusionary zoning policies are being hamstrung by politicians in the Province and cities across Ontario. At variables between requirements of 5-10% of units, Ontario’s timid Inclusionary Zoning policies are below other cities.

Compared to other parts of Canada such as Montreal where new building is committed to 30%, Ontario is far behind. The province also imposes restrictions on Inclusionary Zoning so that it is only applicable to a limited list of communities defined as Major Transit Station Areas. The result is a neutered affordable housing policy that developers are already using as an excuse to avoid negotiating with communities for needed community benefits.

Stay tuned

Bill 109 received Royal Assent and came into force in April 2022. The provincial election outcome will decide how this Bill impacts planning for growth in our neighbourhoods in the future. Ask your local candidates about how they want developments to include us! Ask City Councillors how they plan to respond to these changes and work to increase community involvement in decision-making at the local level.

share

Repost or share this with neighbours who care about changes happening in our communities and want to see more affordable housing created, not lost
TAG **#WECHJ** TO LET US KNOW!

Join us!

Maybe you have a housing story to share or a new development happening in your neighbourhood you want to get involved in? We would love to hear from you and connect you with groups and community partners organising for housing justice and community benefits in the Downtown West.

CONTACT US AT

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The West End Coalition for Housing Justice brings together over 15 different community organisations and groups.