
Hon. Rob Flack, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing

17th Floor, 777 Bay Street
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 2J3

Re: Bill 17, *Protect Ontario by Building Faster and Smarter Act, 2025*

June 6, 2025

Dear Minister Flack,

We represent businesses, organizations, and individuals dedicated to affordable and efficient buildings. We support the intent of Bill 17 to streamline and accelerate housing development, make housing more affordable, and advance transit-oriented communities.

We are concerned, however, that Bill 17 undermines municipal oversight by restricting their ability to safeguard urban design elements like flood protection, air quality, and energy efficiency. It also eliminates critical checks and balances by mandating automatic approval of development submissions from prescribed professionals, removing municipalities' essential role in protecting public health, safety, and environmental well-being.

Municipalities have a responsibility to oversee urban design in their own jurisdictions

Bill 17 prohibits municipal bylaws relating to construction to speed up project timelines, however, it introduces new risks and unintended consequences. The language is so broad that it could invalidate numerous existing bylaws in communities across Ontario, including ones that are critical for health and safety. For example, it could overrule bylaws that limit heavy construction overnight in residential neighbourhoods, prevent homes being built next to industrial plants with pollution beyond regulated limits, or that prevent tall buildings in the flight paths of hospital air ambulances.

Furthermore, by stipulating that submissions prepared by prescribed professionals be automatically accepted as compliant with all requirements, Bill 17 effectively transfers planning approval authority from municipal staff to consultants hired by developers. This eliminates key checks and balances in the system, increases risks and liabilities, and creates unnecessary conflicts of interest for designated professionals. It is essential for the interests of all parties, including the public interest, that development documentation be subject to independent review by qualified individuals at arms-length from the project, such as municipal staff.

Green development standards are essential tools for affordability and sustainability

Municipal authority to enact proven, performance-based green development standards should be made clear. Green standards ensure buildings are efficient and address extreme weather and climate change.

These standards complement, rather than conflict with, the Ontario Building Code, and there is no evidence they slow down housing. In fact, Toronto, with its ambitious standards, has seen more development in recent years than any other city in North America. While green standards add minimal upfront costs, they enhance long-term affordability and reduce municipal infrastructure expenses. Without them, future homeowners will certainly face higher utility costs, and city budgets will be further strained.

Builders need clarity and predictability to build faster

The proposed legislation makes sweeping changes to the role of municipalities in development planning and potentially invalidates a wide range of existing bylaws across Ontario. The bill as drafted risks creating confusion and disorder, as both municipalities and developers work to understand the implications and adjust policies and procedures. This could lead to housing project delays and exacerbate challenges with land speculation that worsens affordability. Stripping municipal authority to review development submissions also risks increasing the number of disputes at the already overloaded Ontario Land Tribunal. If a submission from a prescribed professional is unclear or fails to adequately address a requirement, municipalities may be forced to rely on legal challenges, creating new uncertainty and delays. Rather than accelerating development, these specific changes could have the opposite effect.

We therefore recommend the following changes to Bill 17:

1. Allow municipalities to enact green development standards and bylaws related to construction or demolition, provided they do not conflict with the Ontario Building Code.
2. Ensure clarity in the legislation and consistency with the Provincial Planning Statement to support predictable and fair planning processes.
3. Protect public interest and minimize risk by allowing municipalities to continue conducting independent review of development submissions.

Ensure Bill 17 protects affordability and efficiency

Our recommendations will provide municipalities with a targeted role to play in development that focuses on health, safety, and long-term affordability for Ontarians while reducing red tape and increasing efficiency. Minister Flack, we urge you to refine the legislation to ensure that all stakeholders, including municipalities, can do their part to ensure streamlined approval and construction of quality buildings in Ontario.

Sincerely,
[Your signatures here]