

## New Provincial measures would accelerate home construction

New legislation will be introduced in the Ontario Legislature to speed up home construction across the Province, the government announced Monday.

On May 12 in Vaughan, the Province announced new measures to 'help speed up the construction of new homes and infrastructure,' a move which Aurora Mayor Tom Mrakas described as a 'meaningful step' albeit one that comes with some concerns.

The Province stated that these measures were developed in consultation with municipalities, changes include a simplified system for development charges (fees paid to municipalities by developers to ensure infrastructure keeps pace with growth) and realizing transit-oriented communities, as well as financial boosts to programs like the Municipal Housing Infrastructure Fund.

Once passed, the Province says the legislation will: 'spur new construction by simplifying and standardizing development charges based on measures that were developed in consultation with municipalities, including measures that some municipalities have already implemented. Ontario will work with municipalities to continue simplifying, streamlining, and reducing costly local development fees that can add hundreds of thousands of dollars to the cost of new homes.'

It will also: 'Remove barriers for Canadian manufacturers who want to introduce innovative materials, systems and building designs that could reduce construction costs and expedite projects; streamline and improve planning and delivery for transit-oriented communities, creating more jobs and housing options near transit; reduce costs and speed up project approvals with consistent building construction standards across Ontario municipalities; significantly speed up getting shovels in the ground to build major transit projects by extending measures in the Building Transit Faster Act, 2020 to all provincial transit projects; [and] simplify, streamline and bring consistency to development applications, land use planning approvals, and contents of municipal official plans.'

'These changes would make it easier and faster to build residential, commercial and industrial buildings within and across Ontario's municipalities,' said the Province in Monday's announcement. 'Ontario's road building standards can differ across the Province's 444 municipalities, causing unnecessary cost and delays. The Province will consult with municipalities and stakeholders by fall 2025 on framework legislation for greater harmonization and clarified governance of municipal standards, which will lead to cost savings through more efficient design and technical review, greater construction efficiencies, and streamlined procurement processes.'

The potential new measures were applauded by Mayor Mrakas, tempered somewhat with concerns over how development charges will be handled going forward, particularly the impact such changes might have on communities like Aurora.

'Today's announcement reflects a meaningful step toward reducing red tape and aligning provincial tools with the realities on the ground,' said Mayor Mrakas in a statement. 'As we work together to accelerate housing, one area where we need to proceed with caution is the proposed standardization of development charges. These charges are one of the few tools municipalities have to fund the water, roads, and community infrastructure that new developments require. If we reduce or limit them without a clear, sustainable funding alternative, the costs of growth risk being passed on to existing residents, and that's simply not fair.'

'What we need is stable, predictable funding to ensure growth pays for growth. That's why I continue to advocate for a new approach, one that includes sharing a portion of the Land Transfer Tax and GST on new home sales with municipalities. This is essential if we want to build housing quickly and responsibly. In Aurora, we've made building faster and smarter a top priority. We've streamlined development applications, brought more transparency to the planning process, updated our Official Plan to reflect long-term growth, and focused new development around our Major Transit Station Areas. These new provincial measures have the potential to strengthen that work and help us move further and faster.'

He commended the Ontario Government for increasing investments in the Housing-Enabling Water Systems Fund and Municipal Housing Infrastructure Fund by \$400 million, which he said were 'practical investments' that will help communities like Aurora

?unlock new housing through the infrastructure that makes it possible.?

?I look forward to reviewing the legislation in detail and working with the Premier, Minister [of Municipal Affairs and Housing Rob] Flack, and the Ontario Government to ensure these reforms reflect the needs of communities of all sizes, including small urban municipalities like Aurora.?

Other municipal leaders were largely supportive of the measures.

?I applaud Premier Ford, Minister Flack, and the Government of Ontario for taking bold and creative action to address the housing crisis,? said Vaughan Mayor Steven Del Duca. ?The status quo simply isn't working, and families across Ontario ? including mine ? deserve to see real change. I want my kids to have the opportunity to own a home in the city where they grew up. In Vaughan, we're doing our part by reducing development charges by 50 per cent and using every tool available to get more homes built, faster. I welcome the province's leadership in cutting red tape, standardizing approvals, and building a more efficient, affordable future for all Ontarians.?

Added Mississauga Mayor Carolyn Parrish: ?I'm grateful for the province's leadership in introducing these much-needed measures to address the housing crisis. Municipalities cannot tackle this challenge alone -- we need support like this to cut red tape, streamline approvals, and create the conditions for faster, more affordable housing development. Mississauga's Housing Task Force has demonstrated that bold reforms and innovative policies can drive real progress, and these provincial measures will encourage cities across Ontario to accelerate their own housing initiatives. This kind of collaboration across all levels of government is critical to meeting the urgent housing needs of our residents and building a more sustainable future for residents all over Ontario.?

**By Brock Weir**