

BUILDING PERMITS

Process under the microscope

Despite recent reforms to the *Ontario Building Code*, the permit process is still inefficient and needs more work, according to a new report commissioned by the **Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario**.

“Key legislative changes introduced a few years ago were designed to streamline the building permit process and eliminate bottlenecks,” said alliance executive director **Andy Manahan**.

“Yet, provisions to allow certain functions such as plan examinations to be done by registered code agencies have not been adopted by municipalities.”

The 38-page report, *Examination of recent reforms to the Building Code Act and the building permit process in the GTA*, by **Hemson Consulting Ltd.** describes how municipalities undertake construction plan reviews and building inspections, identifies areas for further streamlining of the process and looks at inefficient practices of both municipalities and builders.

Chair of the **Large Municipalities Chief Building Officials** group **Mark Sraga** said, while the report is factually correct, the scope is narrow and he is concerned with the thrust of it.

In the whole development approval process, the building permit portion of it is rather small when you compare it to the time spent on getting the planning approvals in place, so we are the last step in that very lengthy process,” Sraga said.

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One member group of the alliance said improving the building permit process would alleviate related contract scheduling problems for subcontractors and increasing costs.

“It is critical that permits be issued in a timely manner to make the whole construction process more efficient,” said **Harold Piccininni** of the **Residential Low Rise Forming Contractors Association of Metropolitan Toronto and Vicinity**.

One recommendation in the report to help speed up the building permit approval process suggests municipalities make use of registered code agencies.

Sraga said the point is misleading because the first firm offering the service was only registered by the province in 2007, there are few currently registered and there are other legal and liability issues.

The report also suggests municipalities adopt a co-ordinated and consistent approach to construction plans submitted by professional engineers and architects. Sraga, who is also the chief building officer with the **Town of Caledon** said, “there is a co-ordinated approach... and to say it is not happening is wrong.”