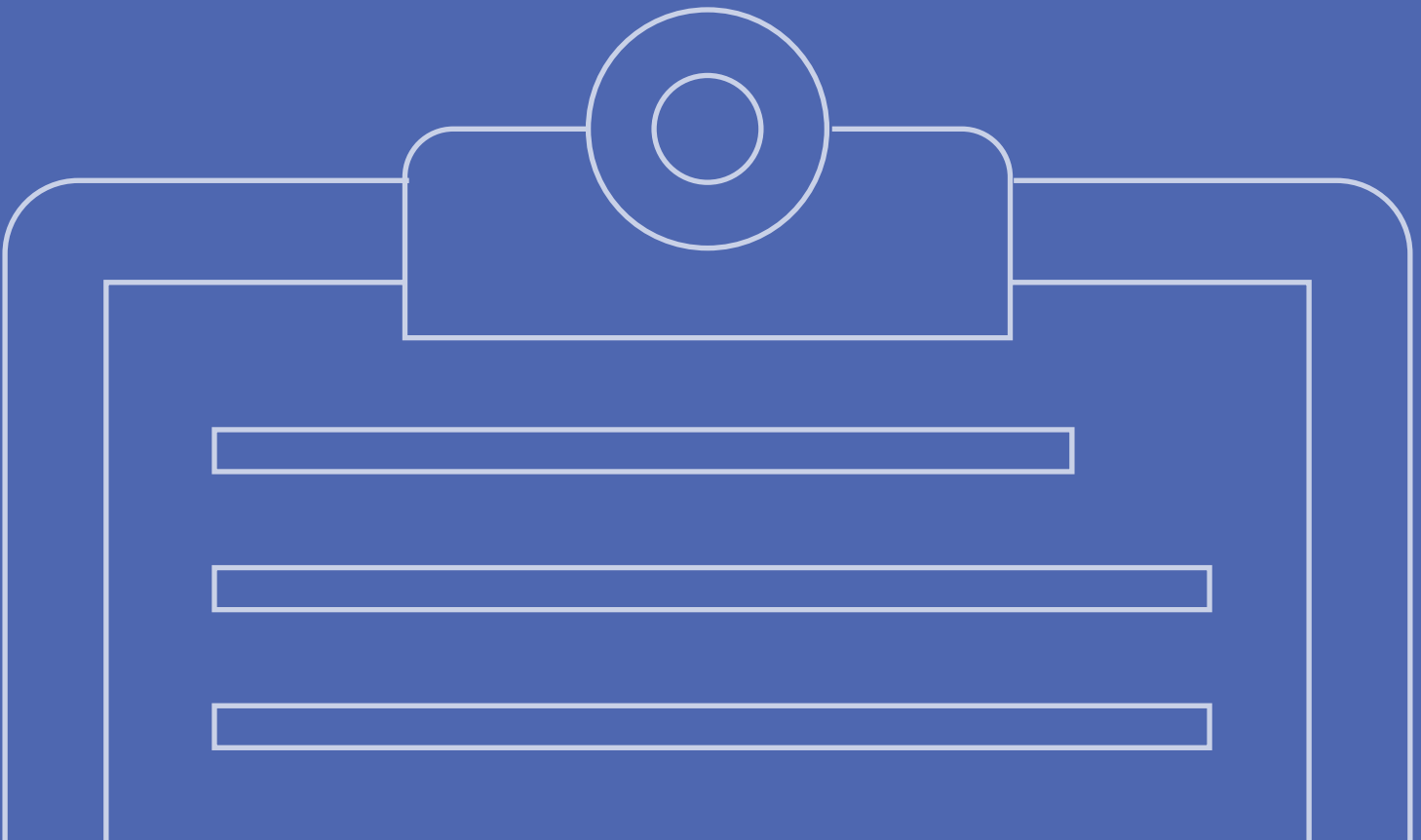


Provincial Housing Report Card

November 2024



Alliance for a
Liveable Ontario





Executive Summary

In June 2022, Ontario Premier Doug Ford was re-elected promising to help solve the housing crisis. His majority government has control over powerful planning policies and many fiscal levers that can encourage affordable family housing.

Yet things have only gotten worse.

Vacancy rates are extremely low. Rents keep going up. Home prices are still too high. Housing starts have plummeted. Construction workers are being laid off due to a lack of work. Meanwhile the demand for affordable housing and family-oriented housing within towns and cities keeps going up.

This report card analyzes the actions the Province has taken.

We conclude that the Province's policies have sent the wrong signals — encouraging the wrong type of housing in the wrong places at the wrong prices. As a result, the housing crisis has only gotten worse.

If the Province wants to solve the housing crisis, it must change direction now.

Provincial Housing Report Card, Fall 2024

To make homes affordable, the Province must:

Build affordable homes in towns and cities, not on farmland.

What the Province did



- Prioritized expensive single family homes on farmland, natural areas and the Greenbelt.
- Removed municipal power to stop sprawl.

WRONG WAY!

To make homes affordable, the Province must:

Build a wide variety of housing types, not more single family homes and small condo units.

What the Province did



- Eliminated requirements to build missing middle, mid-rise and other diverse housing types in towns and cities.

WRONG WAY!

To make homes affordable, the Province must:

Invest heavily in non-market affordable housing.

What the Province did



- Failed to invest in helping housing providers (eg. non-profits and co-ops) build much needed non-market housing.

WRONG WAY!



The Province is pushing the wrong type of housing in the wrong places at the wrong prices.

**ONTARIO HOUSING STARTS TUMBLE, DEVELOPERS WARN
SITUATION WILL 'GET WORSE BEFORE IT GETS BETTER'**

[Globalnews.ca](https://globalnews.ca) July 29, 2024

**ONTARIO'S BUDGET WON'T FIX
AFFORDABLE HOUSING CRISIS: CRITICS**

[CBC News](https://cbcnews.ca) March 30, 2024

**ONTARIO'S HOUSING CRISIS: 'NEXT YEAR
IS GOING TO BE HARDER'**

[Daily Commercial News](https://dailycommercialnews.ca) December 29, 2023

**THESE SENIORS FACE A 20% RENT
INCREASE — AND ONTARIO RULES
MAKE IT LEGAL**

[CBC News](https://cbcnews.ca) November 22, 2022

Introduction

In June 2022, Ontario Premier Doug Ford was re-elected promising to solve the housing crisis. His promise was achievable since his majority government has control over powerful planning legislation and policies as well as having many fiscal levers that can encourage affordable family housing development at different price points and ensure reasonable rents.

Instead, over the past two years, the province has used these levers to pass an unprecedented flurry of new laws and policies directly aimed at housing. It fundamentally changed planning laws, removed municipal powers that guided housing development, eliminated public oversight and gutted environmental laws. The Premier and his government have created a radically changed regulatory framework, insisting that this would encourage developers to build.

Yet, things have only gotten worse.

Vacancy rates are extremely low. Rents keep going up. Home prices are still too high. Housing starts have plummeted. Construction workers are being laid off due to a lack of work. Meanwhile the demand for affordable housing and family-oriented housing within towns and cities keeps going up.

This report card analyzes key actions and signals the Province has sent to developers and municipalities about what housing should be built and where. It is organized around three High Level Actions (HLAs) that have been identified by a broad set of stakeholders¹ as key to making homes affordable in Ontario:

- Build housing in the right places: within existing towns and cities, not on farmland and natural areas.
- Build a wide variety of housing types: prioritize multi-unit, multi-tenant, multi-bedroom instead of only small condos in tall towers and more single family homes.
- Invest heavily in non-market affordable housing.

For each Action Area the key government actions over the past two years were analysed to assess if provincial policies have moved us closer or further away from where we need to go.

¹ See [Taking Action Together: Five Ways to Make Homes Affordable in Ontario](#).

We conclude that the Province’s actions have sent the wrong signals — encouraging the wrong type of housing in the wrong places at the wrong prices — relying even further on the market to fulfil all of our housing needs. The result has been that provincial actions have only made the housing crisis worse.

If the Province is serious about solving the housing crisis, it must change direction now.

Why is the Government ignoring the facts?

Over the past two years, Government Ministers kept repeating the disproven claim that there isn’t enough land set aside within our existing towns and cities to build the housing we need. This was the justification for removing lands from the Greenbelt, a decision that was later reversed after huge public opposition.

Why are they ignoring reports from their own Affordable Housing Task Force? Why are they ignoring the many other legitimate sources² that show there is more than enough land within existing towns and cities and/or already set aside by municipalities in 2021 to build well over 2 million housing units – just on land that had already been approved for home construction?

How we evaluated the Province

**RIGHT
WAY**

Province is supporting the High Level Action.

**MIXED
RESULTS**

Province is neither helping nor harming the High Level Action.

**WRONG
WAY!**

Province is undermining the High Level Action.

² Eby, K. for the Alliance of Liveable Ontario “[Review of Existing Housing Unit Capacity Identified in Municipal Land Needs Assessments Prepared for Upper- and Single-Tier Municipalities in the Greater Golden Horseshoe](#)” - February 2023; News Release and Media Package issued by the Regional Planning Commissioners of Ontario. “[Regional Planning Commissioners of Ontario Issue Inventory of Ontario’s Unbuilt Housing Supply](#)” - March 7, 2023

High Level Action 1: Build Housing in the Right Places

Build in towns and cities and not on farmland and natural areas.

We need to build lots of homes fast. But we must choose locations where it makes sense financially (i.e. where there is existing infrastructure and transit), where people want to live, and where we can preserve our precious farmland, natural assets, and water resources. We can do all of this by building housing within the boundaries of our towns and cities, where enough land has already been set aside to build all the housing we need for generations to come.

Building on farmland and natural areas outside of existing towns and cities actually adds to the housing affordability crisis. New subdivisions require new roads, new services, new everything – which costs a lot more money than building in the right places.³

Provincial Actions



Bill 23, More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022

- Abolished 50 years of coordinated regional/upper tier planning that helped prevent “patchwork” sprawl by coordinating infrastructure with growth management planning and the identification of regional agricultural/natural heritage systems.
- Turns over planning entirely to local municipalities which do not have the resources, expertise, spatial jurisdiction or control of sewer and water servicing, major roads and public transit. abolishes the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, which removes critically important policies and metrics – plus natural heritage and agricultural systems – aimed at reducing urban sprawl and supporting complete communities and transit by directing growth inward and using land and infrastructure more efficiently.

³ In 2021 the [CBC reported](#) on a [study](#) done for the City of Ottawa that concluded building new homes in so-called “greenfields” cost the municipality about \$465 per capita. Building new homes in existing neighbourhoods saved the municipality about \$606 per capita. See also this 2021 report by the City Building Institute ([Density Done Right](#), pp. 4-6) for more data on the high cost of sprawl.

- Weakens wetland protection and severely restricted Conservation Authorities role in reviewing the impact of new development on natural values.

See a detailed analysis [here](#)



Bill 39, Better Municipal Governance Act, Fall 2022 and Related Government Actions

- Removed 7500 acres of land from the Greenbelt (this was repealed when the Premier bowed to public pressure and introduced Bill 136 Greenbelt Statute Law Amendment Act).
- Imposed major urban expansions (17,500 acres) through the modification of regional official plans in the GTAH (also repealed but reimposed via Bill 162).
- Creates the undemocratic Strong Mayor powers – allowing the passing of Mayor initiated bylaws with only 1/3 of council support – to implement “provincial priorities” including the creation of 1.5 million units by 2031.



Repeal of Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe and Provincial Policy Statement PPS) Changes

- Abandons the provincial growth management framework that coordinated how almost 10.8 million people living in the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH) design and build the places where they live.
- Turbo-charges low-density urban sprawl and scattered development by removing any restrictions/requirements on settlement expansion -only requires municipalities to establish undefined target for affordable housing (despite a requirement for a minimum of 25% affordable units first being required by the Province in 1988) -eliminates farmland protection rules, erect barriers to future farmers, and undermines the agricultural sector.

See a detailed analysis [here](#).

Bill 162, The Get it Done Act

- Reimposes tens of thousands of acres of municipal expansion forced on municipalities as part of Bill 23 package and later repealed along with the Greenbelt expansions.

See more [here](#).

Bill 185, Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act, 2024

- Removes the ability of any person, landowner, non-government organizations, or upper tier municipality to challenge an urban expansion at the Ontario Land tribunal (OLT) thereby eliminating a mechanism to stop new sprawl development and making the Tribunal a “developers-only” tribunal.

See more [here](#).

Bottom Line:



**WRONG
WAY!**

The Province changed laws and sent clear signals to municipalities and developers to build expensive single family homes outside of existing towns and cities. Doing this raises the cost of housing since creating new suburbs from scratch requires extremely expensive new roads, sewers and other infrastructure.

The fact that new single family housing starts are so low shows this option is neither affordable nor preferable for most Ontario households. Conversely, housing starts for homes within towns and cities are up, in spite of the Province’s lack of support. Imagine how many more of these housing starts could have happened with proper Provincial support.

What the Province needs to do:

Use its planning and tax powers to get housing built in the right places, within existing towns and cities and not on farmland and natural areas.

High Level Action 2: Build a Wide Variety of Housing Types

Prioritize multi-bedroom, multi-unit and multi-storeyed buildings instead of mainly tall towers and single family homes.

Not all Ontarians want to live in the same type of home or neighbourhood. As we age and grow, our preferences often change. We need housing choices to reflect the wide range of needs and wants. That's why we must ensure new housing construction provides a healthy variety of housing types and sizes.

Today, there is growing demand for homes in multi-residential, low-rise, and mid-rise buildings, often called the "missing middle." We need to shift our priorities to filling this demand instead of building more single family homes in suburbs and postage stamp condo units in tall towers.

Provincial Actions



Bill 23, More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022

- Pushed developers to build homes on farmland and natural areas, likely expensive single family homes.
- Allowed Minister to restrict municipal powers to regulate/restrict the demolition/conversion power of municipalities to protect/require the replacement of affordable rental housing lost to redevelopment.
- Restricts municipal powers to require new affordable units in new developments through capping/restrictions of development charges, community benefits.
- Caps the ability of municipalities to require developers to include affordable units under the Inclusionary Zoning provisions of the Planning Act.
- Waives or reduces development charges for affordable and attainable housing units without requiring the savings to be passed on to purchasers or tenants.

See a detailed analysis [here](#).

Bill 39, Better Municipal Governance Act, Fall 2022

- Imposes major urban expansions (17,500 acres) through the modification of regional official plans in the GTAH, likely leading to more single family homes.

Repeal of Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH) and Provincial Policy Statement Changes

- Removes planning policies municipalities used to require a mix of housing types.
- Abandons the “intensification first” vision, intensification and density targets for growth planning in the GGH that required developers and municipalities to build a mix of housing types.

See a detailed analysis [here](#).

Bill 162, The Get it Done Act

- Reimposes tens of thousands of acres of municipal expansion forced on municipalities as part of Bill 23 package and later repealed along with the Greenbelt expansions where single detached houses will predominate.

See more [here](#).

Bill 185, Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act, 2024

- Removes the ability of any person, landowner, non-government organizations, or upper tier municipality to challenge an urban expansion at the Ontario Land tribunal (OLT) thus allowing greenfield development where single detached housing will predominate.
- Considers amending the Building Code to allow for single access stairwells for lower rise apartment buildings and to allow timber construction in buildings up to 18 storeys from the current 12.

See more [here](#).

Bottom Line:

**WRONG
WAY!**

The Province changed laws and sent signals to municipalities and developers to build more expensive single family homes and investor-friendly condo units in tall towers. With rare exceptions, these laws and policies did nothing to support municipalities and developers wanting to build a diversity of housing types and sizes.

Nothing illustrates this mismatch better than low rental vacancy rates coupled with thousands of postage stamp sized condo units on the market and reportedly sitting empty and new single family home sales plummeting.

What the Province needs to do:






Use its planning and tax powers to get a wide variety of housing types built by prioritizing multi-bedroom, multi-unit and multi-storeyed buildings instead of a focus on tall towers and single family homes.

High Level Action 3: Invest Heavily in Non-Market Affordable Housing

Until the 1990s, governments in Canada were heavily involved in financing the construction and operation of non-market, affordable housing, often owned and operated by housing co-ops and other non-profit housing providers. Then, governments stopped investing and relied on the private sector. This hasn't worked. Today, estimates suggest over 600,000 Ontarians can't afford the homes they live in. More and more of them are ending up homeless.

Meanwhile, there are lots of successful examples of governments supplying non-market housing in countries around the world. Governments need to invest heavily, again, in non-market housing.

Provincial Actions

-  **Bill 23, More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022**
-  **Bill 39, Better Municipal Governance Act, Fall 2022**
-  **Repeal of Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe and Provincial Policy Statement Changes**
-  **Bill 162, The Get it Done Act**
-  **Bill 185, Cutting Red Tape to Build More Homes Act, 2024**

- Despite calls from all housing stakeholders and municipal governments, the Government has made no changes to increase funding or its commitment for non-market/government led affordable housing.
- Even where the Government has imposed massive density increases for developers through Minister's Zoning Orders and other Ministerial Decisions (eg. Official Plans) – including in Transit Oriented Communities and Major Transit Station Areas – it has actually removed municipal affordable housing targets while failing to impose its own.
- And while it required development charges to be waived for non-profit projects and waived the PST on purpose built rental buildings – the PST waiver applies to luxury rentals which make up the vast majority of all new purpose built rental units (it should be limited to “affordable” purpose built rental).

Bottom Line:

**WRONG
WAY!**

The Province has done nothing to help create much needed non-market affordable housing. Worse still, it has overridden municipal affordable unit requirements, sold provincial land to developers with no affordable housing requirements, subsidized luxury rental with government money and reduced the ability of municipalities to stop renovictions which often destroy existing affordable housing to build investor-friendly and expensive housing.

What the Province needs to do:

Start investing heavily in non-market affordable housing, prioritizing funding for municipal and community housing developers – particularly those with shovel ready proposals.

About Liveable Ontario

We are an Alliance of people and groups representing hundreds of thousands of Ontarians from many different sectors. We want to build a liveable Ontario and stop the Provincial Government policies that falsely claim they will solve the housing issues facing us, while harming our communities and undermining the protection of our farmland, natural areas and democratic institutions.



Learn more at
www.fivewayshome.ca