

The Land Economist

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PROFESSIONAL JOURNAL



**ASSOCIATION OF
ONTARIO LAND
ECONOMISTS**

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Increased frequency and destructiveness of storms prompts new guidelines and standards.
PHOTO: Toronto Flash Floods in 2013 by Mark Watmough, [via Wikimedia Commons](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Toronto_Flash_Floods_in_2013.jpg) [CC BY 2.0]

NEWS BRIEFS

LOWEST VACANCY RATE SINCE OCTOBER 2000

Average vacancy rates in Ontario's rental housing markets fell to 1.6%, CMHC's Fall Rental Market Survey reported last month. This is down from 2.1% a year earlier – and the lowest rate in 17 years.

The tightest markets are in Kingston (vacancy rate 0.6%, down from 2.6% in 2016), Toronto (1.0%, down from 1.3%), Peterborough (1.1% - stable) and Guelph (1.2%, down from 2.1%).

Declining rates in recent years have attracted new investment, the survey reports. Primary market (purpose-built) rental completions increased in 2017 – particularly in Kitchener, Barrie and Guelph. And secondary market (condominium) completions used as rentals rose, “exerting upward pressure in the rental universe, particularly in Kitchener and Ottawa.”

However, “new units added to the rental apartment universe fell short of increases in demand.”

VACANCY DECONTROL VITAL FOR RENTAL MARKET

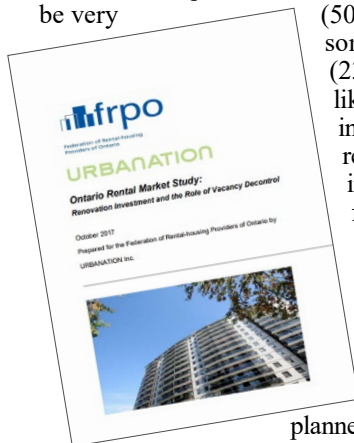
Members of the Federation of Rental-housing Providers of Ontario (FRPO) have reported that just over three quarters of all their rental units received renovations of \$5,000 or more in the past five years. Average spend was \$13,745. For Ontario as a whole, the report estimates renovations of \$5.2 billion total, with \$4.9 billion spent within the stock of rent-controlled units.

The rent increases possible at turnover, allowing a reasonable return on investment, were a very important factor. Almost three quarters said they would be very

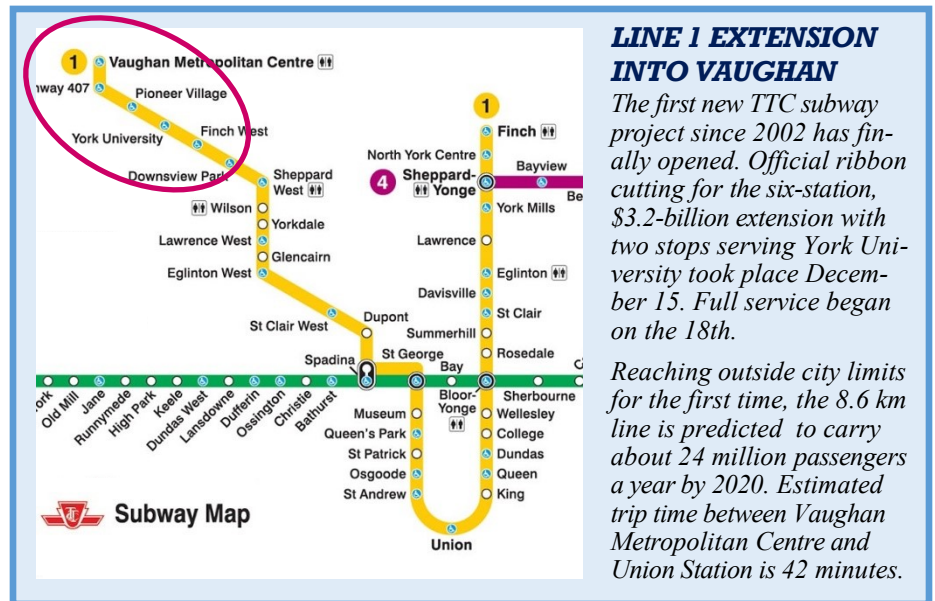
(50%) or somewhat (23%) unlikely to invest in renovations in the next five years without vacancy decontrol.

At least 1,000

planned purpose-



FALL 2017 / Vol 47, No 2



built rental units have been cancelled since April's extension of rent controls to post-1992 buildings, the study says. But the market needs to double its annual production to meet demand. That goal “has virtually no chance of being achieved under a policy that removes vacancy decontrol,” it concludes. See <https://www.frpo.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Urbanation-Renovation-Investment-and-Vacancy-Decontrol-Report-for-FRPO.pdf>

NEW RULES FOR DRONES EXPECTED IN 2018

Transport Canada's (TC's) proposed new rules for the operation of small Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) would no longer be based on whether the equipment is used for hobby or commercial purposes. It would also drop current requirements for commercial operators to obtain a Special Flight Operations Certificate (SFOC) for drones weighing 250 g to 25 kg, and operated within visual-line-of-sight.

Rules would be based on drone size and flight complexity:

- **Very Small** (250 g to 1 kg);
- **Small - Limited** (1 to 25 kg) essentially those used in rural areas;
- **Small - Complex** (1 to 25 kg) those used in urban areas, in restricted airspaces and/or near airports.

All must be marked with contact information, and operators must carry \$100,000 liability insurance. Minimum distances set out slight relaxations, especially for the Very Small drones.

Dropping the SFOC requirements is expected to reduce paper burden for both

businesses and government. Instead, all operators in the first two categories would have to pass a basic knowledge test of about 100 questions.

Those in the **Small - Complex** definition would need to hold a drone-specific pilot permit, register the drone and meet additional flight rules and requirements. In addition, the proposals call for these drones to meet a design standard such as ASTM F2910-14. Operators say this would prohibit many units in current use, and compliant units would cost \$9,000-10,000 each.

Endangering safety, flying where you are not allowed or putting aircraft at risk can result in fines up to \$25,000.

For more information, see Transport Canada's page https://www.tc.gc.ca/eng/civilaviation/opssvs/proposed-rules-drones-canada.html#design_standards, and the MobileSyrup magazine article <https://mobilesyrup.com/2017/07/24/new-proposed-drone-regulations-transport-canada/>

DANGEROUS PLACES

Macleans magazine's November crime ranking shows Temiskaming (Temiskaming Shores) as Ontario's most dangerous place in 2016, and #25 across the whole country.

Ontario's next four on this list were Brantford, Timmins, Woodstock and Thunder Bay (#53, 56, 57 and 58 across Canada).

Rankings are based on Statistics Canada's **Crime Severity Index (CSI)**. See <http://www.macleans.ca/canadas-most-dangerous-places/>

New standards aim at flood resilience

Natural catastrophes and resulting economic losses in Canada have increased dramatically in the past few years. So there's a lot of attention now focused on improving climate resiliency.

That includes updating codes, standards and infrastructure design to reflect climate change and extreme weather impacts.

One key area is flooding. It represents about 75% of the recent losses, and many of them are not covered by insurance.

Impacts are serious and growing: homeowners with crippling value losses, clean-up costs and stress; mortgage holders with defaults; builders and municipalities with lawsuits; and increasing insurance premiums, or loss of coverage.

As well, Conservation Ontario recently estimated that 3/4 of the floodplain maps in the province are out of date. Flooding risk is affected by topography, weather patterns, land use, new development, changes in permeability, the size and condition of existing and proposed infrastructure such as bridges, culverts, roads and sewers, and both natural and engineered stormwater management features.

In Ontario, floodplains are defined by the 1-100 year, Hurricane Hazel or Timmins regional storm. The thing is, 1-100 year storms are coming more frequently. What impact will remapping have?

Here are three projects working towards that goal for new and existing residential communities.

New communities

"Preventing Disaster Before it Strikes" is the first step towards a national standard for new flood-resistant residential communities. The Standards Council of Canada-funded study by the University of Waterloo's Intact Centre on Climate Adaptation sets out 20 best practices for 'green-field' development of low rise housing (singles to stacked townhouses). These would not apply to existing homes, infill or mid- to high-rise housing, and don't address ocean coast floods or unique events like dam failure. But they do address overland flooding, such as when rain over-

whelms catchbasins and sewers.

By 2019, they hope to have completed a standard that "municipalities could, for example, reference in their storm water management guidelines," says Natalia Moudrak, co-author of the study, and developers could use in their marketing to show compliance with best practices.



Design Resilience: No new homes should be permitted in the floodway, and none in the flood fringe, unless they are floodproofed for fringe risks. New development should not increase flood risk for existing communities. HVAC, electrical and fuel systems to be well-elevated or above grade. No reverse slope driveways.

Storm Sewer Design: Capacity should be designed to accommodate

more severe rainfall. Inlet control devices should restrict overload flow from streets. Water level in the sewer should stay 30 cm below any connected foundation drains during major design events, and backwater valves should be installed on sewer laterals.

Sanitary Sewer Design: No downspouts, foundation drains or sump pumps connected to a sanitary sewer. Backwater valves for basement connections. Sewer design to accommodate rain infiltration.

Street Design: Water on the road should remain at least 30 cm below the home's lowest opening (e.g. basement windows). Excess runoff should not flow through a homeowner's property.

As well, development should not encroach on land and vegetation buffers beside water bodies, or space needed for normal stream movement and bank erosion.

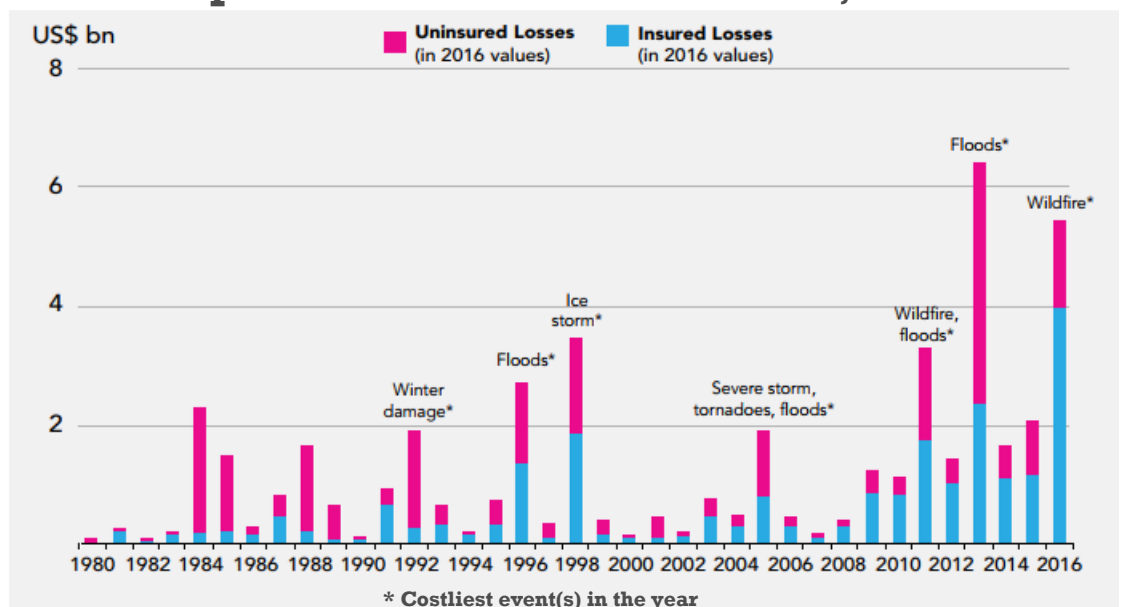
Existing Home Floodproofing

The Intact Centre has also developed a 50-point Home Flood Protection Assessment tool for existing homes. This is key for a proposed cross-Canada program where trained assessors inspect homes, and suggest corrective actions. Pilot programs are under way in several Ontario municipalities.

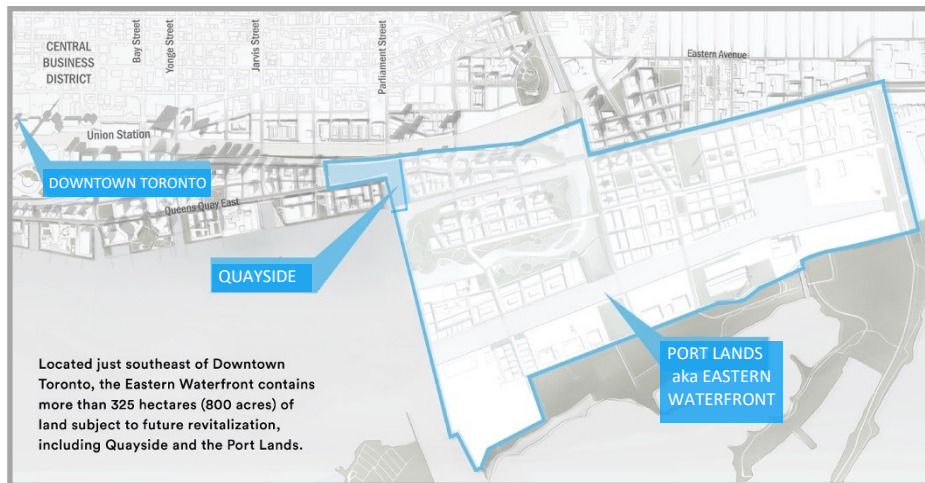
Existing Communities Standard

With interest from municipalities across Canada, the Intact Centre has also begun work towards a Flood Resiliency Standard for Existing Communities, which present more complex issues than greenfields. **RM**

Catastrophic insured losses in Canada, 1980 - 2016



Source: 2017 Munich Re, Geo Risks Research, NatCanSERVICE. As of February 2017



Buzz about Sidewalk Labs, Google, and Waterfront Toronto

By October 17, when Waterfront Toronto and Sidewalk Labs, officially announced their “Quayside Plus” partnership, it had already created a media frenzy here and made international headlines.

It was no secret that Sidewalk Labs, a unit of Google parent company Alphabet, had been scouting locations for a “city of the future” reimagined “from the internet up”. The fact that it had chosen Toronto was greeted here with widespread excitement.

The original RFP had called for an innovation and funding partner to help realize “an unparalleled vision for sustainable urban development on Toronto’s eastern waterfront, specifically the 12-acre Quayside development opportunity”.

However, that vision had expanded dramatically. “Sidewalk Labs and Waterfront Toronto aim to bring the innovations advanced at Quayside to scale across the Eastern Waterfront ... one of North America’s largest areas of underdeveloped urban land,” the group (“Sidewalk Toronto”) says.

Once the living laboratory approach expands across those 325 hectares (800 acres), “Toronto will become the urban innovation anchor for the world, generating new economic activity from unexpected places.”

Part of the Quayside project is to analyse which innovations to pursue. Here are some options and goals included in the Vision Statement:

- integration of physical and digital innovation across every aspect of urban life
- a new platform offering internet con-

nectivity, digital mapping of infrastructure and buildings, a distributed network of sensors providing information about the urban environment, a modelling component to check “what if?” scenarios, personalized portals for residents, data standards, and interfaces for new apps to build on the platform

The concept of ubiquitous data collection has raised concerns: What will the data be used for? Who will own and control it? How identifiable will people’s data be? Sidewalk Toronto has promised to get wide input on protections, transparency, and controls. Ann Cavoukian, former Ontario Information and Privacy Commissioner now Executive Director of the Privacy and Big Data Institute at Ryerson University, has agreed to serve on an advisory board.

“Toronto will become the urban innovation anchor for the world”

- a multi-source district heating and cooling system (“thermal grid”) that identifies and taps excess heat and cool for circulation and reuse (geothermal, waste heat from sewers, and from the buildings themselves)
- a convenient, inexpensive mobility system with restrictions on private cars, self-driving transit shuttles, traffic lights that prioritize walkers and cyclists, and an app that can identify mobility options when you need them
- “radical” mixed use and flexible building typology, enabled through innova-



The Quayside Plus proposal includes utility corridors for services, robotic deliveries and waste handling (top) and pilots of tall timber and modular building.

tive construction such as Loft “strong shell and minimalist interiors”

- improved affordability and energy efficiency through Passive House standards for residential construction, advanced tech modular building and tall wood
- flexible-use public spaces and use of floating parks and/or housing
- a new paradigm shift in zoning and building codes to an “outcome-based system” where compliance is assessed through embedded sensors monitoring structural integrity, daylight access, air quality, noise levels, energy usage, and more. (This is another area that has raised concerns. What would that do to the approvals process and timing? What if the building does not meet the goals?)
- utility channels for services that make digging up roads a thing of the past, and also enable robotic parcel deliveries and solid waste handling (also smart chute systems in multi-family buildings that can differentiate between recyclables and trash)

Sidewalk Labs is making several key commitments, particularly:

- funding up to US \$50 million towards the Master Innovation and Development Plan (MIDP) (\$10 million up front, with the other \$40 million dependent on agreements for the \$125 million pledged government funds and flood protection, as well as details of mandate, scope and procurement within six months)
- moving Google’s Canadian headquarters in as a primary tenant
- pursuing an Urban Innovation Institute as secondary anchor
- using innovative approaches for financing affordable housing.

Ontario forecast at a glance

% change unless otherwise indicated

	2014	2015	2016	2017F	2018F	2019F
Real GDP	2.7	2.9	2.6	2.9	2.1	1.8
Nominal GDP	4.4	5.0	4.3	5.0	4.0	3.7
Employment	0.8	0.7	1.1	1.8	1.4	0.8
Unemployment rate (%)	7.3	6.8	6.5	6.0	5.7	5.8
Retail sales	5.8	5.5	7.1	6.6	5.0	4.4
Housing starts (units)	59,134	70,156	74,952	80,100	68,800	70,000
Consumer price index	2.3	1.2	1.8	1.7	1.7	2.0

ONTARIO'S STRONG PACE TO SLOW DOWN JUST A TAD

Ontario's economy has been on a solid run in the past four years. It was among the provincial growth leaders in Canada. This isn't about to end. It's just that it will get harder to maintain as fast a pace in the face of rising interest rates, market-cooling measures in housing and uncertain trade environment with the United States. We expect that a number of factors that contributed significantly to growth in recent years—including residential investment and household spending—will quiet down in 2018. We project GDP growth to ease from a seven-year high of 2.9% in 2017 to 2.1% in 2018. Our outlook for 2019 calls for further deceleration to 1.8%.

Infrastructure spending still front and centre in 2018

Continuing to fuel growth in Ontario will be heavy investment in the province's infrastructure. We expect to see a coordinated ramp-up in capital spending by all levels of government in 2018. Public transit and road transportation infrastructure will get the lion's share of this spending. More generally, the provincial government will maintain a fairly stimulative fiscal policy stance. Program spending is projected to grow solidly by an average of almost 4% in 2017-18 and 2018-19. This is thanks to strong revenue growth generated by a vibrant economy. In its latest economic and fiscal review published in November, the province also cut income taxes for small businesses, although this is primarily a defensive measure to help small businesses deal with a sharp increase in the minimum wage. The November review confirmed that the provincial government will fulfill its long-standing commitment made in Budget 2010 to

balance its budget by 2017-18.

A significant shift in the housing sector has already taken place

Ontario's housing market will begin 2018 on a much quieter note than it began 2017 when the majority of southern Ontario markets were overheating. Home resale activity fell sharply following the introduction of province's Fair Housing Plan in April. While activity recovered partly since then, we believe that the plan, along with rising interest rates, tighter mortgage lending rules and stretched affordability will keep home resales track-ing a lower baseline in 2018. We expect a similar outcome for new home construction. Pre-construction sales—a usually reliable advance indicator for homebuilding—also dipped since April, especially in the single-detached home segment. Our view is that residential investment will subtract from growth in 2018.

Substantial minimum wage hike on the way

The dramatic 29% scheduled increase in Ontario's minimum wage rate to \$14 per hour on January 1, 2018, and \$15 per hour in 2019, no doubt will pose substantial headaches for many businesses in the province. Our view is that it will put some modest upward pressure on the provincial unemployment rate—especially for younger workers. On the other hand, consumer spending on basic items such food and clothing may get a boost because many minimum wage earners will take home higher pay cheques. These are generally individuals with a high propensity to spend.

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Smart Cities Challenge

On December 7, Infrastructure Canada kicked off a "Smart Cities Challenge". Open to all municipalities, local or regional governments, and Indigenous communities (First Nations, Inuit, and Métis) across Canada, the challenge offers:

- One prize of up to \$50 million open to all communities, regardless of population
- Two prizes of up to \$10 million open to all communities with populations under 500,000 people
- One prize of up to \$5 million open to all communities with populations under 30,000 people

Application deadline is April 24, 2018.

Finalists will be announced in the summer and winners announced in spring 2019.

The Intelligent Community Forum (ICF) is hosting a free webinar panel discussion featuring Gerard Peets, Executive Director, Infrastructure Canada.

Date: January 10, 2018

Time: 1:00 pm - 2:00 pm EST

Register at: intelligentcommunity.org/icf-canada-webinar-smart-cities-challenge

Tall Wood Reference

Ontario's "Tall Wood Building Reference: A Technical Resource for Developing Alternative Solutions Under Ontario's Building Code" is available by emailing masstimber@ontario.ca. Designed to help increase opportunities for designers and builders to create innovative, flexible and affordable new buildings and maintain high fire safety standards for both the public and fire service personnel, it contains information on both fire and structural safety.

Electrical vehicle charging requirements

Electric vehicle charging requirements in housing and non-residential buildings such as work spaces come into effect on January 1, 2018. To aid in the transition, an amendment to the Building Code filed December 19, clarifies that the requirements will not apply to buildings/houses with agreements or an approved plan with an electricity distributor in place by January 1, 2018, as long as they apply for the building permit before January 1, 2020. This accommodates situations where investments have already been made in systems that were not designed to handle the increased energy loads.

WATCH OUT FOR SIGNS OF CYBER FRAUD

The recent *Brick Warehouse vs Chubb Insurance* decision in Alberta is Canada's first decision on 'social engineering' cyber fraud. Although the incident took place before the widespread introduction of specific insurance, it has underscored the importance of human error and insurance policy wordings for cyber security.

In this case, a fraudster contacted one accounts payable employee at The Brick, saying he had just started working at (Brick suppliers) Toshiba and was missing some payment details. The Brick employee faxed over the documentation.

A few days later, another accounts receivable employee received an email. This was from someone claiming to be Toshiba's controller, who said Toshiba had changed banks and provided information to the employee to change future payments to the new account. The Brick employee made the change Aug 24, 2010. Before the fraud was halted, almost \$340,000 had been sent to the bogus bank account. Only about \$114,000 was recovered.

The Brick made a claim under its crime insurance policy, which included umbrella funds transfer fraud. However, the definition limited coverage to funds transfer fraud by a third party, specifically: "fraudulent instructions ... issued to a financial institution ... without the insured's knowledge or consent."

That wording cost the Brick the unrecoverable payments, plus time, effort and money for the lawsuit. The judgement states that: "There is no mention anywhere in the insurance policy of the term 'informed consent'. If the policy contained these words, again it is unlikely the parties would be before the court."

There was fraud caused by vendor impersonation, but a Brick employee clearly gave instructions to the bank to transfer funds. To make matters worse, no-one questioned the calls, or the email address of the so-called controller silbers_toshiba@eml.cc), or verified the request with Toshiba or the bank.

Other lawsuits in the U.S. show some details of increasingly sophisticated funds transfer cyber frauds, and the vulnerability to human error.

In one, a "mirror" email address substituted an "RN" combination for the "M" in the company name — something very



PHOTO: Mansion Global

Wondering what to do with your Xmas bonus?

You might want to look at this 6,919-acre property in Gateway, Colorado.

Its write-up on the Mansion Global [website](#) describes West Creek Ranch as "one of the finest residences and land parcels in the world". Actually, there are four "scenic and verdant" parcels, including sheer rock cliffs and plateau country. There are also four residences with a total of 14 bedrooms. Eight of those are in the 22,000 sf, four-level main residence, which includes an 800 lb capacity elevator, art studio, gym, staff quarters, fountains, pool and spa, and geo-thermal heating and cooling.

Also on the property are — of course — equestrian and bison pastures, fishing ponds, a grass airstrip and hangar, helipad, astronomical observatory and trout stream.

Cost is only \$149 million (US).

With a \$119.2 million mortgage and taxes, monthly payments are estimated at \$693,245.70.

Maybe you could rent out some bedrooms on Air BnB to help with that!



hard to detect in lower-case letters. For example, 'president@arnazon.com' and 'president@amazon.com' look virtually identical, but the first one is actually ARNAZON.

In another recent U.S. case, *Mediadata Solutions Inc. v. Federal Insurance Co.*, a criminal who had hacked a company's computer system was able to create 'real' emails to an employee "from the president", informing her of an upcoming acquisition and saying she would soon hear from his lawyer about it.

The criminal then phoned her, posing as the lawyer, and asked her to transfer funds. She said she would need authorization from two senior executives, so the fraudster sent them emails "from the president", saying he wanted them to sign off on the transfer, which they did.

In that case, the New York District Court judge decided for Mediadata and ordered Federal Insurance to pay. The computer

fraud wording in the crime policy covered losses caused by "fraudulent entry" or changing of data in the company's computer system. Unlike many other cases, this judge held that the fraud had happened when the criminals hacked the company's computers and created the fake emails. Other decisions have denied coverage because the loss is not a "direct" one — i.e., it was suffered by the company's clients or suppliers — even though the company would probably have to repay them.

Don't assume this can't happen to you. A recent test to check phishing vulnerabilities at a Canadian law firm found 75% of the lawyers provided passwords.

These examples underline the need for strict processes and ongoing employee and senior staff training. Insurance for cyber perils is still new, and policies differ widely. Experts recommend careful investigation of options.

FIRST CANADIAN HEAD OF RICS

Congratulations to John Hughes, new President of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, which is headquartered in London, U.K.



John Hughes

He takes over the respected world-wide professional organization as it begins celebrating its 150th anniversary.

He chaired RICS in the Americas from 2013-16, and the Institution's Strategy Group from 2015-16.

Hughes, who is a founding partner at Hemson Consulting Ltd., is a frequent attendee at AOLE events.

SAVE THIS DATE!

Annual General Meeting and Dinner



Much Ado About Housing

For 25 years Peter has watched, analyzed and commented on the housing market here at home and across the country. At this year's Annual General Meeting of the Association of Ontario Land Economists he will share his thoughts and observations on the current housing situation in Toronto, how we got here and where we are going.



Peter Norman
Vice President and
Chief Economist,
Altus Group

Thursday, Feb 8, 2018
Royal Canadian Yacht Club
141 St. George Street, Toronto

aole.org/news-events

LEGISLATIVE BEAT *Continued from page 8*

Hydrail would be an alternative to traditional electrification and would not require a catenary system (overhead wires). Metrolinx has undertaken feasibility work and will have two manufacturers report by spring 2018 on conceptual designs. To date, only Germany is testing hydrogen fuel cells for light rail trains, but no jurisdiction has attempted this with heavy trains.

Finally, the Toronto Region Board of Trade has released a paper proposing that a "Superlinx" agency be created which would not only cover a larger area than Metrolinx currently does, but also take over responsibility for 12 local transit agencies.

While there are pros and cons to such an arrangement, former TTC chief general manager Michael Warren supported this move in a recent [Globe and Mail opinion piece](#). "It's time to examine the future role of Metrolinx," he wrote, adding that the "province wants to have it both ways: support Metrolinx when it's politically convenient and override it when it's not."

A recent example is when the agency's business case found that new GO stations at Kirby and Lawrence East were not warranted, but the province interfered in the process and the Metrolinx Board caved to the political pressure.

Needless to say, this type of self-examination was not part of the RTP consultation. My opinion, and that of a

confidant: provide Metrolinx with the responsibility, sufficient funding and independence to do the job. Oh, and shake up the Board a bit.

PEOPLE'S GUARANTEE

PC Leader Patrick Brown has crafted a compelling platform document which offers five "achievable measures." Mr. Brown says he will resign by the end of the first mandate if, for example, middle class income taxes are not lowered by 22.5% or hydro bills reduced by 12%.

It is commendable that the PCs have released details on the Party's commitment to transit, such as:

- the currently under way two-way, all day GO train service, otherwise known as RER, and
- LRT projects in major urban centres (curiously, neither RER nor Metrolinx are mentioned in this section).

This type of stability in the delivery of major public works is welcome. There is a sense, however, that the PCs are trolling for TO votes by promising subways based on the simplistic notion that this mode is the preferred way to alleviate congestion (PC Party policy resolution: "It's time to get subways built and get the province moving.").

Mr. Brown met with Toronto Mayor John Tory, who is also running for reelection in October 2018, about the PCs plan to help fund transit in Scarborough, including the one-stop subway

(to replace the RT) and the currently unfunded eastern extension of the Eglinton Crosstown LRT to Scarborough's University of Toronto campus.

An additional \$5 billion will be offered to pay for the Relief Line, the Yonge subway extension to Richmond Hill and the Sheppard Subway extension to Scarborough, with the caveat that the federal government 'will contribute funding'. As there is an estimated \$13.4 billion worth of subway projects, the publication Urban Toronto wryly noted: "Houston, we have a problem."

Other than a reference to WiFi on GO trains, the sections on "Change that works for Transit Users" and "Change that works for Drivers" are not particularly forward-looking.

Considering that Uber has inked a deal with the Town of Innisfil to provide mobility services, there is no mention of how these types of sharing services or vehicle automation might disrupt transit services, goods movement or even auto ownership. For a good discussion on these matters, see the End of Driving blog posts on RCCAO-commissioned research [here](#) (2016) and [here](#) (2017).

Andy Manahan is Executive Director of the Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario. He is also a member of the Association of Ontario Land Economists' Board of Directors, and its Legislative Chair.



The Legislative Beat

By Andy Manahan, PLE

LONG TERM INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN (LTIP)

Building Better Lives was released in late November and outlines the province's commitment to:

1. investing in infrastructure that is resilient and adaptable to future changes
2. planning based on evidence, and accounting for climate change
3. improving delivery:
 - managing demand through taxes, user fees and land value capture
 - continuing to use alternative financing and procurement (AFP) for large and complex projects
 - supporting inclusive growth and providing accessible spaces
 - incorporating community benefits (such as the Eglinton Crosstown LRT where 10% of workforce hours will be performed by disadvantaged communities)
 - modernizing apprenticeships and monitoring labour force needs
4. assessing the state of Ontario's infrastructure (estimated replacement value of \$209 B).
5. delivering results across key sectors (e.g., transportation, education, health care) – this section touches on big ticket items such as High Speed Rail to building a network of HOV/HOT lanes to providing real time traveller information. While postsecondary infrastructure will be expanded through new campuses, there will also be a push for virtual or online learning.

Infrastructure minister Bob Chiarelli acknowledges that this 220-page report, including the technical appendix, is an “interim step” in the development of a long-term plan which must be published by May 2019.

As such, this document demonstrates the Province's vision for achieving multiple objectives through infrastructure investment.

INFRASTRUCTURE ONTARIO IMPROVEMENTS

In September, RCCAO released a report by former Ontario deputy minister Michael Fenn, which concluded that there is value in using AFP delivery. With a projected LTIP spend of \$190 B over 13 years (starting in 2014-15), Fenn argues in this report, and in previous RCCAO studies, that better infrastructure planning and project selection are critical – with more innovation and more opportunity for Ontario firms and municipalities to participate. These themes were echoed in *Building Better Lives*.

DEVELOPMENT APPROVAL ROUNDTABLE (DAR)

Over the summer, Secretary of Cabinet Steve Orsini convened a series of meetings to streamline and improve development approval processes at both provincial and municipal levels. The Roundtable's report on ways to bring more housing to market, as well as support land use and infrastructure planning priorities, was released in November.

Fourteen action items were identified. Here is a partial list (each item typically has multi-parts):

- Stormwater Management: improve timelines for Conservation Authority approval of regional flood control facilities, perhaps with simultaneous review with municipalities
- Environmental Assessments: modernize appeal processes for Class EA or local projects. Currently, the Minister of the Environment must address these appeals even though this role could be dealt with at the director level.
- Species at Risk: investigate “Safe Harbour” tools where habitat could be

created for a set period, and then modified later.

- Planning: publish guidance documents to assist with transition for the new (2017) Growth and Greenbelt Plans, including a land-needs assessment methodology, planning at the watershed level and mapping of natural heritage systems.
- Zoning: develop new educational tools to encourage forward-looking zoning by-laws and community planning permit systems.
- Approvals Concierge: remove barriers to housing projects by fostering a one-window approach to service delivery.
- E-Permitting: establish a task force to assess how e-permitting and tracking systems for approvals could be advanced. This would link with the federal Smart Cities initiative.

Representation on the Roundtable was from the municipal and development / construction sectors, with support from seven deputy ministers. In part, the DAR was a response to Ontario's 16-point Fair Housing Plan (see *The Land Economist* Vol. 47, No. 1 [here](#)).

METROLINX

Metrolinx is in the process of expanding GO service, including Regional Express Rail (RER). Part of the capital program consists of 150 km of new tracks, 24 new GO stations, over 45 bridge upgrades and 10 rail/road grade separations. This work will allow for more frequent train service and an anticipated doubling of riders by 2031.

Metrolinx has been consulting on its draft Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) for the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area and, in September 2017, released its consultation document.

The agency's first RTP was released in late 2008 and was known as ‘The Big Move’. It is expected that the final draft RTP will be tabled at the February 2018 Board meeting for approval.

Metrolinx also announced in late summer that its new President and CEO is Phil Verster. In a question about the Ministry of Transportation's interest in hydrogen fuel powered trains, Verster responded that his focus would be to “deliver RER, and to deliver that to the best possible timeline and the best possible cost line.”

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