

April 2, 2019

Via Email

Members of the City of Toronto Planning & Housing Committee
10th Floor, West Tower, City Hall
100 Queen Street West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Attention: Nancy Martins, Secretariat

Dear Sirs/Mesdames:

Re: Item PH4.5 – Committee of Adjustment Panel Size and Structure

With over 1,300 members, the Building Industry & Land Development Association is the voice of the land development, home building and professional renovations industry in the Greater Toronto Area. As the voice of this industry, BILD has always sought to maintain a constructive working relationship with all levels of government in examining ways to better serve the communities in which it operates. It is in this spirit that we are writing to you today.

This letter has a particular focus on BILD's members in the professional renovations industries. The renovation industry in the Greater Toronto Area is a substantial contributor to the economic growth and vitality of our great city. In 2018, in the City of Toronto, professional renovation generated \$6.0-billion in investment value and 55,899 jobs paying \$3.3-billion in wages. Recent reports by the CMHC estimate the renovation industry represents over \$16.1-billion in the GTA alone and \$77.9-billion Province-wide. The importance of this industry to the City of Toronto was recently noted in the 2018 Toronto Employment Survey presented to the Planning and Housing Committee at its meeting on March 20, 2019.

BILD is very supportive of staff's recommendation to increase the number of panel members for the Committee of Adjustment, which would enable more hearing dates to be scheduled. As noted by City staff, the volume of applications to the Committee of Adjustment has increased significantly in the last 10 years, which has resulted in a corresponding significant increase in the time for an application to be scheduled for a hearing. As a reminder, subsection 45(4) of the *Planning Act* actually requires a hearing to be held 30 days after receipt of the minor variance application. Clearly, neither the letter nor the spirit of this statutory requirement is currently being met by the City of Toronto.

Given the admitted difficulty in meeting service standards, BILD also suggests that **this is an opportunity for the Planning and Housing Committee to direct a more detailed review of the application process.** For example, it may be prudent to **consider different application streams for Committee of Adjustment matters based on the size and complexity of proposals that would enable less complex applications (such as renovations) to be processed more efficiently than larger, more complex and/or more contentious matters.**

In the spirit of streamlining, this is also an opportunity for staff to go further to assess the types of variances that are being presented to the Committee of Adjustment and, if it is determined that there is commonality and abundance of the same kind, whether it is prudent for the City to examine different options to address these application types.

At a minimum, ***BILD recommends that City staff be directed to report back to the Planning and Housing Committee with a breakdown of applications according to building type, size, complexity and nature of variance.*** This information would enable a subsequent discussion of potential options to enable a more efficient application process.

Certainly, current service levels are unsatisfactory and it is unlikely that the Committee of Adjustment is going to experience a significant reduction in applications. Therefore, it is also ***BILD's recommendation that staff be directed to explore additional options to improve Committee of Adjustment service standards such as a separate stream for less complex applications.***

BILD looks forward to ongoing dialogue regarding this important issue, and is happy to assist in any way to achieving our mutual goal of greater efficiencies at the Committee of Adjustment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paula J. Tenuta". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Paula J. Tenuta, MCIP, RPP
Senior Vice President, Policy & Government Relations, BILD

CC: *BILD Renovator Government Relations Committee Members*



**Presentation To Planning & Housing
Committee**
Agenda Item PH4.5
***Committee of Adjustment Panel Size &
Structure***

Good day Chair, and members of the Committee.

My name is Paula Tenuta, and I am the Senior Vice-President of Government Relations at the Building Industry & Land Development Association. With me today I have Jon-Carlos Tsilfidis who is on BILD's Board of Directors and Executive Committee and helps with me with everything City Hall in his capacity as Chair of the Renovator Government Relations Committee. You should have correspondence in your agenda package that reflects our deputation.

With over 1,300 members, BILD is the voice of the land development, home building and professional renovations industry in the GTA, and today we are here on behalf of the professional renovator members and our BILD Renovator Council to address Item PH4.5 which speaks to the size and structure of the Committee of Adjustment.

It is important for this Committee to know that BILD's renovators have developed an excellent working relationship with both Planning and Building staff. Through the Chief Building Official's Renovator Roundtable, which planning staff participate on, we have had a formal vehicle to discuss industry issues, in the interest of increasing efficiencies for everything renovation and we have discussed the Committee of Adjustment on several occasions.

BILD is very supportive of City staff's recommendation to increase the number of panel members for the Committee of Adjustment, which would enable more hearing dates to be scheduled. As noted in the staff report, the volume of applications to the CofA has increased significantly in the last 10 years, which has resulted in a corresponding significant increase in the time for an application to be scheduled for a hearing. BILD



renovator members have been expressing their concern for some time now on the time it takes to schedule a CofA hearing, and that is why we are taking the opportunity today to ask this Committee to consider even more ways, above and beyond what the staff report recommends, to streamline and increase CofA efficiencies – and over to my colleague Jon-Carlos to elaborate on our recommendations.

JON-CARLOS:

Hello Chair, Committee members, ladies and gentlemen. It is a pleasure to have this opportunity to address you today. We believe the staff reports' recommendations are a step in the right direction. It is no secret that the CofA is not meeting service standards we should expect - and we can and must do more.

First off – we at BILD would suggest that this is an opportune time for the Planning and Housing Committee to **direct staff to take a more detailed and comprehensive review of the application process and to examine the feasibility of a separate stream for less complicated CofA matters.** It makes little sense to hold hearings involving more contentious planning issues, such as how many stories a particular high-rise development should be permitted, alongside truly minor variances such as side yard setbacks or the size of a rear deck. Many of our members – and clients for that matter – wait for hours to be heard at Committee meetings, after waiting for months for a date, only to have their item dispensed with in mere minutes.

It would be in the interests of efficiency and improved service delivery to start looking at ways to create different streams for CoA matters so as to enable the less complicated ones– such as most renovation items – to be processed in a time line that respects the provisions of the Planning Act, that being 30 days. None of us want to keep our homeowners waiting more than they need to and this would be a step in the right direction.

This leads to my second point. **We are recommending that this Committee ask staff to report on the types of variances being presented to CofA, and then to make a determination as to WHY.** If there is commonality and an abundance of the same type of variances, then, perhaps it would be time for the City to examine different options to address these applications. We have already suggested one – and that's to create a



separate stream, but we might have to examine the zoning by-laws themselves. Prior to the city-wide zoning by-law 569 taking effect, in the old City of Toronto, if you wanted to construct a rear addition to your home, you were permitted to build it in line with the existing house even if the existing house did not comply with side yard setback requirements. No variance was necessary. That is not the case today.

As you may know, the infill construction and renovation industry has now eclipsed the new home industry in terms of size and economic impact. In fact, we are larger than the auto industry. In the City of Toronto alone, last year the industry generated almost \$6 billion in investment value, created over 55,000 jobs paying about \$3 billion in wages. We are a significant economic driver of the City and with your help, will continue to be so.

Our members at BILD are the professionals in the industry who don't run away at the first sign of an Inspector. We are proud of the constructive working relationship we have with the City and want to continue to help by offering solutions in the spirit of co-operation and in serving the interests of our mutual clients, the homeowners of this world class City.

Thank you.

