



## ACT Project

### TIMMINS DEVELOPMENT PROCESS INFORMATION SEMINAR SERIES

FINAL REPORT

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Prepared by

CITY OF TIMMINS

TIMMINS, ONTARIO

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Program Partners:



## PREFACE

The project documented in this report received a grant under the Affordability and Choice Today (ACT) program. ACT is a housing regulatory reform initiative sponsored by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) and jointly managed with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), the Canadian Home Builders' Association (CHBA) and the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association (CHRA).

ACT, launched in 1990, seeks to stimulate changes to planning and building regulations and residential development approval procedures to improve housing affordability, choice and quality. The United Nations Centre for Human Settlements recognized ACT in 1998 as one of the top global best practices for improving the living environment.

ACT awards grants to municipal governments, builders, developers, non-profit organizations, industry associations, educational institutions, planners and architects across Canada to change housing regulations and streamline approval processes. ACT grants are awarded under three categories: Demonstration, Approval Process and Promotion. Assistance has been given to a wide range of projects across Canada.

All completed ACT projects are documented in short project overviews or solution sheets, and a number of case studies have been produced as well, to share the benefits of regulatory reform with others. These documents are available to help builders, developers, local building and planning officials, and others recognize and seize opportunities to improve housing affordability, choice and quality through regulatory reform in their communities.

For more information on ACT and ACT projects (both completed and in progress), visit the ACT Web site at [www.actprogram.com](http://www.actprogram.com), or contact:

ACT Administration  
c/o The Federation of Canadian Municipalities  
24 Clarence Street  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1N 5P3  
Phone: (613) 241-5221 ext. 242  
Fax: (613) 244-1515  
E-mail: [info@actprogram.com](mailto:info@actprogram.com)

## **DISCLAIMER**

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# Timmins Development Process Information Seminar Series

## *General project overview*

The Timmins Development Process Information Seminar Series was created to improve the working relationship between the City of Timmins Community Development Department (Building, Planning & Economic Development) and the local construction industry. The local construction industry was identified as contractors, builders, architects, engineers, suppliers and developers. The seminars dealt with a number of issues including changes in the Ontario Building Code (OBC), information regarding the City of Timmins Official Plan, the Planning Department and with the process involved in acquiring project approvals from the municipality. The benefits from this project were to the local construction industry and to property owners in the community.

Before ACT Funding was received to develop the Seminar Series, the Community Development Department hosted two previous seminars on the Building and Planning Divisions. These were both very well received by the community and the City was asked by the Timmins Construction Association if they were willing to host more seminars. The objective of the Seminars were to ensure that the local construction industry was up to date on current regulations, policies, procedures, and methods surrounding planning and building within the community. The stated objectives of the partners in the Seminar Series were to:

1. Improve communication, relationships and a better understanding of the roles of the approval authority and the construction industry;
2. Educate builders on changes to relevant legislation and policy in order to reduce conflicts during the approvals process and to promote more sound and safer construction;
3. Expedite the review and approvals process by improving the knowledge and understanding of the steps and requirements involved; and
4. Keep the construction industry aware of changes in legislation and policy that affects the way they practice their trades.

Prior to the Seminars, the Building and Planning Divisions had a number of people approaching them with inaccurate information and permits completed wrongly. Many in the local construction industry were not aware of the planning processes for construction projects. Also, they were not aware of new products and procedures that could be used in accordance with the new regulations that the Province of Ontario has developed.

The team members assembled for the Seminar Series included members from the Community Development Department and the Timmins Construction Association. These team members have considerable knowledge and many years of experience in dealing with both planning and building issues from all sides of the application. They were:

- **Mark Jensen** (City of Timmins), Director Planning and Building Department – 15+ years of experience in planning, building, and consulting.
- **Claude Brunet** (Timmins Building Supplies), President – TCA.
- **Janet Ronne** (City of Timmins), Senior Planner – 20+ years of planning experience.
- **Greg Krankovich** (City of Timmins), Chief Building Official – 30 years of building related experience and plans review and inspection.
- **Paul Dambremont** (Union Gas), First Vice-President – TCA.
- **Esa Saarela** (City of Timmins), Plans Review & Inspector – 10+ years of building experience, majority in large building construction and plans development.
- **Mike Regimbal**, Building Inspector – 8 years of building experience.
- **Bob Burey** (Mascioli Construction), Treasurer/Secretary – TCA.
- **Dan Labelle**, Plan Examiner – 8 years of plans examination and development experience.

The key steps in implementing the Seminar Project was the partnership that was developed between the Community Development Department and the Timmins Construction Association. The Community Development Department also secured the financial support of the ACT Program and the unanimous support of City Council. The partners were able to determine some of the more common problems, concerns and questions that the construction industry had regarding the building and planning processes. It was decided that the topics should be separated between building and planning areas with separate seminars. After discussions, it was determined at some of the topics could be covered by expertise in the community and some would require outside experts. From this a series of seven seminars were developed.

### ***Project results***

The City of Timmins Community Development Department deals with legislation and policies established primarily at the provincial and local levels (e.g., Municipal Act, Planning Act, Provincial Policy Statement, other municipal by-laws, the Ontario Building Code, Property Standards By-law, other building guidelines, etc.). The Timmins Construction Association (TCA) has worked with the City of Timmins in addressing common issues arising from established legislation and policies. The impact of achieving the above stated goals has been to reduce the time for obtaining approvals and to improve the working relationship between the construction industry and municipal staff. The attendance of people at most of the meetings was beyond the expectations of the Team. A total of seven (7) seminars were held. Of these, four (4) were in the Planning area and were done using local expertise. One of these was held for the French language members of our community. There were three (3) seminars covering Building topics. One was held using in-house knowledge and the other two (2) were held using the knowledge

of professionals from outside the community. The attendance at the seminars and the dates were:

#### Planning Seminars

1. October 2003 – 28 people
2. December 2003 – 2 people (French Language Seminar)
3. January 2004 – 17 people
4. March 2004 – 12 people

#### Building Seminars

1. April 2003 – 32 people
2. December 2003 – 58 people
3. April 2004 – 62 people

Municipal staff and construction industry members from smaller surrounding communities were invited to attend. Many of these communities did not have the staff time or financial resources to attend all of the information seminars but were able to attend some. Most of the people in attendance were from the construction industry as well as a number of students from the local community college (Northern College) who are in the construction management program. The main impact of the seminars was that those involved in the construction industry are better educated and more knowledgeable in what they are doing. As a result the quality of the site plans and building plans coming in to the City are better than they were. This allows for less time in their review and approval saving the City time and money in the process. The homeowner has to pay less for costs amendments or revisions of the plans thus allowing them to save time and money.

The key objectives of this project were met in full. The community has a better understanding of the roles of the approval authority and the construction industry. The seminars have increased and improved the quality of the communication between the project partners. All people who attended the seminars better understand the steps and requirements in the approval process. Those in attendance have a better understanding of how changes in legislation affect them and how new products can be used to meet those changes.

A key lesson learnt from the project has been that seminars should have been held years ago. Timmins is a northern community where the ongoing education or updates in various fields of study are hard to come by. Companies and the government think twice about sending staff away for days at a time to take courses. The opportunities in northern communities are few or non-existent in the construction industry and offering training in conjunction with the municipality ensures that everyone in the community is up to the same standard on the seminar topic.

Another key lesson is to ensure that the seminars are held at times and dates that allow for members of the construction industry to attend. The seminars were held late in the fall after construction season and during the winter when most members have some time to attend seminars. The seminars were also during the week day evenings to facilitate attendance.

The major difficulty that was encountered in the project was getting the members from the construction industry that most needed the training to attend. Many of the common problems that are encountered are from the same members of the construction industry and most of them did not attend the first seminar. To overcome this difficulty, the project team ensured that written and in person interviews were delivered to those members of the industry. As the numbers of people in attendance for the seminars show, the invitations from their peers was able to get the members out to the seminars that most needed it. The city officials also ensured that those members that most needed the information knew well in advance about the seminars.

The largest potential for transferring this project to other municipalities is the basic need for educational seminars in all regions that will help ensure that all members of the construction industries are educated to the same standard. We found that the need for training seminars was a need across our region and not just within our community. While some companies that cater to the construction industry have product seminars occasionally within the communities, there has been a demonstrated need in our region for more seminars on an ongoing basis. The City of Timmins and the Timmins Construction Association look forward to a continuation of the partnership that was formed from this project to offer future seminars.

A point of interest was that the outside professionals that were brought in from Toronto for two of the seminars were both impressed with the number of people that were in attendance. Both agreed that when they give similar seminars in Southern Ontario that they have the same amount of people in attendance. The project team members were surprised to hear that on a per capita base, more people were in attendance for our seminars. How many people showed interest in the seminars also pleasantly surprised the team.