



[Back to Ontario retaining right to veto sale of public housing](#)

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In what may be the first show of legislative muscle against “Ford Nation,” Queen’s Park is retaining final approval over the sale of social housing in its new housing law approved Tuesday.

It means the province won’t let Toronto Mayor Rob Ford — or any other municipality — sell public housing without provincial consent.

“This is a big win for social housing landlords and social housing tenants,” said Kenn Hale, lawyer for the Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario, which pressed Queen’s Park to keep the “safeguard” in the new law.

“It happened because the province was really spooked by the prospect of Toronto’s public housing projects being sold off in a fire sale by Rob Ford,” he said.

Ford mused about privatizing Toronto Community Housing in the wake of a city auditor’s report in February that uncovered untendered contracts and inappropriate spending by housing company staff.

But with more than 70,000 households waiting for affordable housing in Toronto, the city should be focused on building — not selling — affordable housing, said Councillor Joe Mihevc.

“It’s heartwarming to know that the province is now potentially in our corner,” he said Thursday.

The Liberal government’s new housing legislation requires all municipalities to have affordable housing plans with goals and timetables. And it gives municipalities more flexibility to meet those goals.

But advocates said the law, introduced last December as part of the McGuinty government’s long-awaited affordable housing strategy, went too far when it eliminated the requirement of provincial consent for selling housing.

Former Toronto councillor Case Ootes, appointed by Ford in March as interim managing director of the housing company, is angry at the province’s about-face.

“If they want to keep control of the assets, then they should take over the housing corporation and manage it themselves,” he said Wednesday.

“You can’t expect effective management and effective use of the assets if a third party has the authority to determine whether your decisions are the right ones or not on a case-by-case basis,” he said. “It just doesn’t make any sense.”

The province’s decision to retain ministerial consent may thwart Ootes’ decision earlier this month to sell 22 single-family homes owned by the housing company.

A spokesperson for Housing Minister Rick Bartolucci said the government didn’t have any specific concerns with the actions of “any particular mayor” in its decision to keep its hand in the sale of social housing.

“The government decided to retain ministerial consent after hearing from housing and poverty groups during the committee process,” said Laura Blondeau.

“The (municipal) service managers, for the most part, did not have a problem with us retaining consent and we felt it was the right thing to do to ensure a service standard,” she added.