

Questions for the political parties

As part of the Quebec election campaign, the Association de la construction du Québec (ACQ), the Association des professionnels de la construction et de l'habitation du Québec (APCHQ), the Corporation des propriétaires immobiliers du Québec (CORPIQ) and the Institut de développement urbain du Québec (IDU) have joined forces to question the political parties on the issues that directly affect housing and construction. Construction and renovation costs, regulatory relief, the completion of new projects and workforce training are among the topics covered.

Answers from



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General

01 If your party forms the next government, what will be the first action you take in the first 100 days of your mandate to help resolve the housing crisis?

The PCQ will launch a major regulatory review, entrusted to the Conseil du trésor et de l'efficacité gouvernementale and inspired by the successes of Alberta, British Columbia and Ontario. It will then apply a "one-for-one" rule (or better): for every new regulation adopted, one or more existing regulations must be eliminated.

It will bring together stakeholders from the housing industry to gather their reactions to the deregulation plan specific to this sector, which will have been made public one month earlier.

02 Housing falls under several ministries, institutions and public policies. What measures does your party intend to put in place to ensure clear government leadership, better coordination and greater predictability for industry stakeholders?

- Liberalize housing construction.
- Reduce the number of regulated trades in construction and allow the free movement of labour throughout Quebec.
- Reform the Quebec Construction Code to simplify its requirements and lower construction costs.
- Exempt the residential construction sector from the application of Act R-20.
- Reform housing law for the benefit of all.
- Exclude from rent control rents of more than \$2,500 per month, as well as units fully renovated within the last 5 years or vacant for 1 year.
- Allow landlords to request a security deposit for any new lease, on a non-mandatory basis.
- Reform the Administrative Housing Tribunal to simplify the hearing process and speed up the enforcement of decisions.
- Make assistance for low-income tenants more effective.
- Review all housing assistance programs in order to consolidate them and make support for low-income tenants more effective.
- Simplify housing assistance through a one-stop shop.

Construction costs

03 What does your party propose to reduce the construction costs of projects?

The PCQ's general view is that housing construction must be liberalized.

The affordable housing crisis in Quebec is first and foremost a supply problem. Because of over-regulation and ever-increasing requirements, it is becoming less and less possible for private builders to build housing at an affordable price. A government's first responsibility in curbing soaring residential prices is to make massive cuts to the rules that drive up construction costs, such as density limits, parking-to-customer ratio rules in commercial spaces, overly strict zoning bylaws, restrictions on building characteristics and mandatory permits.

We are committed to reducing the number of regulated trades in construction and allowing the free movement of labour throughout Quebec.

Quebec is the Canadian province with the largest number of compulsory certification trades, at 25. Currently, 13 of Quebec's 25 regulated trades require no certification elsewhere in Canada. In the other provinces, there are between 3 and 11. In Ontario, for example, there are only 7 regulated trades. Likewise, the interregional mobility of construction workers is severely restricted.

This restriction on the freedom to work, introduced at a time when unemployment was much higher, no longer makes sense now that Quebec is facing a labour shortage in the construction sector, and it creates avoidable delays and costs.

It is imperative to reduce the number of regulated trades so that Quebec construction becomes more productive. The PCQ therefore wants to reduce the number of regulated trades to 7, as is the case in Ontario.

We are committed to reforming the Quebec Construction Code to simplify its requirements and lower construction costs.

The sometimes excessive construction standards imposed by the Quebec Construction Code are responsible for additional costs in developing housing, which are then passed on to consumers. Requirements such as the number of parking spaces, seismic loads and energy-efficiency standards increase the cost of real estate projects, sometimes significantly.

The new Construction Code proposed by the CAQ government, whose application has been postponed to 2027, would once again tighten these constraints, which could lead to a 5% to 8% increase in construction costs. Considering that it is already extremely difficult to build projects at a reasonable cost, the last thing to do is add even more standards. On the contrary, the Construction Code must be simplified to eliminate excessive requirements that unduly hold back construction.

We are committed to exempting the residential construction sector from the application of Act R-20.

The Commission de la construction du Québec (CCQ) oversees construction work subject to Act R-20, under a regime that is unique in North America and creates significant rigidity in the industry. In addition to rules that limit versatility and mobility, the CCQ imposes a considerable administrative burden on contractors, which hits SMEs particularly hard. By already partially exempting residential construction from the obligations of Act R-20, the government recognizes that the sector can operate well under labour standards alone. For the sake of both productivity and consistency in the sector, which currently has to deal with two separate regulatory frameworks, it would be beneficial to exclude all residential construction from Act R-20.

04 **How do you plan to stimulate businesses' interest in public procurement and thereby increase competition for public contracts?**

- For services that do not necessarily have to be provided exclusively by the state, we will choose the provider (public or private) best equipped to serve the public.
- For large residential developments on public land or in portfolios of repeatable projects, a public-private partnership (PPP) could also be considered. Depending on the model chosen, the private partner can design, build, finance and sometimes maintain or operate the asset according to performance targets set in advance. This option is particularly relevant when the government provides the land, bundles several projects, standardizes part of the plans and guarantees a predictable approval process. A PCQ government could use PPPs when risk sharing, private expertise and performance obligations offer a demonstrable advantage over traditional public delivery; the choice of a PPP will have to be supported by a transparent comparison of costs, risks and timelines.
- We will eliminate bureaucratic obstacles to promising projects. For example, we will speed up viable property conversions by facilitating the residential and mixed-use redevelopment of underused shopping centres and parking lots in serviced areas.

Payment delays

05 **How does your party intend to ensure that the prompt payment regulation comes into force for municipalities, and on what timeline?**

We will consult the municipal sector on this issue to understand the causes of the delays. We will then take responsibility for removing obstacles to the prompt settlement of transactions.

Regulatory relief

06 **What measures does your party propose to ease the administrative burden on construction contractors?**

We need to free up the capacity to build so that projects can be carried out better and faster. Easing the administrative burden is part of the solution. We are open to creating an administrative one-stop shop.

The PCQ is committed to reducing the number of regulatory requirements, including paperwork, by 30%, with special attention to the construction industry. In addition, we will exempt the residential sector from Act R-20.

07 How would your future government apply a regulatory simplification approach, such as the “two-for-one” principle, to reduce the burden on real estate projects?

Yes, our approach favours regulatory simplification in all economic sectors, and we support the two-for-one principle wherever possible. In addition, we are committed to reforming the Quebec Construction Code to simplify its requirements. The framework for protecting agricultural land, construction sector standards, paperwork and the issuance of building permits must also be simplified.

Building permit processing times

08 What do you plan to do to reduce building permit processing times?

A one-month delay for a permit is a construction cost. A useless rule is a construction cost. An hour lost waiting for another trade is a construction cost. All these costs end up in the price of housing.

A residential project does not just pay for materials and wages. It also pays for time. As long as a developer is waiting for a permit or a decision, the land must be financed, professionals remain on standby, prices can change and risk increases. Administrative delays thus become a cost built into the final price, even though they do not appear on any municipal invoice.

For construction itself, two principles are enough. First, an application that complies with clear rules should receive a response within a measurable timeframe. Second, the rules that apply to a project should be stable enough to avoid a late change forcing the design to be redone.

09 How does your future government intend to reform public consultation and referendum approval processes to help residential projects move forward?

We must listen without granting a veto.

Citizen participation improves projects when it happens early, with complete information and a real opportunity to have an influence. It becomes counterproductive when a small group obtains a veto over housing whose costs and benefits extend beyond the immediate neighbourhood. The right to be heard must not, however, become a right to perpetually preserve the scarcity that increases the value of one's property. When a compliant or reasonably non-conforming project is blocked by a small number of neighbours, the cost is borne by people who are not in the room: young households, newcomers, tenants and families looking for housing.

The Quebec government itself recognizes the limits of referendum approval: it can give a dominant voice to small groups, encourage the “not in my backyard” syndrome and come too late to improve the project. The Act allows municipalities that adopt a compliant public participation policy to be exempted from binding referendums, provided they inform, consult and involve citizens upstream. This approach seems preferable to us. Citizens should receive clear information early on about the project's height, traffic, infrastructure and benefits. A consultation must be able to change access points, landscaping, height transitions or construction site measures. But after a fair process, elected officials must decide. Representative democracy loses its meaning if a minority of neighbouring property owners can always overturn a decision affecting the entire city.

Small towns and suburbs must nevertheless be respected. A provincial policy that imposed the same towers everywhere would rightly fuel resistance. The best way to reduce NIMBYism is often to propose gradual density and rules known before the project. A triplex permitted as of right generates less opposition than an exceptional application for fifteen storeys. Predictability protects neighbours as much as the developer. Participation should also represent those who are not yet residents. Municipalities can publish the estimated effect of a refusal on the number of housing units and on public investments already committed. Local interest deserves a place; it does not automatically constitute the full public interest.

After a fair consultation, elected officials must take responsibility for deciding in the interest of the community as a whole.

Housing

10 How does your party commit to increasing investment in municipal infrastructure to support residential development?

A PCQ government will tackle infrastructure delays, including water infrastructure.

- tens of thousands of housing units are delayed or prevented by inadequate drinking water and wastewater systems;
- land zoned residential is not really buildable when the infrastructure cannot accept new connections;
- public investments must be prioritized according to their measurable ability to unlock housing and maintain existing networks.

Our thinking is currently leading us to look at approaches that will prioritize maintaining existing infrastructure over building new infrastructure. That said, the PCQ is not opposed to new construction projects. For improvements, projects with a strong economic impact, such as wastewater treatment infrastructure, should be prioritized.

We are also looking at approaches that will direct Quebec infrastructure programs toward the projects that unlock the most housing units per public dollar, while taking asset maintenance needs into account. We are also considering performance agreements specifying the number of lots and units made buildable, as well as completion timelines.

11 What concrete commitment is your party prepared to make to accelerate residential construction during the next mandate, and how will you measure the results?

A PCQ government will adopt various regulatory simplification policies.

These policies will be detailed in early 2027.

Quebec will not get out of the crisis by dividing an insufficient number of housing units ever more finely. It must create the conditions for a supply shock that makes it possible to meet demand, catch up on renovation backlogs in the existing stock, mobilize investment and increase productivity.

A supply policy must be willing to be judged. Governments easily announce billions, permits or targets. Families, meanwhile, are looking for an available home at a price they can afford. Indicators must therefore track the entire path, from the amended rule to the occupied unit.

These indicators should be broken down by region, unit size, type of tenure and price range. An overall vacancy rate can hide a persistent shortage in the least expensive quartile. An increase in housing starts can be followed by cancellations. A high number of permits can coexist with few completions. Transparency means showing these gaps, not choosing the indicator that makes the government of the day look best.

A housing policy should be judged less by the number of programs created than by the number of obstacles removed, the infrastructure capacity added, the predictability of the rules and the housing units actually delivered. Governments do not have to produce abundance on their own. They have to create the conditions in which citizens, property owners, contractors, municipalities and organizations can produce it.

Renovation of the rental housing stock

12 What does your party intend to do to simplify access to assistance programs and accelerate the renovation of the existing rental housing stock?

Here is a proposal already adopted at our last convention in 2026 to revive the maintenance of rental housing:

Whereas:

- outdated rental units must be renovated in order to be preserved as rentals and remain competitive with new construction, including condominiums;
- renovated units are subject to the Regulation respecting the criteria for the fixing of rent, and renovations currently provide an insufficient return on rents;

- in Ontario, “vacancy decontrol” rules allow landlords to freely increase the rent of a vacant unit;
- in British Columbia, landlords can increase by up to 20% the rent of a unit whose rent has remained unchanged for three years;
- the inability to adjust rent to market rates creates a disincentive to invest. Affordable rental units must not become the least well-maintained units.

A PCQ government:

- will exempt fully renovated units from rent control for a period of five years, to encourage landlords to upgrade their units after a tenant leaves through complete refurbishment rather than superficial, less durable renovations;
- will exempt from rent control units that have been vacant for one year, to stimulate renovation and encourage these residential units to be put back on the market.

In addition, we are considering creating a one-stop information shop for renovation programs, given that the administrative cost of searching for programs and repeating the same information is particularly discouraging for small landlords, and that a one-stop shop can simplify access to information without creating a new subsidy program.

Taxes and levies

13 What measures does your party propose to reduce the tax gap with neighbouring provinces and lower the cost of real estate projects?

A PCQ government will reduce and modernize land transfer duties.

Whereas:

- land transfer duties increase the cost of a transaction and can reduce residential mobility;
- municipalities can apply a higher rate, of up to 3%, on the portion of the value exceeding \$500,000, except in Montreal;

A PCQ government:

- will gradually reduce transfer duty rates to lower the cost of moving and of property transfers;
- will review the \$500,000 threshold and repeal the provision allowing municipalities to apply an additional rate of up to 3% above that threshold, subject to Montreal’s special powers, which will have to be harmonized;
- will provide a transition period to allow municipalities to adapt their financial planning.

Health and safety representative (RSS)

14 Does your party commit to abolishing this position?

We obviously support eliminating any redundancy in the actions and jurisdictions of public authorities.

Trade versatility

15 What does your party propose regarding the trades in the construction industry?

We propose to reduce the number of regulated trades in construction and allow the free movement of labour throughout Quebec.

Quebec is the Canadian province with the largest number of compulsory certification trades, at 265. Currently, 13 of Quebec’s 25 regulated trades require no certification elsewhere in Canada. In the other provinces, there are between 3 and 11. In Ontario, for example, there are only 7 regulated trades.

Likewise, the interregional mobility of construction workers is severely restricted. Whereas workers were once prohibited from working in a region other than their own, full mobility is now possible after 15,000 hours of experience, or 8 years of full-time work, an arbitrary criterion.

This restriction on the freedom to work, introduced at a time when unemployment was much higher, no longer makes sense now that Quebec is facing a labour shortage in the construction sector, and it creates avoidable delays and costs.

All this over-regulation undermines the productivity of the construction industry. It drives up the number of hours needed to complete the same task, exposes job sites to delays, particularly when one of the required professionals is not quickly available, and leads to higher costs. It is therefore imperative to reduce the number of regulated trades so that Quebec construction becomes more productive. The PCQ therefore wants to reduce the number of regulated trades to 7, as is the case in Ontario.

Updating training programs

16 What does your party propose to promote training pathways in the construction industry?

The PCQ has begun reflecting on how to enhance the value of vocational training.

Although it is not currently part of our election platform, the PCQ has historically taken positions to promote vocational training, encourage links between schools and construction companies, and make it easier to move into vocational training in construction after high school.

There is a labour shortage in many skilled trades, including electrical work, welding, construction, plumbing, IT and logistics. Several other phenomena also concern us:

- The expected retirement of a large part of the current workforce.
- Vocational training in Quebec is half as popular as the OECD average.
- The dropout rate in Secondary 4 and 5 is high, even though these two levels are, for now, a prerequisite for apprenticeship in many trades.
- Growing labour needs to build and maintain our infrastructure and ensure the essential services that support trade and everyday activities.
- Career guidance problems among some students, which waste young Quebecers' time, keep some young people from fulfilling careers and waste taxpayers' money.

Our current thinking is therefore focused on ways to increase graduation rates, particularly in vocational and technical programs, in order to meet employers' expectations and move closer to the average of developed countries.

17 How do you plan to improve training programs in the construction industry?

We will support the construction industry and its representatives in removing obstacles to this type of reform. We already support apprenticeship (compagnonnage), as voted at our 2021 convention.

About the organizations

Association de la construction du Québec (ACQ)

The leading organization promoting and defending the interests of contractors in Quebec's construction industry, the Association de la construction du Québec (ACQ) is the largest multi-sector, voluntary-membership association in the industry. Under Act R-20, the ACQ is the employer bargaining agent for all employers in the institutional, commercial and industrial (ICI) sectors. The ACQ represents more than 20,000 businesses that generate over 64% of the total hours worked and reported in the industry. It is also active in the residential sector, notably because hours worked on the construction of new residential buildings of more than six storeys are counted in the commercial sector, and through its subsidiary ACQ-Résidentiel. With a network of 10 regional associations located in 17 cities across Quebec, it offers its members a wide range of tools and services.

Association des professionnels de la construction et de l'habitation du Québec (APCHQ)

Founded in 1961, the Association des professionnels de la construction et de l'habitation du Québec (APCHQ) is a private non-profit organization that, through its network and regional associations, represents and supports more than 28,000 businesses in the residential construction and renovation industry. Since 1995, it has been the employer representative mandated to negotiate the collective agreement on behalf of employers in the residential construction sector. The APCHQ's mission is to be a unifying agent of change for the benefit of Quebec society, and it acts as a driver of social and economic development by promoting sustainability and quality in housing.

Corporation des propriétaires immobiliers du Québec (CORPIQ)

A non-profit organization bringing together 30,000 landlords and property managers who own nearly 600,000 rental units and condos, the Corporation des propriétaires immobiliers du Québec (CORPIQ) has been the largest association providing services to residential landlords and defending their interests for more than 40 years. It serves every region from four offices with a total of 60 employees. Quebec landlords provide housing to 1.4 million tenant households and, in seven out of ten cases, own a duplex or triplex.

Institut de développement urbain du Québec (IDU)

Founded in 1987, the Institut de développement urbain du Québec (IDU) is an independent non-profit organization. The IDU is the largest representative of the commercial real estate industry in Quebec. The IDU produces content on real estate and the urban fabric. It acts primarily as a partner between industry members, public authorities and all stakeholders in the commercial real estate ecosystem. The commercial real estate industry contributes more than \$20 billion annually to Quebec's GDP and more than \$5 billion in tax revenue for governments and municipalities. For Quebec's seven largest cities, it accounts on average for nearly half, or 45.8%, of their total property tax revenue. With combined spending of more than \$24.5 billion, it supports close to one hundred thousand jobs.