



THE ONTARIO WOOD PREFABRICATION INDUSTRY

Produced by the Ontario Structural Wood Association (OSWA)

In recent years, OSWA has seen the release of numerous reports and policies looking for solutions to allow us to meet the short and medium-term housing needs of our province. These reports by groups representing government, builders and others often reference the solution being to use off-site prefabrication solutions.

OSWA sees an immediate and current cost-effective solution using the existing light wood framing (LWF) industry capacity. The LWF industry only needs orders and some indication that these orders will continue to support any investments that are made to the manufacturing platforms and they can build what is necessary!

To prove our point that the production capacity already existed, in the spring of 2025, OSWA undertook to survey the LWF industry. We were particularly interested in Ontario's panel capacity. Trusses and EWP products are already used in most wood construction projects. Panels are the final step in avoiding a "stick-built" structure and the off-site segment with the lowest market penetration. OSWA identified that there are approximately 40 companies spread across the entire province that are currently capable of delivering wood panels to a job site.

Half of the existing industry responded to our survey. The key question was - what is your current production capacity using existing machinery, with a fully staffed but only 1-shift, Monday to Friday operation? We took those production numbers and assumed a modest but not incredibly tiny housing footprint of 1500 square feet. Those surveyed could product 12,000 housing units per annum which if the entire industry had responded can easily be doubled to 24,000 housing units. This volume requires no investment, the capacity exists already. And it is clear that this capacity can be further increased relatively easily.

Our research showed that the industry consists of a handful of larger players with large dedicated and often automated operations. Then a slightly larger group of manufacturers with fulltime production lines with more limited automation. The largest group are smaller operations waiting to scale their production to meet builder demand. Across the industry we can produce wall panels, floor cassettes, roof cassettes and in some cases complete modular

homes. The projects we currently build include single and multi-family up to and including 4-6 story mid-rise. Everybody can produce open panels and approximately half currently also do closed panels. Finally, just under 50% are either CSA A277 certified or plan to be in the near future.

OSWA's members, who are over 100 strong, are the experts in the manufacturing of off-site wood components. Roof and floor trusses and EWP products have long been the staple of the industry. But it is clear that the entire structure of wood buildings can be built more efficiently off-site and merely assembled onsite. This can take the form of flat pack delivery or modular / volumetric methods. In either case this type of construction achieves many positive results that the "stick-built" traditional methods are not able to deliver. The builder can save money with a faster build time, reduction of material waste, reduced labour requirements and improved project coordination. It is time for the construction industry to see the efficiency improvements that virtually every other industry has seen over the past few decades. And this methodology is particularly well suited to the larger multi-unit housing projects that are needed as we face the urgent need for dramatically more affordable housing.

The light wood frame off-site industry is a strong and viable option for Ontario to utilize as it works to deliver the housing required in our province. We believe it is being overlooked and underestimated. We are the short-term solution to building housing that Ontario wants and needs. Call us and we will deliver!

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OSWA exists to promote the growth of sustainable, renewable, structural wood products for all applications to all construction stakeholders. Our members include truss fabricators, EWP manufacturers and distributors, wood panel fabricators, connector companies and related engineering and design services.

While OSWA was incorporated in 2016, it is a spinoff of an earlier truss fabricator only association. We re-branded in 2016 because we recognized that the future of wood construction rested with the industrialization of construction, with the increased use of off-site methods to build in Ontario.