

Help us secure the Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy that Ontarians need:

1. Endorse the HNO Declaration online.
2. Urge your MPP to endorse a housing plan that passes the *5 Tests*.
MPP contact info available at:
www.ontla.on.ca/web/members/member_addresses.do?locale=en
3. Talk about the solutions to housing-related poverty with your friends, family and local community and encourage them to speak out.
4. Visit www.stableandaffordable.com for updates on events and actions.

1 in 5 tenant households in Ontario spend over 50% of their income on rent. Over 260,000 households are forced to choose between paying the rent and buying food and other necessities.

Housing-related poverty can be eliminated.
All it takes is a strategy.
That strategy is within sight.
And we must act on it now.

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Building the Foundation for Ontario's Future 5 Tests for Success of Ontario's Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy

The Ontario government has committed to creating Ontario's first Long Term Affordable Housing Strategy by June 2009. This historic opportunity comes at just the right time.

With recovery from the recession still uncertain, the construction of new affordable housing and the renovation of existing housing would strengthen the economy and create jobs in the short-term. Ongoing core funding for affordable housing and support programs would result in employment opportunities for Ontarians over the long-term. And more affordable housing for our growing workforce would help Ontario remain competitive in the global marketplace.

The Strategy should also help us make progress on Ontario's target to cut child and family poverty by 25% by 2013. Without secure housing, the ability of Ontarians to get and hold jobs, maintain their household, and look after their family's health are all jeopardized.

Ontarians welcome the Premier's leadership on reducing housing-related poverty, and we look forward to a housing plan that addresses the deep needs in our communities. Consultations across the province have shown strong support for investment and action to address the challenges of homelessness, high housing costs and housing insecurity.

Now is the time to act.

Turn the page to see how the Housing Network of Ontario will assess the long-term housing strategy:

TEST 1 **Bold targets and sustained funding**

A Long Term Affordable Housing Strategy must ensure an adequate supply of quality, affordable housing for Ontarians, supported by multi year financial commitments. The Ontario government should commit to:

- Funding a housing program that creates a minimum of 10,000 universally accessible affordable non-profit and co-op developed housing units annually for the 10 years of the strategy.
- Provide funding so that at least 50% of these units can provide “rent geared to income” assistance.
- Create an annualized fund to repair & maintain existing and new affordable housing units.
- Make government land available for affordable housing. Create innovative financing options and enhance existing loan funds for developers of affordable housing.
- Strengthen the development and technical capacity of the affordable housing sector.

TEST 2 **A solid measuring stick**

An effective Housing Strategy requires a solid foundation of accurate evidence about the scale of housing insecurity and homelessness in Ontario and a clear way to measure progress. Housing measures must track progress on whether actions taken under the Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy are:

- Systematically reducing the number of households on the wait list for affordable housing in all regions of Ontario;
- Addressing the housing affordability problem through consistent annual reductions in the percentage of Ontario tenants spending 30% or more of income on housing;
- Improving access to suitable and adequate affordable housing for members of marginalized groups, including Aboriginal People, communities of colour, people with disabilities and mental health issues, lone mothers and people living in rural and northern communities.
- Consistently reducing the number of Ontario households in core housing need, the number of households facing eviction due to high rent costs, and the number of Ontarians in homeless shelters.

TEST 3 **Accountability**

Ontario’s Long Term Affordable Housing Strategy needs to be kept on track, and the plan must remain accountable to the people it intends to serve.

Accountability measures should include:

- Annual public reporting on progress.
- Committing to ongoing public consultation, as the plan unfolds.
- Improved coordination of housing and related programs between Ministries to ensure the best possible outcomes for Ontarians in housing need.
- Local control of program design and delivery to suit local needs.
- Setting up a Residents Review Committee that is equitably representative of people who have experienced housing insecurity, along with grassroots leaders and experts.
- Appointing a full-time Minister of Housing to ensure affordable housing is a government priority.

TEST 4 **Make housing truly affordable and accessible**

All Ontarians should be able to access housing they can afford, and supports should be provided to ensure equitable thriving, inclusive communities.

- Introduce a monthly Universal Housing Benefit for low income Ontarians to close the gap between low incomes and high housing costs.
- Expand the priority list for social housing to include equity seeking community members: Aboriginal People, communities of colour, people with disabilities and mental health issues, lone mothers, and others facing discrimination by landlords.
- Fund retrofits to ensure older units are accessible for people with disabilities, and design new affordable units to ensure accommodation for diverse household size and universal accessibility.
- Provide funding for at least 2,000 new supportive housing units annually that provide culturally appropriate services to support people with disabilities, mental health issues and addictions to maintain their housing.
- Fund an energy affordability program that provides ongoing financial assistance to low-income Ontarians who cannot afford rising home energy costs.
- Introduce a tax credit to support low and modest income households to purchase affordable homes.

TEST 5 **Reform housing legislation to build stronger communities**

Key legislation that governs municipal planning, social housing and the private rental market must be reformed to promote growth in affordable housing, better protect the housing rights of tenants and provide flexibility for non-profit and co-operative housing providers.

- Overhaul the *Social Housing Reform Act* to give community housing providers control and a fair appeals process to review decisions made by service managers.
- Improve fairness for social housing tenants by restricting punitive rent-geared-to-income rules and allowing tenants the right to an independent review of loss of subsidy decisions.
- Amend the *Residential Tenancies Act* to better protect tenants and ensure landlords cannot raise rents on vacant units beyond rent regulation guidelines.
- Amend the *Planning Act* to allow municipalities to introduce inclusionary housing policies to create new affordable housing.
- Give cities the power to expropriate abandoned properties for affordable housing conversion.

