

June 10, 2009 – for discussion

A LONG TERM AFFORDABLE HOUSING STRATEGY FOR ONTARIO (Housing Network of Ontario Discussion Document)

Based on public consultation the Ontario Government should outline a coordinated, inter-ministerial strategy for ensuring stable, equitably accessible and affordable homes for all Ontarians that addresses these 4 priorities:

1. Affordable Housing.

All Ontarians should have homes that cost no more than 30% of their net income and which leaves them with sufficient income for the other necessities of life.

How to get there?

- Invest in a permanent provincial affordable housing program to fund the construction of affordable and supportive homes in all communities.
- Provide a housing benefit to low income households to reduce housing costs to affordable levels for those living on low incomes, indexed annually.
- Real rent controls to prevent unaffordable rent increases.
- Allow municipalities to introduce inclusive zoning policies to spur development of new affordable housing units and promote integrated, accessible mixed communities.
- Strengthen partnerships with federal and municipal government; social housing, co-op, and private housing developers; non-profit organizations and others.
- Ensure flexibility in income support programs to enable people to adjust their living situation appropriately as their income improves.

2. Sufficient supply of stable, good quality housing.

All Ontarians should have homes that are in a good state of repair, safe, and up to property standards, without overcrowding.

How to get there?

- Investments in regular repair and ongoing maintenance of existing and new affordable housing.
- Develop and implement a comprehensive energy conservation strategy for low income households.
- Ensure strong building standards and enforcement.
- Ensure that jobs created through the affordable housing program equitably benefit historically disadvantaged groups and communities.
- Flexible affordable housing models to ensure ability to age in place and long-term affordable security of tenure.

3. Housing supports, programs and protections.

All Ontarians need to have supports and programs to ensure that they can equitably access and maintain their homes.

How to get there?

- Provide emergency relief and services for homeless people.
- Invest in culturally appropriate and linguistically accessible supportive housing with support services to meet the specific needs of high-risk/high-need, vulnerable persons with special needs that may include mental health issues, experience with institutionalization, addictions, HIV/AIDS, or disabilities.
- Strengthen tenant protection laws to ensure fairness for low-income tenants.
- Fully upload the municipal share of social housing programs to the Province.
- Appropriate discharge plans for all people leaving shelters, hospitals, child welfare care, mental health and correctional facilities that include stable, equitably accessible and adequate affordable housing.
- Protect low-income tenants from rising energy utilities costs with on-going assistance programs.
- Through community based partnerships, fund and locate programs and services in the communities served, to respond to differing needs, in both rural and urban areas.

4. Measure progress.

A good plan needs a robust monitoring process that fully engages communities across the province.

- Overall, a composite indicator based on statistical indicators that reliably measure housing affordability and adequacy.
- Move beyond aggregates to ensure that the specific housing conditions facing various disproportionately disadvantaged groups (Aboriginal people, racialized communities, newcomers, women, people with disabilities and others) are clearly distinguished and tracked.
- Use the various indicators to generate annual targets for new supply, affordable measures, repair initiative and other housing programs and services.
- Use the various indicators to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the comprehensive provincial housing plan.
- Ensure semi-annual public reporting on progress to meeting targets.
- Partnership funding for community-based housing networks across the province to ensure that low-income tenants and advocates are able to effectively engage in ongoing monitoring, evaluation and accountability processes.

The Housing Network of Ontario is a network of anti-poverty activists, homelessness and social housing advocates, equity and human rights groups, non-profit organizations, tenants, people with lived-experience of housing insecurity and homelessness and others who are working to ensure the provincial government delivers the integrated and fully-funded affordable housing strategy our communities need. For more information and to endorse the Declaration please visit: www.stableandaffordable.com The Housing Network of Ontario is linked to the 25 in 5 Network for Poverty Reduction. For regular updates on advocacy work to push for an effective Ontario Poverty Reduction Strategy, go to www.25in5.ca .