



HEALTHY COMMUNITIES • SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

August 27, 2015

Ms. Karen Pitre
Special Advisor to the Premier on Community Hubs
Legislative Building
Queen's Park,
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

Dear Ms. Pitre,

Re: Community Hubs

On behalf of the Ontario Professional Planners Institute (OPPI), I would like to congratulate the province on the release of *Community Hubs in Ontario: A Strategic Framework & Action Plan (August 2015)*.

OPPI is the recognized voice of the Province's planning profession. Our more than 4,000 members work in government, private practice, universities, and not-for-profit agencies in the fields of urban and rural development, community design, environmental planning, transportation, health, social services, heritage conservation, housing, and economic development. Members meet quality practice requirements and are accountable to OPPI and the public to practice ethically and to abide by a Professional Code of Practice. Only Full Members are authorized by the Ontario Professional Planners Institute Act, 1994, to use the title "Registered Professional Planner" (or "RPP").

Ontario's planners play a key role in creating and fostering healthy and sustainable communities where we can live, work, shop, and play. We support a strategic framework and action plan on community hubs that adapts existing public assets and allows new ones to develop. This will facilitate the improved delivery of coordinated services and build better ties amongst schools, municipalities and community organizations.

Community hubs should be located in the communities that they serve and have services that reflect the community. The programs and services should be available to all members of the community and allow for the interaction of people of different incomes, ages, social strata, cultural backgrounds, etc. Communities should be able to define what goes into these hubs in order to best meet their own needs. There is not a one-size fits all solution. In some communities, for example, there could be a need to bring together economic/health and social service agencies under one roof. In others, the mix may be quite different. Community hubs represent important opportunities for service agencies to come together, develop a plan to collaborate and better co-ordinate service delivery, reduce staffing and admin costs, share capital costs, as well as ongoing operations and maintenance. These hubs are also convenient for users - one stop shopping. Downtowns, key nodes, former school sites (depending on compatibility) are potential locations for community hubs. Existing buildings should be used as much as possible, particularly in downtown areas that already have good transportation links.

Schools often integrate community centres and library facilities that can be accessed by the public. Community hubs should not be located in industrial or business parks that do not have good transit access and are not situated near residential areas.

Direct outcomes of community hubs should be healthier and more sustainable communities with the improved availability of services and greater accessibility to obtain these services. These should be well-integrated within the existing community, whether urban or rural. Financial savings should not override other outcomes and benefits, such as better service coordination, access and community development.

As key stakeholders in the creation and fostering of healthy and sustainable communities, we look forward to being a part of the conversation and working towards identifying and finding solutions for the establishment of community hubs. To further discuss our comments or to schedule a meeting, please have your staff contact me at (416) 668-8469 or by email at policy@ontarioplanners.ca

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'L.R.' followed by a horizontal line.

Loretta Ryan, MCIP, RPP, CAE
Director, Public Affairs
Ontario Professional Planners Institute