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HEALTHY COMMUNITIES • SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

June 30, 2015

The Honourable Ted McMeekin, M.P.P.
Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
14th Floor, 777 Bay Street
Toronto, ON M5G 2E5

Dear Minister McMeekin,

Re: Provincial Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy Update Consultation

On behalf of the Ontario Professional Planners Institute (OPPI), I want to thank you for the opportunity to comment on the update to the Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy. We commend the Province of Ontario in its commitment to rethinking our housing challenge by exploring new ideas and seeking creative solutions.

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").

Building complete, healthy, and safe communities where we can live, work, shop, and play begins with housing options that meet the needs of all residents. The need for more private and non-profit affordable housing options, as well as social and economic supports, continues to grow. Low and moderate income residents in many communities across Ontario are facing skyrocketing home ownership costs with very few social housing or private market rental housing alternatives being made available. More and more Ontarians are placing themselves in financially vulnerable situations that threaten their overall economic well-being due to increasing housing costs.

Creating housing options for everyone would allow:

- Our thriving businesses to be more competitive in attracting and retaining employees;
- More options for seniors and recently retired colleagues, if they choose to downsize;
- Young adults to stay in their community when searching for their first home;
- Newcomers and working families to find housing close to work; and
- Would allow more housing options to reduce commute times, traffic congestion, and automobile emissions.

As our comments on the next page illustrate, these consultations can result in innovative changes that lead to healthier, stronger, and more resilient communities.

How can the Province encourage private investment in affordable housing through planning, financial, regulatory, and other tools?

- Amend the Planning Act to give municipalities the authority, tools, and funding models to increase housing supply and achieve affordable housing targets (for example, inclusionary zoning and conditional zoning).
- Create regulations to support implementation of the Strong Communities through Affordable Housing Act, 2011 requirements for municipalities to establish official plan policies and zoning bylaw provisions allowing second units in detached, semi-detached, and row houses, as well as ancillary structures.
- Further strengthen and support the use of existing land use regulation tools, such as density bonusing, development permit system, development charges, and providing provincial funding for community improvement plans.
- Provide funding for municipalities to develop financial incentives for private rental development (new and rehabilitation).

How can the Province better support the non-profit sector (including co-ops, private and municipal non-profits) in maintaining, replacing, and expanding social and affordable housing?

- Upfront costs of land can be a major barrier for non-profit housing groups. This barrier could be mitigated by creating an affordable housing lands fund to generate access to affordable land in strategic locations on transit corridors for non-profit development of housing.
- Encourage development of housing by non-profits on publically owned land.

What steps can the Federal Government take to support housing supply, including Social Housing?

- OPPI encourages the provincial government to work with their federal counterparts to work towards a strategy that prioritizes the protection of at-risk households living in social housing and preservation and expansion of rental housing stock, including private, non-profit, and co-operative rental housing.

Overall, more can be done to re-engage private investment in affordable housing. Government actions that change tax structures, housing policies, or regulations to support housing affordability can help industry, but abrupt changes or time-limited government funding programs that provide little ongoing certainty can create instability and a lack of trust between governments and the building industry.

The need for more housing options, as well as social and economic inclusion supports, are complex challenges that no one organization can solve on its own. All levels of government, the development industry, community agencies, and housing providers, must work together to develop strategic, holistic, and collaborative solutions. By the nature of their role, planners possess the community-based perspective that is critical to the successful development of new

and inclusive strategies. By working together, the potential for change is real and the possibilities for innovative solutions are endless.

OPPI looks forward to continuing to play a role in this critical initiative. To further discuss our submission 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 read 'L. Ryan', followed by a horizontal line.

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