

The Municipal Role in Meeting Ontario's Affordable Housing Needs

Ontario Professional Planners Institute (OPPI)

Position Statement

Affordable Housing Action Now!

Ontario's lack of affordable housing is a problem that continues to escalate. Municipalities have growing waiting lists for subsidized rental housing, record low rental vacancy rates, increasing homelessness, and rising home ownership costs. This situation is fuelled by several factors including cuts in funding for social housing by senior levels of government and transfer of responsibilities to local and regional municipalities, the inability of the private sector to obtain an acceptable rate of return on investment in new rental housing, and the decline of traditional affordable housing alternatives such as rooming houses.

Affordable housing is the cornerstone for a stable and healthy life for individuals and families. It enables all citizens to more fully participate in their communities, reduces the need for emergency shelters, provides much-needed housing for thousands of new Canadians, and allows local industry to attract and keep its labour force.

Who is OPPI and Why Did We Commission This Research?

The Ontario Professional Planners Institute (OPPI) is the recognized voice of the province's planning profession. Our 2,400 practising planners work for government, private industry, agencies, and academic institutions. Members work in a wide variety of fields including urban and rural community development, urban design, environment, transportation, health and social services, housing, and economic development.

As part of our efforts to spur action on affordable housing, OPPI sponsored the development of a Housing Handbook and companion Environmental Scan to provide guidance for municipal planners and other partners in developing comprehensive affordable housing strategies at the community level.

Ontario's planners are committed to improving the quality of Ontario environments and communities. Planners have in-depth knowledge on how housing is developed, how effective partnerships can be created, how communities can participate in solutions, and how to assess and understand community housing needs.

Why an Affordable Housing Strategy?

Despite the obstacles to building affordable housing, we believe there is still much that can be achieved. The lack of affordable housing is a complex problem that cannot be solved with one simple solution. A holistic approach is required, one that makes best use of a wide range of ideas, tools, and resources. Our Environmental Scan shows what has been accomplished. The Handbook provides both a strategy and a roadmap. This will help local communities determine the most appropriate practices and integrate these into a comprehensive plan for action.

Municipalities must take the lead and work with senior governments, the private sector, the not-for-profit sector, and other community partners to implement this strategy. The need and opportunity

Copies of the Handbook and Environmental Scan will be available on the OPPI website at www.ontarioplanners.on.ca in late-February 2001. For further information, please contact Loretta Ryan, MCIP, RPP, Manager, Policy and Communications at policy@ontarioplanners.on.ca

for municipalities to develop coherent, proactive strategies for the provision of affordable housing, has never been greater. The time to act is now!

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