



Community and Health Services  
Office of the Commissioner

## Memorandum

TO: Committee of the Whole

FROM: Adelina Urbanski  
Commissioner of Community and Health Services

DATE: September 10, 2015

RE: **Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy Update  
Provincial Consultation**

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### **Background:**

In 2010, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing released [Building Foundations: Building Futures Ontario's Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy](#) (the Strategy). The Strategy laid the foundation for changes to the housing and homelessness prevention system that have enabled Service Managers to plan and deliver locally responsive and appropriate services. Key among these changes were: the replacement of the *Social Housing Reform Act, 2000* with the *Housing Services Act, 2011*; the creation of a consistent framework for local housing and homelessness plans; and the consolidation of a number of provincial homelessness funding streams.

Through [Realizing our Potential: Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy 2014-2019](#) the Province committed to updating the Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy. In April 2015, Ontario launched public consultations to support an update to the Strategy. The updated Strategy is intended to provide housing policies that are relevant to current realities and reflect new research, best practices, and the housing needs of Ontarians. The public consultation period closed July 3, 2015.

### **Consultations:**

In anticipation of the Strategy renewal, in March 2015, the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA) and the Housing Services Corporation (HSC) jointly submitted a paper to the Province to inform the Strategy update. The Region is a member of both OMSSA and HSC as these organizations provide supports such as training programs, research papers and advocacy to senior levels of government in the human services and housing program areas. The Region participated in the development of this paper which summarizes short and medium term housing system improvement opportunities.

The Region provided comments to OMSSA on local issues, needs and insights which helped inform OMSSA's coordinated municipal sector response to the Province for the development of the next Strategy. York Region also supported the Regional Planning Commissioners of Ontario, Affordable Housing Group develop a consolidated submission on behalf of participating regional municipalities.

Staff consulted internally and with housing providers to prepare a coordinated response to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (Attachment 1).

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) also conducted a consultation process that engaged elected officials. AMO's submission to the Province highlighted many of the same recommendations as the Region's submission.

In June, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing announced they would host technical working groups to further explore key themes. Two Regional staff from the Housing Services Branch were invited to represent the Association of Municipalities Ontario. The working tables are expected to be wrapped up by the end of September 2015.

### **Our Response:**

York Region supports and encourages the Province to continue their efforts to facilitate integrated planning and collaboration amongst Ministries and Service Managers. The goal should be to ensure housing policies and programs foster innovation and flexibility to adequately provide affordable housing and the necessary supports. Acknowledging that a long-term affordable housing strategy needs to create a more sustainable housing system and provide funding stability to enable Service Managers, housing providers and the development industry to invest in building complete and affordable communities.

The Region recommended several approaches and critical elements be included in the updated Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy:

- Replacing Rent-Geared-to-Income with a system that allows housing providers to charge reasonable minimum rents that reflect the incomes available through federal and provincial support programs. The resulting revenue capacity could be directed towards sustaining and expanding the supply of affordable rental housing
- Providing greater flexibility to use options such as portable housing allowances and short-term rent benefits to support long-term housing stability
- Amending the *Planning Act* to explicitly permit inclusionary zoning
- Committing sustained investment in new affordable housing supply and financial resources to sustain and regenerate the existing stock

**Next Steps**

The Region will monitor the progress of the next Strategy and report back to Council as appropriate.

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Adelina Urbanski, Commissioner of Community and Health Services

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Attachment (1)

#6196723

**Wayne Emmerson**  
Chairman and CEO



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June 22, 2015

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

Dear Minister:

**Re: York Region's Submission on the Provincial Consultation on the  
Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy Update**

On behalf of The Regional Municipality of York, we are encouraged to see the Province renewing its commitment to increase access to affordable housing and support social and economic inclusion through the update of the Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy.

As our attached submission illustrates, these consultations can result in positive, proactive changes to achieve housing affordability and sustain critical community assets.

We would specifically suggest the renewed strategy recognize municipal knowledge of local housing markets and increase flexibility to plan and deliver locally appropriate housing solutions. The province should further amend program and planning regulations by:

- Eliminating all remaining Ministerial Consent requirements for Service Manager approved property transactions
- Replacing rent-geared-to-income with a system that allows housing providers to charge reasonable minimum rents that reflect incomes available through federal and provincial support programs; the resulting revenue capacity could be directed towards sustaining and expanding supply of affordable rental housing
- Providing greater flexibility to use options such as portable housing allowances and short-term rent benefits to support long-term housing stability
- Amending the Planning Act to explicitly permit inclusionary zoning

Service Managers are responsible for growth management, housing programs, homelessness prevention, as well as a broad range of programs and services. They are well positioned to transition to the role of regulating the housing system, focusing on innovation and local housing needs.

The success of the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative is an excellent example of Service Managers using the program's flexibility to develop locally responsive programs and invest according to local needs. A similar approach is needed for housing programs.

The Province could further enhance its role as steward of the housing system by:

- Working with Service Managers and the Federal Government to develop strategies and tools to sustain the housing system as social housing mortgages mature and operating agreements expire
- Committing sustained investment in new affordable housing supply and financial resources to sustain and regenerate the existing stock
- Building long-term capacity for the Ministry of Finance to provide automated income verification services and to support delivery of portable housing benefit initiatives

The Province should continue to facilitate integrated planning and collaboration amongst ministries and Service Managers. This will ensure housing policies and programs foster innovation and flexibility to adequately provide affordable housing and necessary supports. Provincial efforts to support collaboration between Service Managers and Local Health Integration Networks (LHIN) are showing signs of success. In York Region we have partnered with the Central LHIN to plan for effective delivery of mental health supports for clients living in social housing. The Province could demonstrate further support by applying the same partnership approach to other ministries to improve program alignment.

There is also a critical need for the province to remove regulatory barriers that restrict information sharing across program areas to enable more effective case management and reduce the need for clients to "tell their stories" multiple times.

A long-term affordable housing strategy needs to create a more sustainable housing system and provide funding stability to give Service Managers, housing providers and the development industry confidence to invest in building complete communities. In York Region, this means federal and provincial funding commitments to support affordable housing development and the ability for the Service Manager to set standards to better meet the needs of our residents.

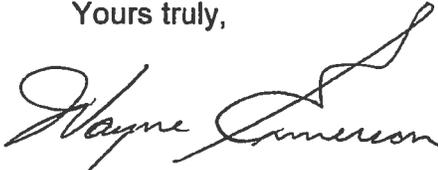
We must continue to work towards reducing barriers and enable Service Managers to plan, manage and deliver programs at local levels more effectively.

June 22, 2015  
York Region's Submission on the  
Long-term Affordable Housing Strategy Update

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If you have questions about York Region's submission, please contact Adelina Urbanski, Commissioner of Community and Health Services, at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 72023 or by email at [Adelina.urbanski@york.ca](mailto:Adelina.urbanski@york.ca)

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Wayne Emmerson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping initial "W".

Wayne Emmerson  
Chairman and CEO

Attachment

**Theme 1  
A Sustainable Supply of Affordable Housing**

Questions for Discussion	Discussion
<p>How can we encourage private investment in affordable housing through planning, financial, regulatory and other tools?</p>	<p><b>Key Points for Theme 1:</b>            Building complete communities includes a full mix and range of housing options that meet the various needs of our residents and workers. Affordable housing is an important component of healthy and vibrant communities. In York Region, we have a limited supply of rental housing with essentially no new private rental housing built in the last decade. Building a housing system that meets the needs of our diversifying population requires planning, financial, regulatory and legislative support from all levels of government.</p> <p>To achieve a sustainable supply of affordable housing we need long-term funding commitments to support new affordable housing developments and maintain the existing stock. The Province needs to enable Service Managers with greater flexibility to allow them to set standards to better meet the needs of our residents, and be better positioned to ensure that local housing policies and investments are well aligned with local Housing and Homelessness Plans.</p> <p>Legislative Amendments are needed to the Planning Act to permit inclusionary zoning and provide local governments the flexibility to mandate affordable housing units; to the Growth Plan to revise the affordable definition to be consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement; to the Housing Services Act to enable Service Manager to set their own local standards.</p> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Amend the Planning Act to permit inclusionary zoning for affordable housing.</b> This will provide local governments the flexibility to mandate a specified percentage of housing units in developments to be market rental, affordable rental or affordable ownership units and enforce affordable housing targets set out in their Official Plans, as mandated by the Province</li> <li>• <b>Revise the definition of “regional market area” in the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe to be consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement</b></li> <li>• <b>Create Regulations to support the implementation of the Strong Communities through Affordable Housing Act, 2011</b> requirements for municipalities to establish official plan policies and zoning by-law provisions allowing second units in detached, semi-detached and row houses, as well as in ancillary structures               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provincial tax incentives or grants to support the development of second suites</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Develop a provincial private market rental housing construction grants pilot program</b> – a grant-per-unit program to stimulate private sector investment in new purpose-built, private market rental developments. Municipal administration of this program could permit flexibility to allocate grants based on local priorities and design guidelines, such as unit size, type, or number of bedrooms, vacancy rates less than 3%</li> <li>• <b>Develop a provincial tax deferral program</b> – substantively improve the economics of rental developments through more favourable tax treatment for rental properties. A rental housing tax deferral program in conjunction with local deferral of development cost charges could stimulate private investment in rental housing by reducing up-</li> </ul>

**Theme 1  
A Sustainable Supply of Affordable Housing**

Questions for Discussion	Discussion
<p>How can we better support the non-profit sector (including co-ops, private and municipal non-profits) in maintaining, replacing, and expanding social and affordable housing?</p>	<p>front costs, mitigating financial risk, and increasing financial viability. Province would select which tax(es) are deferred</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Waive PST portion of HST or issue tax credits for the construction of purpose-built rental housing – tax policies that encourage rental housing development could help re-engage the public and private sector in building rental housing</li> <li>• Create an Affordable Housing Lands Fund to generate access to affordable land               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Form a fund that receives money from private developers in lieu and of equal value to providing affordable housing units within new developments. Competition for multi-residential land on transit corridors often results in inflated land values based on anticipated condominium development. This undermines viability of rental construction in strategic locations. A Land Fund could be used to help purchase land on strategic transit corridors for affordable rental housing.</li> <li>- Provide access to underused public lands for the creation of affordable housing</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Enable Service Managers to strategically manage and leverage their assets by eliminating program restrictions               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Expand the capacity of the Mortgage Backed Security pool or support the creation of new financial tools that will enable building repair and regeneration and new development</li> <li>- Enable redesign of former federal and provincial programs to achieve long-term sustainability specifically the former Provincial Reform program (HSA Part VII)</li> <li>- Give Service Managers greater flexibility around program rules for all current and future affordable housing programs</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Provide Service Managers with the authority to establish local standards that hold Housing Providers (including AHP/AH housing providers) accountable for building maintenance and long-term asset planning               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Implementation of procurement policies to ensure responsible spending and transparency</li> <li>- Required capital and preventative maintenance plans</li> <li>- Requirements for building board capacity</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Facilitate implementation of management and ownership models that enable Housing Providers to achieve economies of scale               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Establish a technical working group to explore opportunities to facilitate mergers/amalgamation and shared service arrangements for Housing Providers. This will assist small Housing Providers that do not have dedicated resources to implement effective fiscal and asset management strategies</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>How can we improve regulatory and legislative tools to enhance housing affordability?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support portfolio management strategies by expanding the HSA s. 167 transfer exemptions               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The transfer exemption in s.167 of the HSA, includes an exemption from land transfer taxes. The transfer exemptions should be expanded to cover amalgamation of portfolios; transfer of housing projects from Service Manager to local housing corporation or Housing Provider or vice versa</li> <li>- This change will encourage small Housing Providers to amalgamate with other Housing Providers or the Service Manager so they can implement the asset and fiscal strategies required to achieve economies of scale</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**Theme 1  
A Sustainable Supply of Affordable Housing**

Questions for Discussion	Discussion
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Reduce Ministerial consent requirements to facilitate portfolio level management of housing assets</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Remove requirement for the Minister to consent to a benchmark change (o. Reg. 398/11 6(4), 7(4), and 13(3))</li> <li>- Amend O. Reg. 367/11 s.140 &amp; 141 to require only Service Manager consent for transfer (sale) of public housing assets or housing projects where the transferee is a Housing Provider</li> <li>- Any legacy consents requirements should be delegated to the Service Managers. This will ease portfolio management and provide Service Managers with additional tools to maximize the capacity of social and affordable housing</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Enable Service Managers to introduce modest penalties for program compliance issues that are less serious than triggering events</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Authority to impose modest penalties on Housing Providers for failing to comply with local standards will give the Service Manager a moderate tool to compel Housing Providers to comply with requirements. For example, expanding the use of penalties under HSA. S. 80 (4)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 (RTA) to support Housing Providers post-operating agreement expiry and new housing programs</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Section 7 of the RTA and section 6 of O. Reg. 516/06 provide exemptions for social and affordable Housing Providers to support delivery of rent subsidy programs. However, these exemptions only apply to projects with original operating agreements. These agreements will soon expire</li> <li>- Apply RTA exemptions to all social and affordable housing programs and not just projects with operating agreements</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Work with the Energy sector to reduce administrative billing costs applied to individual tenant bills</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In order to deliver on the Province’s commitment to energy conservation and environmental sustainability, new rental construction under the AHP and IAH programs require buildings be energy efficient. Suite meters are also required in new construction to help tenants conserve energy and help mitigate energy poverty issues</li> <li>- Because suite metering typically results in individualized billing for tenants, many of the tenants’ efforts towards conservation are thwarted through additional billing costs such as account fees, energy delivery fees, and debt reduction fees. These fees can add an additional 30% to a tenant’s hydro bill. To better meet the environmental sustainability goals of the Province and to mitigate energy poverty for our affordable housing tenants, we encourage the Province to work with the Energy Sector to minimize or eliminate these additional fees</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Planning reform and regulatory tools should include affordability indices, to calculate combined housing and transport affordability for a specific area when determining where to locate affordable housing options</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Policy and planning reforms can increase affordable-accessible housing development to meet the growing demand. Policies have the potential to significantly reduce overall cost burdens since affordable-accessible or location efficient housing allows for residents to minimize their vehicle ownership and use, minimizing household cost burdens while achieving various economic, social and environmental objectives</li> <li>- A fair distribution of transportation resources – particularly for commuters with fewer transportation choices has an impact on people’s economic and social opportunities. Transit access, quality, and level of service can improve commutes and commuting times particularly on the transit-captive. Locating affordable housing in places where improvements to transit can take advantage of economies of scale, can make investment in both affordable housing and transit efficient, and make the distribution of transportation services more equitable</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**Theme 1  
A Sustainable Supply of Affordable Housing**

Questions for Discussion	Discussion
<p>What steps should the federal government take to support housing supply, including social housing?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amend the Planning Act to permit inclusionary zoning for affordable housing. This will provide local governments the flexibility to mandate a specified percentage of housing units in developments be market rental, affordable rental or affordable ownership units and enforce affordable housing targets set out in their Official Plans, as mandated by the Province</li> <li>• <b>National Housing Strategy</b> – develop a national housing strategy to re-engage the federal government in the housing market and ensure consistency across the system. This strategy can prioritize:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Protection of at-risk households living in social housing and further investment in new social housing stock</li> <li>- Preservation and expansion of Canada's rental housing stock, including private, non-profit, and co-operative rental housing</li> <li>- Improve opportunities for affordable homeownership for the next generation</li> <li>- Reduce homelessness</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Recommit investment to develop and sustain social housing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Expiring federal operating agreements are creating significant fiscal burdens on provinces and Service Managers to fund new social housing and maintain existing stock</li> </ul> </li> <li>- <b>Develop sustainable new supply and capital repair investment strategies</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop sustainable investment programs to allow Service Managers to do long-term planning to meet their Housing Plans commitments</li> <li>- Develop a strategy to maintain the same level of funding as under the Social Housing Agreement past 2032, do not drop off funding each year as it makes long-term planning unsustainable Or at a minimum reduce program rules in the Social Housing Agreement to enable Service Managers and housing providers to plan for sustainability of assets after expiration of agreement</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Develop strategies to preserve the not-for-profit status and Harmonized Sales Tax (HST) "qualifying non-profit" status of providers who continue to subsidize rents after their operating agreements expire</b></li> <li>• Create Federal tax incentives aimed at removing barriers to new affordable and market-rental housing, including a Rental Incentive Tax Credit.</li> <li>• Create a Rental Housing Protection Tax Credit to preserve and stop the erosion of existing rental properties.</li> <li>• Create investment vehicles for long-term "patient" investors and social responsible investors to help finance affordable housing or rental housing developments.</li> </ul>

**Theme 2**  
**A Fair System of Housing Assistance**

Questions for Discussion	Discussion
<p>How can we improve access to housing assistance and reduce wait times?</p>	<p><b>Key Points for Theme 2:</b></p> <p>As housing costs continue to increase in York Region, the number of households experiencing homelessness or at risk of becoming homeless are also increasing. A fair system of housing assistance should guide investment and service planning for emergency, transitional and homelessness prevention to housing stability. Housing supports to help residents find and/or retain housing should include immediate financial assistance to pay rent or utility arrears, help find housing, life skills, education/training, employment, access to mental health or addiction services, or transportation.</p> <p>The current housing system was designed to deliver one type of rent subsidy, Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI). The RGI program is expensive, complex to administer and difficult for clients to navigate. Building-based rent subsidies restrict housing providers' capacity to generate revenue and leverage their assets. Alternative rent support programs would provide Service Managers the ability to be more innovative. A redesigned system of housing assistance would enable Service Managers to define Service Level Standards to include all types of subsidies delivered by Service Managers; explore provincial portable housing allowances as a permanent program, particularly as an alternative to the Special Priority Policy, and develop, in consultation with the province, a rent subsidy system to replace RGI.</p> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Support waitlist system innovation through removal of waiting list eligibility rules and limitations on local rules. Provide Service Managers with flexibility to better match applicants with housing options and make better use of waiting list resources. For example:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Amend s. 39 of O. Reg 367/11 to allow Service Managers to count any refusal of a subsidy offer, not just RGI units</li> <li>- Remove the requirement to provide a minimum of three refusals to applicants and provide Service Managers the discretion to establish a minimum refusal rule based on local need</li> <li>- Amend s.46(4)(iii) of O. Reg 367/11 to allow Service Managers to remove a household from the waiting list if it has accepted a subsidized unit in any service area</li> </ul> </li> <li>- <b>Enable Service Managers and Housing Providers to more effectively use the waiting list and tenant selection systems for a range of rent subsidy programs</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Broaden the language in the HSA to include the variety of social and affordable housing programs offered by the Service Managers. The current language is framed solely around RGI which creates limitations</li> </ul> </li> <li>- <b>Review the HSA Special Priority (SP) requirements and develop alternative strategies to address the housing affordability needs of victims of domestic violence</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Current mandatory SP requirements should be removed from the HSA and replaced with a provincial housing allowance program for victims of domestic violence, aligned with support services to provide more timely assistance and to assist the victims to find independence</li> <li>- SP does not serve the purpose of providing rapid housing to victims of violence. In York Region, the demand for SP housing significantly exceeds the supply, for</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**Theme 2**  
**A Fair System of Housing Assistance**

Questions for Discussion	Discussion
<p>How can the systems of housing assistance be improved – for clients and service providers?</p>	<p>example, in 2014, on average SP households waited 15 months to be housed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Priority categories come at the cost of others waiting for affordable housing. In 2014, 38 per cent (13 of 34 family buildings) of all family buildings in York Region housed only SP households. All of these buildings are located in high demand areas of the Region with the longest waiting lists</li> </ul> <p><b>- If a complete review of the Special Priority (SP) policy is not feasible, at a minimum amend the HSA to better balance the demand of SP and chronological applicants</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Define the intent of the SP policy</li> <li>- Limit SP to only one refusal or provide Service Managers with the authority to set local rules for required minimum number of building selections</li> <li>- If the number of refusals cannot be reduced, a SP applicant that was removed from the waiting list due to three refusals should be restricted from reapplying to SP for a period of time</li> <li>- Tighten the eligibility criteria for a referring professional. Require the referring professional to have a working relationship with the applicant that is directly related to resolving the abusive situation</li> <li>- Allow periodic reviews of SP approved applicants to verify continued eligibility, for example, if the applicant moved in with a new partner perhaps the threat of abuse is no longer there and there is no longer a need for SP</li> <li>- Amend s. 4(4) of O. Reg 367/11 to extend the required response time to an SP application. The legislated 14 day timeframe is unrealistic</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Renew and fulfill the Provincial commitment to simplify the Rent-Geared-to-Income system</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rethink rent subsidies with a view to transparency and clarity for recipients, cost effectiveness of administration and improved access for low income households</li> <li>- Provide Service Managers with the ability to be more innovative by enabling the development of alternative rent support programs</li> <li>- Service Level Standards need to be broadly defined to encompass all types of subsidies delivered by Service Managers</li> <li>- Work with Service Managers to develop a rent subsidy system to replace RGI</li> </ul> </li> <li>- <b>While considering options to replace the RGI system, fix the following:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Update and index the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) and Ontario Works (OW) rent scales. Current OW and ODSP rent scales artificially shift costs to Service Managers to the detriment of RGI households. The OW and ODSP tables in the HSA are significantly lower than the OW and ODSP maximum shelter rates. For example, an ODSP client receives \$109 for rent in a one bedroom unit in a Part VII housing provider and \$479 in rent for the same size unit in a building built under the affordable housing program</li> <li>- Clients transitioning from ODSP to pension income, find their rent increasing from \$109 based on the HSA table to \$423 based on 30% of their income. Matching the scales and indexing them, will make the system more transparent and equitable.</li> <li>- Utilities scales are disconnected from current costs. In some cases households pay more in utilities than they pay in RGI. For example, a townhouse in the south area of York Region could cost on average \$350/month in utilities while the current utility allowance is \$77/month for a two bedroom and \$84/month for a three bedroom. For some households this could mean paying more for utilities than RGI. Utilities allowance scales should be updated and indexed.</li> <li>- Give Service Managers the authority to set the imputed rate of return on non-income producing assets. Imputed rate of return has been at zero percent. This</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**Theme 2**  
**A Fair System of Housing Assistance**

Questions for Discussion	Discussion
	<p>provides no consequence to tenants who have transferred assets to avoid paying a higher rent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To alleviate the reporting burden from RGI households, consider adjusting requirements for verification of income to every two years for households whose income is solely from a permanent subsidy such as ODSP or Old Age Security (OAS)</li> <li>- Broaden the definition of Service Level Standards to include all Service Manager administered rent subsidies, this would support innovation and may facilitate regeneration initiatives</li> <li>- Increase and index the minimum rent to match ODSP rent allowance for market rent</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Engage the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) and the Ministry of Finance to develop a long-term sustainable Automated Income Verification Program               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- This will support the development of portable allowance by enabling the local funds to flow directly to clients while providing the Region with a more accurate and efficient approach to verify household incomes</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Create the necessary capacity to transform the Investment in Affordable Housing Extension - Housing Allowance Program to be a permanent and sustainable program</li> <li>• Align the repayment of housing subsidies received by a sponsored tenant with the OW/ODSP process where the sponsor is required to repay all assistance received by the sponsored individual</li> <li>• Increase alignment between different provincial funding streams - that support people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, including the Mental Health Strategy and the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative and ensure that mandates do not conflict or compete, to provide greater flexibility to deliver innovative programs</li> <li>• Support a wider range of options for housing assistance - including shallow rent subsidies and short term housing benefits that provide a 'bridge' for households that are homeless or at risk during the transition to stable housing</li> </ul>
<p>What non-financial programs and supports help to maintain successful tenancies?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Client-oriented programs and supports help maintain successful tenancies, such as:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Assertive Community Treatment teams to support people facing significant mental health issues</li> <li>- Financial literacy and life skills development to support stable tenancies</li> <li>- Eviction prevention services</li> <li>- Engage landlords and tenants providing education on tenant rights and responsibilities</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**Theme 2**  
**A Fair System of Housing Assistance**

Questions for Discussion	Discussion
<p>How can we better support people who are homeless to become stably housed?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase access to long-term housing allowances and short term rent benefits - to allow people who obtain housing after experiencing homelessness to stabilize</li> <li>• <b>Housing First needs to be adequately funded</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Housing First cannot work without funding for housing. Service providers that deliver Housing First interventions designed to support people who are experiencing chronic or episodic homelessness and/or face multiple barriers (e.g. chronic mental health) need sustainable funding to provide the housing component of the intervention as well as supports and case management. Cross-ministerial collaboration to adequately fund Housing First programs is essential</li> <li>- Need a flexible system to serve differing client needs - episodic homelessness, permanently homeless, or at risk of being homeless</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Support a range of options for housing assistance - that support housing first and rapid rehousing intervention such as housing allowances, shallow rent subsidies and short term rent benefits (that may be gradually reduced)</li> <li>• Continue to support the local innovation and flexibility provided under the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative - that provides 'block funding' to Service Managers to set local priorities and develop programs that respond to local needs, including cost of living increases for CHPI funding to enable Service Managers to sustain current service levels and complete long-term resource and program planning</li> <li>• Fund programs that combine wrap-around supports with financial assistance, such as York Region's Housing Stability Program that provides short term financial support to keep residents housed and help residents become housed</li> <li>• Support Emergency housing service delivery models that include an aftercare support component to help with housing retention               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Clients at risk need long-term supports – achieved through long-term planning</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Coordinated approach among Ministries including those that are not involved in housing but have a housing component (e.g. MCSS, MCYS)</li> </ul>

**Theme 3**  
**Co-ordinated, Accessible Support Services**

Questions for Discussion	Discussion
<p>How can the Province, Service Managers, community agencies, and housing providers work to improve Ontario's supportive housing system?</p>	<p><b>Key Points for Theme 3:</b></p> <p>An integrated approach to service planning and collaboration amongst ministries and Service Managers will ensure housing policies and programs foster innovation and flexibility to adequately provide affordable housing and the supports that are often needed for people being housed. The Province should build on the successful partnership between Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, and continue the development of systems level planning that allows for coordination and alignment of service and funding across all Ministries.</p> <p>The Province should enable ministries who fund supportive housing providers, such as Ministry of Community and Social Services or Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, to partner with Service Managers and other Ministries to develop plans that adequately maintain supportive housing assets. Furthermore, aligning Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing funding streams and reducing program restrictions for housing allowances, would give Service Managers better ability to support a 'housing first' approach to addressing homelessness.</p> <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Increased cooperation across provincial ministries that provide funding for supportive housing, including Municipal Affairs and Housing, Health and Long-Term Care, and Community and Social Services</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Municipalities are home to many supportive housing providers who are funded through MCSS or MOHLTC. These providers are not adequately funded to sustain their assets and in some cases are seeking funding from Service Managers. Ministries who fund support services should explore options, which many include partnering with Service Managers to develop plans to adequately maintain supportive housing assets</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Continue to support the development of systems level planning frameworks that allow for coordination and alignment of service and funding across Ministries, Local Health Integration Networks (LHIN) and with Service Managers</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Engagement across ministries is essential to foster local innovation and flexibility</li> <li>- Cooperation across ministries ensures policies and programs that are mutually supportive to better provide affordable housing and the supports that are often necessary for the people being housed. A recent alignment of the provincial mental strategy investments with the investment in Affordable Housing program is an excellent example of a provincial policy framework that enables local collaboration between Service Managers and LHINS</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Develop a long-term sustainability strategy for Housing Providers that are subject to Part VII of the HSA</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- With high mortgage costs and low tenant rent revenues, HSA Part VII projects are costly to administer and will become increasingly so as housing provider reserves</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**Theme 3  
Co-ordinated, Accessible Support Services**

Questions for Discussion	Discussion
<p>What changes would make the system easier to navigate for people? What access and intake systems work best for people with complex needs?</p>	<p>are depleted. At present, there is no provincial strategy to address repair funding deficits and there is no clarity to the viability of the funding formula once the first mortgage is discharged. Asset and fiscal strategy options are constrained by funding formula requirements, limited tenant revenues and the inability to blend and extend within the social housing mortgage pool</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In its current form, the HSA Part VII program will not be sustainable over the long-term. At the same time, there is no end date to Service Managers' obligation to fund this program or to individual housing provider's obligation to deliver the program. There is a critical need for the Province to lead development of a long-term strategy that addresses sustainability of these housing assets and housing affordability for tenants/members</li> <li>- As a first step, a technical working group should be established to review the implications of first mortgage discharge on the HSA Part VII funding formula</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Integrate intake for supportive housing programs</b> - to help people with complex barriers access appropriate housing and supports</li> <li>• <b>Assign dedicated workers, such as Outreach workers, who can assist with system navigation and help link clients to the right housing supports</b></li> <li>• <b>Amend the Ontario Works, Ontario Disability Support Program and child care legislation to enable information sharing and improve client services</b></li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Section 174 of the HSA permits the sharing of information collected under the HSA, the Ontario Works Act, the ODSP Act and the Day Nurseries Act (to be replaced by the Child Care and Early Years Act), the information sharing provisions in the other Acts are more limited and frustrate the ability of Service Managers to effectively manage these programs at the local level, often compromising quality of service to clients</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Amend the following Acts to be more consistent with section 174 of the HSA and allow for the sharing of information collected under the HSA, the OW Act, the ODSP Act and the Child Care and Early Years Act (CCEY) with the following entities as it relates to their powers and duties under the relevant Acts:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Section 73 of the Ontario Works Act to include the sharing of information with service managers under the HSA (or their delegate under section 17) and service system managers under the CCEY</li> <li>ii. Section 54 of the ODSP Act to include the sharing of information with service managers under the HSA (or their delegate under section 17) and service system managers under the CCEY</li> <li>iii. The CCEY to include the sharing of information with service managers under the HSA (or their delegate under section 17) and delivery agents under the OW Act</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
<p>Are there opportunities to encourage innovation and reduce administrative</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Dedicate funding for pilot programs</b></li> <li>- Innovation could be encouraged with a dedicated funding stream for pilot programs or new services</li> </ul>

Theme 3 Co-ordinated, Accessible Support Services	
Questions for Discussion	Discussion
<p>How can we better co-ordinate housing and supportive services?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Local municipal budget processes need to have the capacity to take on short term funding for pilots</li> <li>• Facilitate partnerships between Housing Providers and support providers with greater flexibility in funding and program mandates</li> <li>• Amend the Housing Services Act and Regulation 367/11 to exclude modified units, without dedicated support services, from the definition of special needs housing and exempt special needs units from the HSA application and tenant selection requirements               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The current HSA special needs provisions can be a barrier to local collaboration amongst Service Managers, Housing Providers, support service agencies and funders and delivery agencies. The HSA and the regulations should be reviewed and updated to separate the requirements for modified units without supports from units with supports. Modified units without supports should be subject to Service Manager waiting list and a review process; units with dedicated supports should not</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**Theme 4**

**A System Based on Evidence and Best Practices**

<p>Questions for Discussion</p>	<p>Discussion</p>
<p>What outcomes should social and affordable housing programs focus on achieving?</p>	<p><b>Key Points for Theme 4:</b>                  The new Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy should clearly describe roles and responsibilities and outline reporting structures. The Strategy should include guidelines around data collection and management, setting targets for performance and evaluating progress related to affordable housing and homelessness.</p> <p>Currently, Service Managers compile a number of reports to meet provincial requirements (Service Manager Annual Information Return (SMAIR), Annual Information Return (AIR), waiting list data, as well as Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative outcome reporting). The reporting system is labour intensive and appears to have a limited value from a policy and analysis perspective. It is recommended that the Province work with Service Managers to modernize and streamline all data systems to better support evidence-based policy decisions. The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing reporting requirements for housing and homelessness need to be coordinated and consistent processes need to be developed to simplify the report system.</p> <p>Rather than setting provincial targets for housing and homelessness, develop a provincial framework that provides Service Managers the flexibility to set their own targets that reflect the local housing and economic context and local priorities. Reduce reporting burdens for clients by enabling information sharing through amendments to Ontario Works, Ontario Disability Support Program and child care legislations.</p> <hr/> <p>Outcomes for social housing, affordable housing and homelessness programs should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Housing stability for clients</b></li> <li>• <b>Housing stability for Housing Providers</b> – long-term funding gives Housing Providers a stable portfolio, allows them to maintain and ensure a healthy asset</li> <li>• <b>Housing availability</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Invest or support investments in affordable housing to create a healthy rental stock in our communities</li> <li>– Increase sustainable housing options</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>How can we support Service Managers and housing providers to achieve outcomes?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Modernize program reporting requirements to better support evidence based policy decisions and establish a technical working group to develop a data strategy for the sector</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Service Managers compile a number of reports for the province as per reporting requirements. These include the Service Manager Annual Information Return (SMAIR) and Annual Information Return (AIR). These reporting requirements are not compatible with the HSA Part VII housing program. As a result, considerable</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

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Questions for Discussion	Discussion
	<p>resources are dedicated to manual statistical data collection and analysis. The resulting information has limited value for the purpose of policy development and evaluation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It is recommended that the Province, in collaboration with Service Managers, review all existing reporting requirements and develop a new, streamlined process that aligns with HSA program requirements, fulfills federal reporting obligations, and supports evidence based decision making.</li> <li>• Ensure that homelessness performance measures and targets recommended in the Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy are consistent with and build on the existing CHPI performance indicators under a single reporting process</li> <li>• Create a framework for homelessness targets that allows Service Managers the flexibility to set local targets – targets should reflect the local housing and economic context to support the priorities and programs set out in their Housing and Homelessness Plans</li> <li>• Support effective homelessness data collection and tracking systems - provide regular opportunities for Service Managers to discuss data definitions and CHPI reporting requirements with each other and provincial staff</li> <li>• To support outcomes, local service managers are utilizing tools such as the federal Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS), local data collection tools and CHPI data to inform local decision making and funding investments</li> <li>• Allow funding to be used to support periodic evaluations and reviews of homelessness programs - completed by local Service Managers to examine client outcomes and look for opportunities to strengthen services to foster a culture of continuous improvement</li> <li>• Elimination of the long-form census makes evidence-based reporting more difficult – need consistency and reliability of data collection</li> </ul>
<p>What opportunities exist for sharing housing data with partners and the public?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An annual provincial report on progress toward preventing and ending homelessness that includes local best practices and innovative approaches</li> <li>• Sharing HIFIS data through local community partners</li> </ul>
<p>How do we enhance service provider capacity to access evidence on best practices?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amend the Ontario Assessment Act, 1990 to include a special category for social and affordable housing that bases property values on actual rent revenue, not full market rent. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Work with Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC ) to ensure social housing properties are valued based on actual rents rather than market comparators</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Facilitate information-sharing activities by way of webinars, conferences and research papers to disseminate new and emerging evidence on best practices</li> </ul>