



January 25, 2019

Hon. Steve Clark
Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
777 Bay St., 17th floor
Toronto, ON
M5G 2E5

Re: Housing Supply Action Plan

Dear Minister Clark,

Established in 1950, the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA) is a non-profit association whose members are the Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs) and District Social Services Administration Boards (DSSABs) across Ontario. Our members' interests are represented to OMSSA by the senior human services staff of the CMSMs and DSSABs. In Ontario, community housing and homelessness prevention programs are co-funded, planned and administered by 47 service system managers.

OMSSA encourages and recognizes the Ministry's efforts to increase affordable housing supply and address challenges around affordability in communities across Ontario. Service system managers are particularly interested in efforts to increase the supply of rental stock to address low vacancy rates, as well as efforts to address increasing rental costs and ensure tools such as the Portable Housing Benefit are successful.

OMSSA believes community housing, transitional housing and supportive housing all play a crucial role in addressing Ontario's affordable housing challenge, and must be considered as part of the mix of an affordable housing supply. Investing in affordable housing is the most cost-effective means of addressing homelessness. Community housing costs less on average (\$23 per day) than use of emergency shelters (\$69 per day), corrections facilities (\$142 per day) and hospitals (\$665 per day) when people are homeless, according to the City of Toronto's Affordable Housing Action Plan for 2010-2020.

The National Housing Strategy offers an opportunity for new federal dollars to support increased supply of rental and community housing. Donating surplus government-owned land for the purpose of building new rental and community housing is a step in the right



direction. OMSSA and its members look forward to working with the Province and stakeholders to increase and maintain the supply of community housing and access to rental housing in communities across Ontario. As we move forward, maintaining and ensuring local flexibility will be important to address unique circumstances in Ontario's urban, suburban, rural and Northern communities.

It is important to provide additional resources to the Landlord and Tenant Board (LTB) to ensure speedy resolution of issues between landlords and tenants. The length of time required to reach a decision in resolving disputes with community housing tenants is problematic for service system managers. Increasing the speed of decisions is important in balancing the interests of tenants and landlords in a manner that is fair and equitable.

Ontario's local governments and service system managers are open to ideas on reducing red tape and speeding up the approval process for project applications from the Ontario government for the purpose of increasing affordable housing supply in a timely manner. Changes may be required to provincial legislation to align with the goal of speeding up the approval process.

Ontario's service system managers are concerned with waitlists and the supply of community housing, as affordability challenges have resulted in increased demand for community housing and shelter spaces. OMSSA looks forward to working with the Province on important issues such as community housing renewal, end-of-operating agreements, rent-geared-to-income (RGI) simplification, service level standards, utility scales and reducing administrative and reporting burdens in 2019. Reducing poverty and homelessness remains a priority in communities across Ontario and requires all levels of government working together.

OMSSA believes that supporting Ontario's most vulnerable residents in need of housing must be prioritized, rather than dedicating limited resources primarily to incentivizing home ownership. There is a growing need to repair existing community housing units and create new capacity to meet increased demand.

In Ontario, the municipal level of government funds 58 per cent of the cost of community housing, and that percentage is increasing. Municipalities receive nine cents on every dollar of tax revenue in Canada. Development charges and property tax revenue is needed to fund critical infrastructure and supportive services for residents.



Challenges in affordability are not limited to municipal fees and taxes. Increased land, labour, financing, materials and construction costs also contribute to housing affordability challenges and a lack of new rental supply. The solution to these challenges must come from all levels of government, with government, housing providers and private developers working together to create additional affordable housing supply. The financial burden cannot be placed on one level of government alone. Many municipalities have been undertaking significant local initiatives and investment to improve housing supply and affordability in their communities.

OMSSA and its members are eager to consult with the Province and to work together towards innovative and cost-effective solutions that will lead to better outcomes for those in urgent need of housing. Our members remain committed to their housing and homelessness plans and are doing important work locally to reduce poverty in their communities. A housing first approach is a crucial component in reducing homelessness and poverty in all Ontario communities. Housing is also an important factor in employment outcomes and to improve social determinants of health.

OMSSA endorses the Association of Municipalities of Ontario's submission and recommendations on the Housing Supply Action Plan. OMSSA also supports individual submissions from service managers and municipalities across Ontario.

OMSSA has enjoyed a strong working relationship with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Ontario's service system managers look forward to working with the Province on common priorities to maximize positive outcomes for Ontario's individuals and families.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on the Housing Supply Action Plan, Community Housing Renewal and efforts to reduce the reporting and administrative burden on service managers.

Sincerely,

Doug Ball

Executive Director

Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA)