

Report HDR-SS-12-15

To: Chair Burley and Members of the Social Services Committee
From: Anne Marie Shaw, Director of Housing
Meeting Date: June 25, 2015
Subject: **Long Term Affordable Housing Strategy Update Submission**
Status: Recommendation adopted by Committee as presented per Resolution SSC65-15; Endorsed by County Council July 7, 2015 per Resolution CC97-15;

Recommendation(s)

WHEREAS the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing has issued a call for submissions to the update of the Long Term Affordable Housing Strategy;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT Report HDR-SS-12-15 be received;

AND THAT the submission for the Long Term Affordable Housing Strategy Update included with report HDR-SS-12-15 be submitted to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing as Grey County's submission;

AND FURTHER THAT in accordance with Section 24(13b) of the County's Procedural By-law, this submission be made immediately as the date for submissions closes July 3, 2015.

Background

In 2010 the Province launched the Long Term Affordable Housing Strategy (LTAHS). The strategy aims to transform Ontario's housing system into one that is people centred, partnership based, locally driven and fiscally responsible.

Since the introduction of the LTAHS, service managers across the province have developed 10 year local affordable housing plans, the Investment in Affordable Housing Program was extended five years and the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative was developed with annualized funding.

In 2015 the Province is updating the strategy to ensure the Province is up to date on current needs of our vulnerable populations and that housing policies and practices are relevant to current issues.

While the strategy has led to progress being made towards Grey County's affordable housing goals there are still challenges with meeting the changing and growing needs of affordable housing for our residents.

The Province is looking for input in four key areas; a sustainable supply of affordable housing, a fair system of housing assistance, coordinated accessible support services, a system based on evidence and best practices. County staff from social services, housing and planning departments provided input for the submission to the Province. The Submission is due July 3, 2015.

Financial / Staffing / Legal / Information Technology Considerations

Continued funding commitment from various levels of government to support social and affordable housing programs.

Link to Strategic Goals / Priorities

The submission to the Province supports Goal 4.6 of lobbying senior levels of government for financial supports that enhance the sustainability of rural and small urban communities.

Attachments

Submission report

Respectfully submitted by,

Anne Marie Shaw
Director of Housing



Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy

County of Grey Submission

Submitted to:
Janet Hope, Assistant Deputy
Minister
Ministry of Municipal Affairs and
Housing
Housing Division
College Park, 14th Floor
777 Bay Street
Toronto, ON M5G 2E5
Submitted via email



Background

In 2010 the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing released the Long Term Affordable Housing Strategy (LTAHS). The strategy was the first of its kind in Ontario and began a process to transform Ontario's housing system into one that is people-centred, partnership-based, locally driven and fiscally responsible.

Since the introduction of the LTAHS service managers across Ontario have developed 10 year local housing and homelessness plans. These plans were developed as a requirement of the Housing Services Act 2011, new legislation to replace the Social Housing Reform Act, 2000. The province also introduced the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI) in 2013 that consolidated five formally separate funding streams into one stream to allow for local flexibility and local program delivery.

In April 2015 Minister Ted McMeekin, Municipal Affairs and Housing, released details on how the Province will be moving forward to update Ontario's Long Term Affordable Housing Strategy.

The provincial Long Term Affordable Housing Strategy (LTAHS) aims to improve access to safe, affordable housing leading to better outcomes for individuals and families that contributes to Ontario's economy. The Province is updating the strategy to ensure the Province is up to date on current needs of our vulnerable populations and that housing policies and practices are relevant to current issues.

Consultation on the strategy will focus on four key themes:

1. A sustainable supply of affordable housing
2. A fair system of housing assistance
3. Coordinated and accessible support services
4. Effective use of evidence and best practices

Purpose

Since the introduction of the LTAHS, service managers across the province have developed 10 year local affordable housing plans, the Investment in Affordable Housing Program was extended five years and the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative was developed with annualized funding.

While the strategy has led to progress being made towards Grey County's affordable housing goals there are still challenges with meeting the changing and growing needs of affordable housing for our residents.

This document was prepared to provide the Ministry with a summary of areas identified as opportunities for improvement. These opportunities reflect input from various departments within Grey County and input from community partners through the Bruce Grey Poverty Task force.

Opportunities

The housing sector including Grey County has a number of significant challenges such as increasing capital needs, aging infrastructure and loss of federal funding, decreasing rents and the expiry of operating agreements. Long term thinking and new approaches to asset planning are needed to preserve and sustain a supply of affordable housing and provide access to affordable housing for all residents.

Theme one: A Sustainable Supply of Affordable Housing

- Sustain our current assets with new and continued resources for repair and redevelopment of affordable housing units
- Invest in capital resources for existing social and non-profit housing
- Provide targeted funding for the creation of secondary units.
- Control escalating utility costs
- Increase the number of rent supplement or non RGI programs to provide a broader range of options and opportunities for households in need.
- Develop long term strategies to maintain social housing units after end of operating agreements
- Implement changes in the HSA to allow the implementation of mixed income communities, market, RGI, affordable and other rent subsidy models to promote sustainable housing communities
- Review or replace utility scales and rent scales for Rent Geared to Income housing.

- Replace time limited housing programs with long term funding to reduce insecurity in the housing system and provide sustainable housing.
- Attract private investment in affordable housing by expanding planning tools available to Service Managers to incent affordable housing development
- Ensure approval processes are as streamlined as possible and that legislation does not create barriers to approving affordable housing developments.
- Ensure that appeals to developments, including affordable housing developments are processed in a timely manner
- Consider a housing tax credit for low income earners
- Support rural transportation plans to develop coordinated systems to improve travel options for residents

Theme Two: A Fair System of Housing Assistance

- Increase shelter allowances provided by Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program to provide adequate funding for basic shelter for recipients
- Provide a coordinated system of waitlist application for more than just RGI housing.
- Renew current RGI income system as it is too complicated and expensive. Current system is not sustainable
- Explore strategies to provide a better system of connecting applicants with various housing options.
- Ensure services are in place to support housing through housing first models, eviction prevention programs, landlord education sessions, collaborating with community agencies

Theme Three: Coordinated, Accessible Support Services

- Continue to invest in units of supportive housing for people with mental health and addiction issues
- Coordinate health supports with accommodations at a Ministerial level. Encourage information sharing and case conferencing. Break down barriers such as information sharing and silo approach to services
- The need to coordinate accommodation with health-related supports so individuals have supports to maintain housing
- Focus on and invest in a “housing first” and harm reduction model for supportive housing and community outreach programs

Theme Four: Evidence and Best Practices

- Improve program reporting requirements to better support evidence based policy decisions.
- Use evidence based performance measures and data collection.
- Devote funding to developing a stronger research base for housing and homelessness data.
- Provide a Provincial definition of homelessness and goals to reducing homelessness.
- Encourage sector organizations to take on the responsibility of best practices and continuous improvement
- Encourage open data sharing among Ministry funded programs
- Provide updated affordable housing data at a local municipal scale or funding so that municipalities/organizations have access to current housing data for good decision making

Sustaining and maintaining the current housing stock, developing new affordable housing, providing appropriate and timely supports and developing best practices will enhance and improve the current housing system.

The County of Grey is a willing partner in the Province's vision of improving access to "affordable, suitable and adequate housing to provide the foundation to secure employment, raise a family, and build strong communities."