

MEMORANDUM

TO: Community and Health Services Committee Members

FROM: Adelina Urbanski, Commissioner of Community and Health Services

DATE: January 19, 2011

RE: **Provincial Long Term Affordable Housing Strategy**

Over the last several years, municipalities and agencies such as Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA), and others have been advocating and consulting with the Province on the issue of housing. Throughout those consultations municipalities reiterated the need for greater local flexibility to address local needs and for the development of a provincial and national strategy on housing.

On November 29, 2010, the Province announced their much anticipated Long Term Affordable Housing Strategy (LTAHS) as part of its Poverty Reduction Initiatives. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing described the LTAHS as taking “a client centred approach that empowers municipalities with the flexibility they need to address local housing and homelessness needs.” The LTAHS will effectively complete the transfer of housing program responsibility that began as part of the local service realignment exercise a decade ago.

The LTAHS will be implemented primarily through passage of a proposed new *Housing Services Act* and repeal of the *Social Housing Reform Act, 2000*, a process which will go on over the course of 2011 with proclamation of the new act expected in early 2012.

The LTAHS will impact the Region in a number of areas:

- The Region will be required to develop a ten year housing and homelessness plan that complies with standards to be established by the Province.
- Administration of provincially funded programs delivered by municipalities (e.g. domiciliary hostels, emergency shelter, rent banks and homelessness prevention programs) will be consolidated and funded based on the housing and homelessness plans.
- Changes to the *Planning Act* will require municipalities to have second suite policies.
- Social housing administration will be streamlined through:
 - elimination of most Ministerial Consent requirements
 - simplification of the Rent-Geared-to-Income program rules
 - greater flexibility with respect to local program rules

Although the LTAHS will support enhanced service opportunities for the Region, it does not address key issues related to the long term sustainability of the existing housing portfolio. There are also some potential technical problems with portions of the *Housing Services Act*. Staff will prepare a February report to Committee and Council articulating these issues with a view to preparing for input to the legislative Committee process.

The *Housing Services Act* is intended to provide an enabling framework, with details to be established in the supporting regulations. Full implementation will entail the development of significantly revised regulations and the submission of housing and homelessness plans by municipalities with housing responsibilities. This extensive work should be complete late in 2012 at the earliest. When the regulations are released it will then be possible to fully assess the administrative and cost impacts of the new legislation to the Region in its service manager role and to Housing York in its service provider/landlord role.

The Province has committed to consulting extensively during regulation development and implementation. Regional staff expect to be heavily involved in the consultations and will provide further updates to Committee and Council as they become available.



Adelina Urbanski
Commissioner of Community and Health Services

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