



Community and Health Services
Office of the Commissioner

MEMORANDUM

TO: Community and Health Services Committee

FROM: Adelina Urbanski,
Commissioner of Community and Health Services

DATE: October 12, 2011

RE: **Provincial Long Term Affordable Housing Strategy and the
Federal/Provincial Investing in Affordable Housing Program**

The Province has announced a Long Term Affordable Housing Strategy

In November 2010, the Province of Ontario announced its Long Term Affordable Housing Strategy. The Strategy's major areas of focus include:

- Increased local flexibility in housing program administration.
- Simplifying Rent-Geared-to-Income calculations.
- A new requirement for service managers to develop local housing and homelessness plans.
- Consolidating Housing and Homelessness Programs.

The Strategy will be implemented over approximately the next two years

Implementation of the Strategy will be iterative. Effective January 1, 2012, the *Social Housing Reform Act, 2000* will be repealed and new legislation, the *Housing Services Act, 2011*, will take effect. The new Act was proclaimed in July, 2011 after a productive consultation process that resulted in significant improvements to the original bill. The regulations that set out the program and funding requirements were published in August of this year. Staff are currently assessing the impact of the Act and its regulations, as well as the opportunities created by new areas of flexibility.

The Strategy calls for replacement of the current Rent-Geared-to-Income program with an income tax based system. The Province has responded to concerns raised by service managers and others regarding the need to ensure that the transition is managed in a manner that minimizes impacts on tenants. The existing system will be maintained into 2012 to allow time for further modeling, testing and assessment. Staff will be actively engaged in this process.

The Region has a new requirement to create a long term plan for the housing and homelessness system

Service managers will be required to develop ten year housing and homelessness plans by January 2014. The plans must address areas of provincial interest as identified in the Act and in the provincial Housing Policy Statement issued in August 2011. In order to fulfill the four mandatory components of the plan the Region must:

- Identify current and future housing needs within an area.
- Include objectives and targets relating to housing needs.
- Describe measures proposed to meet these goals.
- Describe how progress towards meeting the identified goals will be measured.

The plans will also need to reflect the consolidation of the following programs currently funded by the Province and delivered by service managers:

- Homeless Prevention Program
- Emergency Energy Fund
- Emergency Hostels
- Domiciliary Hostels
- Rent Bank

The consolidation exercise is on-going and staff continue to be involved in the process.

The Multi-Year Plan of the Community and Health Services Department provides for the development of a Housing Strategy. Staff in Community and Health Services and Planning and Development Services are currently collaborating on the first component of the plan - the assessment of housing needs. This process will require selected community consultations with specific populations identified in the Province's Housing Policy Statement. A report on this phase of the process will be provided to Council in the spring of 2012.

The Region has also been allocated \$22.2 million over four years through the federal/provincial Investment in Affordable Housing Program

The Region was advised on August 12, 2011 that the Investment in Affordable Housing Program will provide \$22.2 million to the Region to support a range of housing initiatives. The Program includes the following components from which service managers can choose:

- Affordable Rental Housing and Housing Allowances program
- Affordable home ownership programs
- Rent supplements program
- Ontario Renovates (a repair program for seniors, the disabled and low income households to support essential home repairs or retrofits that replaces the former federal Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP))

The funding is allocated over four years and there is no opportunity to carry funds forward from one year to the next. Staff are currently evaluating program and project options in light of the strict program timeframes and will bring forward a proposed funding commitment plan for Council consideration later this year.

Adelina Urbanski,
Commissioner of Community and Health Services

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