



We will create a long-term strategy for affordable housing. We will ensure this strategy contains a mix of non-profit and co-operative housing...

The Ontario Liberal Election Platform, 2007
Moving Forward Together

A Place for Co-op Housing in Ontario's Affordable Housing Strategy

The **CO-OPERATIVE HOUSING FEDERATION** of Canada



Work on Ontario's first-ever Affordable Housing Strategy is well underway. During the 2007 election campaign, Premier McGuinty promised to develop a long-term strategy that would include a mix of non-profit and co-operative housing. The co-op housing sector welcomes this historic and timely initiative to address Ontario's affordable housing crisis.

Faced with a severe economic downturn, the government must make hard choices about priorities. Construction of affordable housing has a major stimulative impact and is essential to economic recovery in Ontario. It creates jobs while reducing poverty and provides a valuable public asset for the long term.

Co-op housing is vital to the Strategy's success. Co-ops offer benefits not found in other forms of social housing. They build strong communities that empower residents to be more successful in life.

MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER

Fund more affordable housing and ensure that co-ops are an integral part of the mix

At least 130,000 households sit on social housing waiting lists across the province.

There is not enough rental housing in Ontario and much of what is available is not affordable for those with lower incomes.

Ontario needs 10,000 to 12,000 more affordable units each year – three times the number funded in each of the last five years.

Co-ops have been an important part of the mix of government-funded housing for almost 40 years. But now co-ops are getting left behind.

Under earlier programs, co-ops made up about 25% of the new housing developed. Under the Affordable Housing Program (AHP) this has dropped to about 4%.

Key commitments needed

- ✓ Recognize affordable housing as a core government program with a focus on new, permanently affordable, non-profit, mixed-income housing.
- ✓ Develop at least 8,000 new affordable units each year with rent-geared-to-income subsidies in 50% of new units and set up a rent supplement program.
- ✓ Set up a rent supplement program for rental housing, including federal co-ops.
- ✓ Change the Affordable Housing Program so that it works for co-ops and fund new co-op housing based on the historic level of 20%-25% of new units developed.

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Overhaul the *Social Housing Reform Act* to build stronger communities

We are pleased that Jim Watson, former Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, had stated that the Province plans to review and change the *Social Housing Reform Act* as part of the Affordable Housing Strategy.

The SHRA, passed by the Conservative government in 2000, downloaded a quarter of a million social housing units, including over 20,000 co-op homes, to municipal service managers.

This Act has eroded the community housing model, putting in place a program framework that is cumbersome, prescriptive and filled with rules designed to clamp down on residents receiving RGI assistance.

Housing co-ops have struggled to survive as member-controlled businesses and communities under an Act that strips away much of the decision-making from community housing boards and transfers it to government.

The SHRA leaves co-ops vulnerable if their service managers take action that is unreasonable or beyond their authority. The only way to challenge a decision by a service manager is to go to court.

Key commitments needed

Comprehensive reform of the SHRA, guided by a vision of building stronger communities, including:

- ✓ a re-balanced accountability framework that supports community decision-making
- ✓ program regulation focussed on outcomes, not prescribed processes
- ✓ a process for independent review of service manager decisions that allows housing providers to settle disputes with service managers
- ✓ new rules governing receivership and sale of co-ops that make sense in community housing





Co-ops offer benefits that co-op members know first hand and government studies have documented. They build social cohesion and pride of ownership.

We need your help

Contact the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Honourable Jim Bradley, and let him know that you want to see a place for co-op housing in Ontario's Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy.

We need an immediate commitment to:

- develop 20%-25% of new affordable housing as co-operative housing, and
- overhaul the SHRA to give community housing providers control and a fair way to review unreasonable actions by service managers.

The Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada

CHF Canada has served as the national voice and advocate for co-operative housing for over 40 years. Our Ontario Region is the voice of co-op housing at Queen's Park, representing some 500 housing co-ops across the province.

CHF Canada's Brief on the Affordable Housing Strategy

We have submitted a detailed brief with recommendations on the key elements that we feel should be included in the Affordable Housing Strategy. The brief can be found on the Ontario Region homepage on our website at www.chfcanada.coop.

For more information please contact:

Harvey Cooper
CHF Canada, Ontario Region
416-366-1711 or 1-800-268-2537 (ext. 237)
hcooper@chfcanada.coop

