

## AFFORDABLE HOUSING



Responsibility for housing in Ontario is shared by all three levels of government in a complex relationship involving funding, policies / laws, and service administration. Funding for housing programs is shared with the federal government. There is a consensus that there is a housing affordability crisis in Ontario. The need for affordable housing crosses the spectrum from supportive housing essential to those receiving social assistance and community housing, through to market rental and market ownership.

### What are the Issues?

#### Tenant Protection

- Changes to the [Residential Tenancies Act](#) in 2018 weakened rent control regulation. Rent control no longer applies to any rental unit – apartment, condo unit, or basement apartment - that became newly occupied as rental since November 2018. Also, there are no controls on what landlords can charge for rent when a unit becomes vacant ([vacancy control](#)). This is an incentive to evict tenants which in turn decreases the stock of affordable rental units.

#### Funding Supportive and Community Housing

- According to the 2021 [Report on Housing and Homelessness Programs in Ontario](#) by the FAO (Financial Accountability Office of Ontario), in 2018, 13.9 % of households in Ontario were in [core housing need](#), the second highest rate among all provinces. FAO projections indicate the share will remain at 13.9% until 2027. Shelter use and length of stay has been increasing since 2014. [Women's National Housing and Homelessness Network](#) reports that, in Canada, 28% of women-led households are in core housing need and 36% of people experiencing homelessness are women. In its 2020 report [Urban and Rural Indigenous Housing Plan for Ontario](#), ONPHA (Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association), reports a need for approximately 22,000 additional subsidized Indigenous community housing units over the next 10 years to meet the current and future housing needs of Indigenous Ontarians living with 'core housing need'\*. The [Maytree housing report](#) calculates that less than 0.3 % of the province's own annual spending has gone towards housing programs, estimating that that Ontario's current and projected spending is an annual shortfall compared to 2019/20

#### Provincial Policy

- The Provincial government through the [Planning Act](#) and its [Provincial Policy Statement](#) (PPS) controls land use zoning in Ontario. The 2020 PPS was criticized by housing advocates as over emphasizing market driven development. The recent [Ontario Housing Affordability Task Force](#) recommends increasing the supply and density of new housing, but also limiting consultation and appeals to speed up building new communities.

### AFFORDABLE HOUSING Key Message

There is a **housing crisis in Ontario** that spans the full spectrum of housing needs. Key areas where the Ontario government has the authority to relieve the housing affordability crisis:

- Tenant protection through reform of the ***Residential Tenancies Act***.
- Increased funding for supportive and community housing.
- Planning Policy: Working with municipalities to ensure the building of a healthy mix of new housing.
- Taxation measures to limit real estate speculation.

### Questions for Candidates

1. How would your party address the current level of homelessness and lack of affordable housing for low-income earners and those on social assistance in your riding?
2. Is your party willing to address the issue around rent control by expanding controls to include all residential rental units?
3. Is your party willing to curb speculation in the housing market through taxation?

- Ontario's Big City Mayors, although agreeing with some of the recommendations, are concerned, wanting more collaboration and respect for municipal planning that takes into consideration local needs and issues such as the environment, existing services, and infrastructure. There are red flags associated with fast tracking development. Over the last few years, the Ontario government has allocated only 0.3% of its annual budget to affordable housing issues. Significantly more funding needs to be invested. In some areas of Ontario, the subsidized housing wait list time is 7 to 10 years (Settlement Org, Jan.8, 2019).

### **Real Estate Speculation**

- [Multi-property owners now represent over 25% of total transactions](#) (Ontario 2021 data from housing market insights by Teranet). Real estate investors drive up prices and make it more difficult to compete in bidding wars. A tax on real estate speculation and vacant properties held by speculators could cool the market, increasing opportunities for those in need of homes.

### **Why now?**

Housing is a human right. In Ontario, too many are without homes, in core housing need, or unable to find affordable housing in their communities. The greatest barrier to financial stability is the rising cost of housing. Data shows that rent and housing costs eat up most of the household budget for lower income earners. Little is left for the other necessities of heat, hydro, transportation, and food. Unless the government takes steps to increase adequate, safe and affordable housing, and puts in place stricter rent controls, any increases in the income of individuals and families experiencing poverty will be eaten up by rent.

\*Terms Based on: ***The National Housing Strategy Glossary of Common Terms***

**AFFORDABLE HOUSING:** a housing unit that can be owned or rented by a household with shelter costs that are less than 30 per cent of its gross income.

**SUPPORTIVE HOUSING:** Housing that provides a physical environment that is specifically designed to be safe and secure, with support services such as social services, provision of meals, housekeeping and social and recreational activities.

**COMMUNITY HOUSING:** An umbrella term that typically refers to either housing that is owned and operated by non-profit housing societies and housing co-operatives, or housing owned by provincial, territorial, or municipal governments.

**CORE HOUSING NEED:** means the unit is either (1) not large enough for the number of people living in it; (2) not in good repair; (3) not affordable. Or perhaps all three.