



**Ontario Municipal Social
Services Association**

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Social Housing Modernization Consultation
Housing Policy Branch
Ministry of Housing
777 Bay Street, 14th Floor
Toronto, ON M5G 2E5

Sent by email to: janet.hope@ontario.ca and housingstrategy.mah@ontario.ca

RE: Response to Technical discussion document on social housing modernization: A Modern Framework.

Established in 1950, the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA) is a non-profit organization whose members are the Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs) and District Social Services Administration Boards (DSSABs) across Ontario. Our members' interests are represented to OMSSA by the senior human services staff of the CMSMs and DSSABs.

OMSSA works on the behalf of 47 CMSMs and DSSABs who act as service system managers funding, planning, managing and delivering human services including early learning and child care, employment and income supports, and housing and homelessness prevention programs.

OMSSA thanks the Ministry of Housing for taking the time to consult with service system managers at housing forums, the policy forum, SMHN/HPN network and other consultation opportunities throughout the LTAHS update. OMSSA values our relationship with the Ministry and the ongoing communication with service system managers through working groups and special meetings with the 47 leads and their housing professionals as required. Service system managers would like to continue to build on this partnership going forward.

This submission is an interim response to the Ministry of Housing's Social Housing Modernization Technical Discussion Document #2: *A Modern Framework released February 2018*. As service system managers and primary funders of social housing costs in Ontario, our members have a vested interest in social housing modernization. OMSSA is committed to working with its members and The Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) over the summer to propose feedback and proposals to the Ministry. A summit will occur in late June to develop a more detailed and informed submission on housing

modernization that reflects the views of all service system managers across the province. **Results of this forum will be submitted to the Ministry before September.**

As service system managers, OMSSA members are committed to social housing modernization and want to work in partnership with the Province to co-develop a framework that reflects our shared goals and objectives. A framework for the future of the social housing system must be both strong and sustainable. Service system managers have technical knowledge, local knowledge and practical implementation experience to improve the social housing system to better serve Ontarians.

Modernization presents an exciting opportunity to work in partnership with the Province to help shape the future of social housing in Ontario. It is important to design a social housing framework that works better for tenants, those waiting for housing and at risk of homelessness, the province, local service system managers, and housing providers. Service system managers want to see the best possible framework that incorporates the experience and expertise of our members working with social housing on a daily basis.

The role of CMSMs and DSSABs in social housing in Ontario is unique and not duplicated anywhere else in Canada. The success of National Housing Strategy initiatives in Ontario requires federal, provincial and local levels of government to effectively collaborate to achieve desired outcomes. The same is true for social housing modernization. We emphasize that it is important to maintain strong relationships and open communication with all partners. To this end, OMSSA recommends a new strategic working group table that brings together service system managers and relevant partners to advance social housing modernization in Ontario. In fact, this group should be very active co-creators and founders of strategy.

Service system managers share some common concerns including availability of funding to repair, maintain and expand housing supply in cities, suburbs, rural communities and Northern Ontario. All service system managers agree there is a need for more social and affordable housing within their jurisdictions and face challenges serving those on their growing wait lists. But service system managers also have unique local housing needs, and a modernized social housing framework needs to allow for local flexibility in addressing these local circumstances. Low rental vacancies remain a concern and a barrier to the success of the portable housing benefit model. RGI simplification, improvements related to waitlist administration, updates to the *Housing Services Act*, service level standards, quality assurance standards, access to local mental health and other tenant supports, local poverty reduction efforts and the commitment to end chronic homelessness by 2025 are examples of issues that must be considered as part of efforts to modernize social housing in Ontario.

In addition to social housing modernization, the Province and service system managers are working towards human services integration and modernization in social assistance and child care. Our work cannot operate in silos and must take a client based approach in human services. Coordination is also required across provincial initiatives. The Province must improve collaboration between Ministries that have a role in housing or supportive services. It is important to have all parties at the table to better address gaps in the system and support positive outcomes in social and supportive housing.

OMSSA members want to see a strong and sustainable housing system that allows for local flexibility and less administrative burden. Service system managers want to partner with the Province to co-create a modern framework that will support sustainability and flexibility of the social housing sector and create better outcomes for Ontarians living in and accessing social and affordable housing.

Service system managers appreciate the opportunity to consult further on housing modernization, recognizing this is an ongoing long-term commitment and that these are still the early stages of the housing modernization consultation process. Local service system management input and engagement is crucial to getting housing modernization right and co-developing a framework that will achieve our joint objectives. We look forward to sending additional feedback arising from our June forum in the coming months. Thank you for your time and consideration of this submission.

Personal regards,

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