



Social Housing Modernization

2017 Housing Forum

Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA)

September 14, 2017

2016 LTAHS Update

- On March 14, 2016, the government released the update to the Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy (LTAHS). The updated Strategy is bold and transformative, and supports our goal of ending chronic homelessness by the year 2025.
- The updated strategy is based on a **new vision** that reflects the government's goal of ending homelessness:
 - ***Every person has an affordable, suitable and adequate home to provide the foundation to secure employment, raise a family, and build strong communities***
- This vision is associated with **two overarching outcomes**:
 - **Decreased number of people who are homeless and**
 - **Increased number of households achieving housing stability.**
- Achieving these outcomes can potentially impact a range of **associated outcomes**, including long-term cost avoidance in other sectors such as:
 - **Decreased inappropriate use of emergency health care services;**
 - **Decreased use of policing and correctional services;**
 - **Increased employment;**
 - **Increased education outcomes; and**
 - **Increasing social and economic inclusion.**

Ontario's Updated Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy (LTAHS Update)

VISION

Every person has an affordable, suitable, and adequate home to provide the foundation to secure employment, raise a family, and build strong communities.

THEMES

Appropriate and Sustainable Supply of Housing

Equitable, Portable System of Financial Assistance

People-Centred, Efficient Housing Programs

Indigenous Housing Strategy

Steps to End Homelessness

Evidence-Informed System with Capacity to Respond Effectively to Changing Needs

Please Appendix for further details of LTAHS themes

Social Housing Modernization

- A key element of the LTAHS Update is developing a modernized framework for social housing aligned with the government's focus on poverty reduction:
 - ✓ Articulate key elements for social housing programs in the future – **Social Housing Modernization Technical Document released May 2016**
 - ✓ Undertake some immediate reforms to support modernization – **Promoting Affordable Housing Act, 2016 (passed December 8, 2016); other regulatory reforms approved May 2016**
 - ❑ Commit to a process to define the path forward - **Ongoing**
 - ✓ **Social Housing Modernization Discussion Forum convened May 2016**
 - ✓ **Framework for a Portable Housing Benefit in effect September 1, 2017**
- The modernization of the social housing system will be built around the following themes and key elements:
 - A modern program framework
 - A more coordinated access system
 - New approaches to financial assistance
 - A vibrant not-for-profit and co-operative housing sector

Key Elements of Social Housing Modernization

- Consistent with the updated LTAHS vision, the province identified four key elements of a social housing modernization framework that guide the Discussion Forum's work:
 1. **A modern program framework** that recognizes and aims to meet the unique needs of individuals, families, and communities across the province and that is:
 - Consistent with a poverty-reduction focus
 - Responsive to local needs and conditions
 - Promotes innovation while ensuring public accountability
 - Supports sustainability in a post-operating agreement environment
 2. **A more coordinated, effective access system** that better matches people with housing needs to an appropriate form of assistance, including housing opportunities within the private housing market, as well as existing not-for-profit and co-operative housing providers
 - A modernized access system should be coordinated with opportunities for specialized housing with supports that may be offered through broader human services, including supportive housing

Key Elements of Social Housing Modernization cont'd

3. New Approaches to Financial Assistance

- The government will be introducing a framework for a portable housing benefit
- A portable housing benefit would operate more like housing allowances introduced under more recent programs
- Ontario would like to move, over time, to providing assistance in the form of portable housing benefits, so that more people in housing need can receive financial assistance and so that individuals and families seeking housing assistance have more freedom to choose where they live – closer to family, social support networks, schools and employment opportunities

4. A Vibrant Not-for-Profit and Co-operative Housing Sector that:

- Operates on more business-like principles while maintaining its social purpose
- Focuses on effectively managing social housing portfolios and fostering healthy communities, rather than focusing on the delivery of financial assistance
- Encourages an entrepreneurial culture to foster innovation, effectively meet local needs and increase supply where possible

Social Housing Modernization – Progress to Date

- Immediate reforms after the release of the LTAHS Update to support modernization included a number of regulatory and legislative changes:
 - Changes to the *Housing Services Act, 2011* included enabling alternative forms of housing assistance; framework for a portable housing benefit in effect September 1, 2017.
 - Regulatory changes provided Service Managers with greater flexibility in the delivery and administration of social housing (e.g., allowing for more mixed income housing within the current public RGI housing stock).

Social Housing Modernization Discussion Forum

- To support the social housing modernization process, a Discussion Forum was convened in May 2016 and tasked with providing advice to government on all aspects of the modernized system.
- The Discussion Forum is supported by a variety of working groups providing technical advice on specific topics. Participants on the Forum and Working Groups include representatives from Service Managers, social housing providers, sector organizations including the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association (ONPHA), as well as representatives from broader community groups.
- To ensure broad government perspectives, partner ministries include the Ministry of Health and Long- Term Care, the Ministry of Community and Social Services, and the federal government, through the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, are also participants.
- The Forum has met eight times since May 2016 and is expected to meet into 2018.

Implementation: Portable Housing Benefit

- The Portable Housing Benefit Framework is intended to create the foundation for an equitable, portable system of financial assistance that encourages social and economic inclusion.
- A portable housing benefit can give people more flexibility to choose where they live and not create a disincentive to work and become economically self-sufficient.
- Effective September 1, 2017, Service Managers may offer municipally-funded portable housing benefits to households as an optional alternative to rent-geared-to-income assistance in social housing, at their discretion, to receive credit toward their Service Level Standards.

Implementation: Program and Policy Enhancements for Survivors of Domestic Violence

- Launched in July 2016, the Survivors of Domestic Violence – Portable Housing Benefit Pilot is a two-year program in 22 Service Manager areas to help survivors of domestic violence access safe and affordable housing.
- The Pilot provides the option to receive a portable housing benefit, allowing survivors to immediately find housing in their community.
- The 2017 Ontario Budget committed \$30 million over the next three years to extend the Survivors of Domestic Violence – Portable Housing Benefit Pilot to eventually support up to 3,000 survivors of domestic violence.
- Building on the strong results of the Pilot, the SDV – PHB will be available to all Service Managers on an ongoing basis beginning 2018-19.
- The new SDV – PHB ongoing program will be provincially delivered on a first-come, first-served basis to ensure portability across the province.

Implementation: Program and Policy Enhancements for Survivors of Domestic Violence, cont'd

- Under the *Housing Services Act, 2011*, the Special Priority Policy (SPP) is a gender-neutral policy that provides priority access to social housing for households that are fleeing an abusive situation and are unable to afford rent in the private market.
- In June 2016, the ministry established a Working Group to provide advice to government on ways in which the policy can be enhanced to better meet the safe housing needs of survivors of domestic violence and include survivors of human trafficking.
- In Spring 2017, the government approved policy enhancements to SPP. The proposed enhancements balance the recommendations of the SPP Working Group while maintaining the original intent of the policy and the role of Service Managers as service system managers.
- The proposed enhancements were posted on the Regulatory Registry for a 45 day comment period, which concluded on September 1, 2017.
- In addition to considering all feedback received through the Regulatory Registry posting, the ministry will undertake targeted consultations with existing stakeholders tables led by MHO and other ministry partners including the Ministry of Community and Social Services and the Ministry of the Status of Women. All comments will be considered before government finalizes regulation.
- Pending approval, it is anticipated that proposed amendments to SPP will come into effect in Winter 2017/18.

Implementation: Program and Policy Enhancements for Survivors of Domestic Violence, cont'd

- Proposed enhancements to the Special Priority Policy include:
 - Expanding SPP rules to include survivors of human trafficking;
 - Allowing SPP households to place their application on hold (and maintain their place on the centralized waitlist), if they reconcile with their abuser;
 - Updating the records of abuse, including adding a record of forcible confinement;
 - Updating the verifiers of abuse to include mid-wives and Indigenous Elders;
 - Requiring that Service Managers determine household's eligibility for SPP and RGI prior to addressing rent arrears or amounts owing;
 - Providing Service Managers with the flexibility to contact a safe alternative contact as identified by the SPP applicant;
 - Making it easier for SPP households without certain information and documents to apply for SPP and RGI;
 - Updating the definition of spouse to recognize individuals who are legally married; and,
 - Updating the definition of abuse to clarify that for the purposes of the definition, children who are unrelated to their abuser have access to SPP.

Implementation: RGI Simplification

- The government has committed to simplifying and harmonizing the definition of income used to calculate rent-geared-to-income (RGI) assistance, to make it consistent with other income-tested programs used in the province.
- As a result, instead of dealing with complex, time consuming rent calculations, Service Managers and housing providers will have more time to spend with their tenants and manage their properties.
- Through the Discussion Forum on Social Housing Modernization, the ministry will engage its partners on an approach to simplify the administration of RGI assistance.
- Details and recommendations on streamlining and simplifying the calculation of RGI assistance and a process for transitioning existing tenants to a new calculation will also be developed.

Potential Outcomes:

- RGI assistance is calculated annually by Service Managers and housing providers using household income information reported on the Notice of Assessment from the Canada Revenue Agency.
- Recalculation of rent may be requested between annual reviews to account for significant decreases of income, but rent will not change for income increases.
- Service Managers and housing providers will be able to spend more time working with tenants and managing their properties, rather than processing documentation.
- Households will better understand their rent calculation and have greater flexibility to pursue socio-economic opportunities to realize their full potential.

Social Housing Modernization: Retrofit and Repair

- As part of the Climate Change Action Plan, the Ontario Government announced a five-year investment into social housing buildings across Ontario, totalling up to \$657 million* to be used for extensive social housing retrofits and repair.
- Included in this funding is \$82 million for the Social Housing Apartment Retrofit Program (SHARP) which was implemented in 2016. The Program provides funding for retrofits in social housing apartment buildings of 150 or more units.
- The new program will fund retrofit activities in high-rise social housing apartment buildings, including the latest low-carbon and carbon-free energy technologies.
- Proceeds from the carbon market must by law be invested in programs that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and save money on energy costs.

* Funding total is contingent on carbon market proceeds.

Related Initiatives: Supportive Housing Transformation

- On March 9, 2017, the province released the Supportive Housing Policy Framework and Best Practice Guide to provide direction for the long-term transformation of Ontario's supportive housing system (available on MHO website at <http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/Page13793.aspx>)
- Also on March 9, the province announced it is investing up to \$200 million in operating funding for housing assistance and support services to assist up to 6,000 families and individuals over the next three years.
 - The investment will also support the construction of up to 1,500 new supportive housing units over the long-term.
- The supportive housing investment is comprised of three components:
 - 1) **Service Manager component to be delivered in select communities (Home for Good program): ~ \$75 million by 2019/20;**
 - 2) **Targeted funding for Indigenous organizations to give Indigenous people better access to supportive housing, and culturally appropriate services and supports: \$20 million by 2019/20; and**
 - 3) **Funding to meet the unique needs of specific target populations transitioning from provincially funded institutions and service systems (e.g., hospitals and prisons), to be delivered by MOHLTC and MCSS: ~\$5 million by 2019/20.**
- MHO released an Expression of Interest (EOI) inviting municipal Service Managers to apply for funding for the first two years of the Home for Good program – focused on helping people within one or more of the provincial priority homelessness areas.

Related Initiatives: Indigenous Housing Strategy

- MHO's new Indigenous Housing Policy and Programs Unit is leading an engagement process with a range of Indigenous organizations and communities.
- The ministry has established an Indigenous Housing Strategy Engagement Table, including participation from:
 - The Ontario Native Women's Association, the Métis Nation of Ontario, Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres, Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services, Miziwe Biik Development Corporation, as well as two housing providers nominated by ONPHA's Urban Indigenous Committee - Gignul Housing and Nishnawbe Homes.
- **The Ministry is also reaching out to other Indigenous organizations to discuss the Strategy, including Tungasuvvingat Inuit, Chiefs of Ontario (COO), and Political Territorial Organizations such as Nishnawbe Aski Nation, Grand Council Treaty #3, Union of Ontario Indians, Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians and Independent First Nations.**
- MHO continues to work with the federal government to provide input on the National Housing Strategy (NHS) and Indigenous-specific housing strategies, with a view to ensure alignment with the outcomes for the province's Indigenous Housing Strategy.
- As announced on March 9, 2017, MHO is dedicating \$20 million per year (20%) of the Supportive Housing Investment to an Indigenous Supportive Housing Program, which will be designed and delivered by Indigenous housing program administrators.

Related Initiatives: **Federal Budget and National Housing Strategy**

- On March 22, the federal government tabled its 2017 budget, which proposes to invest more than \$11.2 billion nationally over 11 years in a variety of initiatives designed to build, renew and repair Canada's stock of social and affordable housing.
- These investments will be made as part of a new National Housing Strategy (NHS), to be developed in partnership with provinces and territories.
- The Strategy will provide a roadmap for all orders of government and housing partners and stakeholders across the country as they decide how to best support housing and homelessness in Canada.
- The Budget includes:
 - \$3.2 billion of renewed funding to provinces and territories (this is the Investment in Affordable Housing (IAH) successor program, and starts in 2019-20);
 - An additional commitment (outside of NHS funding) to preserve baseline funding related to expiring social housing operating agreements. The federal government later indicated that this funding could potentially be approx. \$4 billion.
 - Other initiatives to be delivered by the federal government and which address the existing social housing stock, homelessness and Indigenous housing needs.

Note: The Homelessness Partnering Strategy and Indigenous Housing Strategy are on different timelines.

Related Initiatives: **National Housing Strategy, cont'd.**

- Ontario has been working with the federal government and other provinces and territories to develop the NHS:
 - Federal/provincial/territorial (F/P/T) housing ministers met on November 1, 2016 to finalize priorities for the NHS.
 - Results of public consultations were released in November 2016.
 - FPT housing ministers met by teleconference in August 2017 to continue working on the NHS. FPT ministers are scheduled to meet again in fall 2017 to finalize the Strategy, and a public release will follow.
 - NHS funding streams begin in spring 2018.
- Ontario is looking to ensure that the NHS aligns with the goals of our LTAHS Update and that it is flexible enough to meet local needs and priorities, including the need to preserve the existing social housing stock.

Social Housing Modernization: Proposed Future State

Status Quo

- Patchwork of 10 legacy programs with separate and prescriptive rules
- Reliance on government subsidies
- Concentration of low income households
- Complex reporting requirements and restrictions
- Aging stock requiring significant capital investments for repairs/regeneration
- Lack of clarity, confusion and risk

Modernization Initiatives

- Social Housing Modernization
- National Housing Strategy and Investments
- Climate Change Action Plan
- Increased Sector Capacity

Proposed Future State

- Single, streamlined, province-wide framework
- Disentangled provision of housing assistance (municipal responsibility) from the provision of the physical asset (provider responsibility)
- Increased economic and social inclusion
- Risk-based, streamlined reporting and accountability requirements
- Greater financial and administrative independence/capacity to manage portfolio
- Increased clarity and flexibility allowing for long-term planning
- Managed transition process to minimize disruption and to support housing stability

Social Housing Modernization – Feedback

- At OMSSA’s Policy Conference last December, the Ministry of Housing had the opportunity to discuss social housing modernization as a part of the i-Lab series.
- We asked participants for early thoughts on the future of social housing and what success would look like in a modernized social housing system. Here’s what we heard:
 - Better integration of social services and housing system, including supports (e.g. system-wide targets, coordinated access/intake systems, etc.)
 - Simplified RGI calculations that provide more time for case management to support housing stability
 - Households in receipt of housing assistance receive the supports they need in order to maintain their tenancies (e.g., seniors, etc.)
 - Increased household choice/engagement through portable housing benefits that leads to mixed income communities/social inclusion
 - Increased capacity, flexibility and ability to innovate in order to meet local need/variation through modernized funding arrangements and a policy framework
 - Opportunities to increase the supply of housing (e.g., funding, integrated planning systems, etc.)

Discussion Questions

Modern Program Framework

**More Coordinated, Effective
Access System**

**New Approaches to Financial
Assistance**

**Vibrant Not-for-Profit
and Co-operative Housing Sector**

- 1) How is social housing modernization taking shape in your community?
- 2) What barriers or challenges are you experiencing as you move forward?
- 3) What supports and/or assistance do housing providers need in order to implement social housing modernization?
- 4) What steps could the province take to further support your community to make progress on social housing modernization?