

Long Term
Affordable Housing
Strategy (LTAHS)
Windsor Essex
~ Renewal Consultation

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Collavino Hall – WFCU Centre

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Note to Reader:

This report is intended to provide the comments made by stakeholders at a community consultation session and is for information purposes only. This report and the information contained herein has not been reviewed, approved, endorsed by and does not necessarily reflect the views of the City of Windsor, County of Essex, or any municipal Council in the Windsor Essex Service Area.

Introduction

In April 2015 the Province of Ontario released its Long Term Affordable Housing Strategy (LTAHS) Renewal, which would build on the work set out in 2010 regarding the framework for housing policy in Ontario. The LTAHS Renewal sought feedback from Ontarians to inform the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) on what the current challenges are facing Ontario's housing system in order to inform the province on how they "can innovate and use creative approaches that increase access to affordable housing for those in need."

The Province committed to updating the Long Term Affordable Housing Strategy in the 2014 release of Realizing Our Potential, a new Poverty Reduction Strategy. In Realizing Our Potential a long term commitment to end homelessness was made and steps have begun provincially to support this goal. The LTAHS Strategy Update Consultation Discussion Guide laid the foundation on where the province was focusing the next 5 years by providing an updated vision, goals and key themes and identifying opportunities and challenges within the 4 key themes.

Updated Vision

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

In June 2015, the City of Windsor Housing Services Department brought together over 120 stakeholders, key partners and government representatives from various sectors in Windsor Essex to engage in the process to submit a comprehensive response to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing based on the 4 key themes and questions identified in the Consultation Discussion Guide.

The results from the Windsor Essex consultation were then compiled and this report will showcase the results of the day. The report is presented in two sections. Section one focuses on the key themes and ideas shared during the consultation that were submitted to the Ministry for review. Section two focuses on local issues and challenges that were identified by the community which will help inform updates pertaining to the Windsor Essex 10 Year Housing and Homelessness Plan.

Section 1: Response to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing

Theme 1: A Sustainable Supply of Affordable Housing

- **How can we encourage private investment in affordable housing through planning, financial, regulatory and other tools?**
 - Establish a fund to assist with deferring municipal costs. To be cost shared with the province dollar for dollar
 - Encourage and support municipalities to establish concession policy on property taxes for affordable housing similar to IAH programs and ensure implementation of the concession is at the implementation of the project
 - An incentive program for neighbourhoods which support new affordable housing builds by offering asset incentives (i.e. pool, park, etc)
 - Establish social investment bond program
 - Allow access to the provincial mortgage pool system for all sectors involved with social and affordable housing for a variety of refinancing initiatives
 - Encourage and support Service Managers to waive all development and associated fees for all affordable housing for private sector affordable housing (new starts and acq-rehabs)

- **How can we better support the non-profit sector (including co-ops, private, and municipal non-profits) in maintaining, replacing, and expanding social and affordable housing?**
 - Establishment of a long term low cost loan / mortgage program with a forgiveness feature
 - Implement a simple process and easy system to access the available equity for refinancing; rationalization of stock
 - Allow access to the provincial mortgage pool system for all sectors involved with social and affordable housing for a variety of refinancing initiatives
 - Establish a sustainable funding model and capital reserve provisions for the Local Housing Corporation
 - Incentives for joint ventures between private and non – profit
 - Simplify Rent Geared to Income calculation to reduce administrative burden
 - Senior level of government long term funding for maintaining, replacing, and expanding social and affordable housing

- **How can we improve regulatory and legislative tools to enhance housing affordability?**
 - Encourage and support Service Managers to waive all development and associated fees for all affordable housing for private sector affordable housing (new starts and acq-rehabs).
 - MPAC market value assessment criteria be revised / restructured for affordable housing projects to recognize the nature / dynamic of affordable and social housing with the intent to lower property taxes

- Explore and consult with stakeholders on the feasibility on establishing a mandatory percentage for new units in new developments dedicated to social housing (inclusionary zoning)
 - Explore and consult with stakeholders on the feasibility of establishing an affordable housing levy fee attached to obtaining a permit for non-affordable housing (similar to park levy fee)
 - Reduce or eliminate the need for ministerial consent, more local decision making
 - Fund Service Manager's according to housing need not population when allocating housing program funds
 - Allow Housing Providers inclusive of Local Housing Corporation to have increased flexibility to establish rents with Service Manager approval after the End of Operating Agreement has expired
 - Review Rent Geared to Income utility scales
 - Allow Service Manager's to harmonize all rent supplement programs and allow Service Manager's to pool all rent supplement funding
 - Increase shelter allowance portion for income support programs (i.e. OW and ODSP)
- **What steps should the federal government take to support housing supply, including social housing?**
 - Removal of tax on capital gains if gain is reinvested in affordable housing stock
 - Fund research and innovative alternative affordable housing build solutions
 - Extension of capital funding program (i.e. Social Housing Renovation and Retrofit Program - SHRRP)
 - Senior level of government long term funding for maintaining, replacing, and expanding social and affordable housing
 - Develop and Implement a Federal National Housing Strategy
 - Strengthen and retain Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), they are an excellent support to Service Managers, stakeholders and the public
 - Federal government programming for Convention Refugees should be better coordinated with Service Managers as it relates to housing and support services
 - Negotiate solutions with Federal Government to:
 - a) Address expiring operating agreements
 - b) Eliminate CMHC penalties when a Non-Profit is refinancing
 - c) Continue federal funding for housing

Theme 2: A Fair System of Housing Assistance

- **How can we improve access to housing assistance and reduce wait times?**
 - Increase senior levels of government (provincial and federal) funding to support an increase in housing stock
 - Improved discharge planning is required between income supports, housing staff and housing providers
 - Increase information sharing between Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) and Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) to enable an improved eligibility verification process for the Central Wait List

- Develop a parallel Special Priority household category (SPP) ranking and selection process using long term rent supplement and / or housing allowance programming
 - Eliminate the expiry dates on existing rent sup/housing allowance on current programs by annualizing the funding; future rent supplement / housing allowance programs with no end dates and increase the funding for rent supplement / housing allowance programs
- **How can the systems of housing assistance be improved for clients and service providers?**
 - Simplify RGI rent calculation (i.e. flat rent)
 - Inter-ministerial supports should be attached to the person and not the unit
 - Creation of a multilingual portal for individuals and service providers to access current housing information
 - Harmonize income support legislation with Housing Services Act requirements for Central Wait List eligibility
 - Allow more flexible year-to-year and program component-to-component carryover and shifting provisions in Investment in Affordable Housing – Extension (IAH-E) program
 - Require Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) and Ministry of Health (MOH) to provide annualized budget funds to housing programs that are targeted to benefit their respective initiatives
 - Establish a fund to support tenant engagement for residents residing in social housing to enable housing providers to provide and support tenant empowerment, improve safety, human and social services, education and job opportunities within neighbourhoods and communities.
- **What non-financial programs and supports help to maintain successful tenancies?**
 - Social inclusion / neighbourhood strategies
 - Review income support legislative requirements regarding the request for voluntary pay directs for income support programs
 - Review legislative requirements for income support programs to allow for mandatory pay directs when individuals in affordable and/or social housing have fallen into previous arrears
 - Increase peer support involvement in social housing developments
 - Financial literacy education
 - Integrate support services, legislation and policies to reduce barriers in accessing supports
- **How can we better support people who are homeless to become stably housed?**
 - Increase funding for the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI)
 - Coordinate and integrate systems of ministry funding between MMAH, Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU), Ministry of Education (MEDU), MCSS, Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS) and MOH (i.e. ACT teams)
 - Public education strategy to decrease stigmas of homeless individuals and families
 - Coordinate and integrate HPS initiatives for a shared vision and goals with MMAH for safe, affordable, adequate housing and supports available to the person

Theme 3: Co-ordinated, Accessible Support Services

- **How can the Province, Service Managers, community agencies, and housing providers work to improve Ontario's supportive housing system?**
 - Increase funding to support an enhancement in the quality of life of individuals in Housing with Support homes that includes a recognition of the provision of specialized services to this population
 - Create in collaboration with the Local Health Integration Network (LHIN), Ministry of Health and Ministry of Community and Social Services a multidiscipline, transdiscipline mobile teams that would support all Housing with Support homes to address the needs of their tenants (i.e. mental wellness, addictions, physical health, occupational therapy, nursing, etc)
 - Expand transportation eligibility and provisions under income support programs
 - Increase training and resources in order to attract and retain skilled employees
 - Provide wage enhancement to staff who work in Housing with Support homes
 - Offer capital funding to assist with accessibility issues to fulfill requirements of Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)
 - Increase public awareness regarding the value of supportive housing in communities
 - Apply the current model of individualized funding from Developmental Services Ontario (DSO) to this population
 - Funding needs to be increased, shared and coordinated amongst the following Ministries in order to achieve the desired outcomes to increase the Quality of Life to those persons residing in Housing with Supports Homes: MMAH, MOH, MCSS, MCYS
 - MMAH, MOH, MCSS and MCYS should contribute funding to housing programs for an appropriate amount in order to achieve improved outcomes for people in supportive housing programs
 - Invest appropriate Ministry of Health funding to support individuals in-home
 - Invest appropriate funding in neighbourhood and peer support strategies to increase social inclusion for individuals receiving in home support
 - Allow for certain exemption under smoking legislation for supportive housing facilities
 - There is a gap in services and the needs of vulnerable seniors who are not eligible or cannot afford Long Term Care (LTC) are currently not being met. The Province should take necessary action to address this gap and enable the provision of support services for vulnerable seniors experiencing this circumstance
 - Some Housing with Support homes are regulated by municipal by-laws, standards and / or the RRHA. Develop legislation and create a governing body similar to that governing LTC homes to increase consistency of housing standards, program standards and level of care standards within supportive housing

- **What changes would make the system easier to navigate for people? What access and intake systems work best for people with complex needs?**
 - System integration which includes the following: Coordinated information sharing and access; common individualized assessment and intake that is evidenced based and developed with considering input from persons with lived experience
 - Mobile support services

- Need the necessary mechanisms in place to support people – need to review legislation, policies and procedures that do not allow people to be supported in an integrated manner
- Promote a multi-ministry funded HUB like model through investments and policy which would allow people with complex needs to navigate the system easier
- **Are there opportunities to encourage innovation and reduce administrative burdens?**
 - Eliminate barriers that prohibit tenant participation in acquiring skills for daily living within the facility i.e. safe food handling certificate for cooking skills
 - Promoting an individualized approach to supports
 - Increase access to health technologies, such as Tele-Health, Tele-Psychiatry, etc. to support individuals residing in supportive housing
 - Promote the engagement and inclusion of postsecondary institutions to assist with best practices, evidence based solutions and evaluation
 - Promote the engagement and inclusion of Employment and Education institutions to offer incentives to individuals in Housing with Support Homes to obtain and achieve self-sufficiency
- **How can we better co-ordinate housing supply and supportive services?**
 - Changes are required to eliminate legislative barriers for support services for non-designated housing units as agencies designated under LTC are not able to extend services beyond that sector
 - Increase Ministry of Health funding to support an increase for ACT teams
 - Mandate use of care plans for individuals
 - Implement full system integration between housing providers and support services providers
 - Harmonized, integrated system of eligibility verification for all Provincial social programming (e.g. BC Services Card); with a goal of coordinating and brokering services
 - Coordinate portable rent supplement with support services
 - Change IAH (E) program rules to allow for families to create private space in their homes to care for family members without having to comply with secondary suite requirements of the multi-res component of IAH (E). In addition, review eligible house values and maintain the criteria to only assess the income of the family member that is being cared for in a “private space” program provision

Theme 4: Evidence and Best Practices

- **What outcomes should social and affordable housing programs focus on achieving?**
 - Housing Retention: Length of tenancies should be measured long term up to a period of 3 years
 - Exits from social and affordable housing to Home ownership
 - Quality of Life, Income levels, type of Housing, social inclusion, education, food security, employment, increase in health status, use of emergency responses, incarceration / institution use inclusive of hospitals (Social Determinants of Health)
 - Measure positive and negative outcomes – possibly through storytelling, exit interviews

- What supports are having a positive effect to housing stability
 - Qualitative outcomes should be measured in addition to quantitative measures
 - Track the number of unique persons assisted / housed
 - Customer satisfaction and a method for dealing with complaints at the local level
 - Link with “Realizing Our Potential” Poverty Reduction Strategy outcomes and measurements
- **How can we support Service Managers and housing providers to achieve outcomes?**
 - Consistency in data collection between the Federal, Provincial and Municipal levels of government
 - Create a standardized measurement tool and online database which is easy to use, mobile, accessible across multiple platforms
 - Increase funding to Service Managers
 - Have a portal for municipalities to compare best practices and data outcomes comparatively
 - Have a portal for service providers to compare best practices and data outcomes comparatively across the province
 - Increase ongoing support for the Integrated Housing System designed by the Housing Collaborative Initiative (HCI) by 8 Service Managers (SMs) to collect data with possible expansion province wide
 - Support for training on data collection and outcome measures by the Province in order for SMs to better support Service Providers
 - Consider Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) as standardized tool for data collection federally and provincially
 - Address insufficient program admin fees and create admin fee system where fee structure is same length of time as the program i.e. 20 Years
- **What opportunities exist for sharing housing data with partners and the public?**
 - HIFIS with networking
 - Service Manager Annual Report
 - Planning tables
 - 10 Year Plan
 - CMHC publications and online portal
 - OMBI data
 - ONPHA wait list survey
 - 211
 - ONPHA website / resources
- **How do we enhance service provider capacity to access evidence on best practices?**
 - Create a portal for service providers
 - Education and training
 - System user engagement

Section 2: Local Challenges and Opportunities

Theme 1: A Sustainable Supply of Affordable Housing

- Local land banking
- Allow program funds to be used to assist landlords with damage costs
- Make it easier for homeowners to renovate to include secondary suites
- City facilitate private lending institutions to make it easier to obtain financing
- Facilitate an education information session with private sector
- Agency head leasing units to divert families from shelter and into temporary or permanent housing
- Emergency fund to assist non-profits with unexpected events
- Establish a housing maintenance standard
- Regulate the private sector – standardization practices (private sector)
- Increase awareness through marketing & communication strategies and encourage partnerships in the community (E.g. St. Clair & University of Windsor)

Theme 2: A Fair System of Housing Assistance

- Flexibility on Rent Geared to Income occupancy standards (flex within ministry standards)
- Creation of a discharge policy and procedure for individuals without an address leaving Hospital
- Increase promotion and awareness of 211
- Examine possibilities to better serve individuals placed on wait lists
- Creation of an education platform to inform the public on available services and supports within Windsor Essex
- Examine housing policies to include and offer flexibility regarding custody issues
- Creation of a minimum set of Building and Property Standards for Landlords
- Legal Assistance of Windsor to assist with the prevention of evictions

Theme 3: Co-ordinated, Accessible Support Services

- Coordinate portable rent supplement with support services
- More flexibility in regards to smoking by-laws in supportive housing
- Assist private families to create affordable housing
- Examine legislation – based on individuals income and family income
- By Laws conflicting /zoning – planning department (log jam)
- Coordination with employment agencies – Social Workers
- Concerns expressed regarding the capping of the number of eligible subsidies for supportive housing which may hinder future growth and expansion of this sector
- Create clear pathways to house individuals and access various supports (from anywhere)
- More by-law and city administration presence within Supportive Housing units and buildings

Theme 4: Evidence and Best Practices

- Increase training on the collection of data

Conclusion

The City of Windsor Housing Services staff would like to thank everyone who participated during the consultation. The submission has been greatly enhanced and would have been impossible without all of your valuable input, dedication and commitment to the quality of life for individuals and families in Windsor Essex.