



**STAFF REPORT
ACTION REQUIRED**

**Housing Opportunities Toronto Update: Setting
Toronto's Affordable Housing Agenda for 2009**

Date:	December 19, 2008
To:	Affordable Housing Committee
From:	Sue Corke, Deputy City Manager
Wards:	All
Reference Number:	P:\2009\Cluster A\AHO\HOT Public Consultation – (AFS-6987)

SUMMARY

In 2008 the City of Toronto took a number of new steps to address the affordable housing needs of the people of Toronto. At the same time, the Affordable Housing Office co-ordinated public consultations on the development of the city's long term affordable housing plan, Housing Opportunities Toronto (HOT).

HOT is based on the principle that affordable housing is a powerful positive contributor to Toronto's economy, to its environmental efforts, to the goal of community. Creating and renewing affordable housing will offer significant job creation possibilities in 2009, which is particularly important in the current economic climate.

This report summarizes 2008 affordable housing developments among the three governments as well as the City's HOT consultations. It also sets out priority actions for 2009.

Financial Impact

There are no financial impacts from this report.

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the affordable housing priorities for 2009 include the finalization of Toronto's ten-year affordable housing action plan, securing the renewal of federal/provincial affordable housing programs, contributing to the development

of Ontario's long-term affordable housing strategy and working with our partners to achieve new federal investments and a national housing strategy.

DECISION HISTORY

At its June 16, 2008 meeting, the Affordable Housing Committee supported the advocacy efforts of FCM and provincial and territorial Housing Ministers in their call for the renewal of key federal affordable housing and homelessness initiatives, including the introduction of a national housing strategy. Council endorsed this action at its meeting of July 2 and 3, 2008.

Also at the June 16, 2008 Committee meeting, some thirty residents and organizations filed submissions and made deputations on the HOT framework as part of the public consultation process. Decision documents and background information on a number of these matters can be found at:

Housing Opportunities Toronto – Affordable Housing Framework 2008 - 2018

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2008/ah/bgrd/backgroundfile-13639.pdf>

June 16, 2008 Affordable Housing Committee Decision Document

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2008/ah/decisions/2008-06-16-ah07-dd.pdf>

April 22, 2008 Affordable Housing Committee Decision Document

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2008/ah/decisions/2008-04-22-ah06-dd.pdf>

ISSUE BACKGROUND

National Advocacy

In January 2008, the Chair of the Affordable Housing Committee participated in the release of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) report “Sustaining the Momentum: Recommendations for a National Action Plan on Housing and Homelessness.” The report called on the federal government to commit to a comprehensive strategy over the next 10 years to preserve and enhance existing housing assets, reduce homelessness and to expand the supply of affordable housing to meet existing and future need.

The City of Toronto continues to be at the forefront of calling for ongoing federal involvement and funding to support a full range of affordable housing investments. In June, 2008, the mayor wrote to the federal minister for human resources and social development advocating for a renewal of federal housing and homelessness programs as well as the creation of a national housing strategy.

Similar efforts have been undertaken by other municipalities, FCM, the provincial/territorial Housing Ministers, and many other organizations and individuals.

HOT Consultations

In 2008, Toronto completed public consultations on the development of HOT and discovered strong support for investment in a full range of housing opportunities for Toronto residents.

During the HOT consultation process the city also took a number of actions and investments consistent with the priorities proposed in the HOT Framework.

COMMENTS

Housing Actions

The following is a summary of developments in the affordable housing field in 2008.

Toronto

- 1) Through inter-governmental funding agreements assisted affordable housing sponsors to complete and open 1,000 new affordable homes;
- 2) Investment of \$75 million from the sale of Toronto Hydro Telecom to repair TCHC housing;
- 3) Launch of the Mayor's Tower Renewal Project to lever new and existing resources, in partnership with the private sector and community stakeholders, to rejuvenate and retro-fit aging high-rise rental buildings;
- 4) Implementation of the Multi-Residential Apartment Building Strategy with target audits of 176 rental apartment buildings to provide tenants with better housing;
- 5) Expansion of the City's Streets to Homes program with approval of \$5 million in new funding;
- 6) Approval of \$17 million in capital funding in 2008 to support the development of more than 400 affordable homes on the Railway Lands;
- 7) Approval of \$9 million in capital funding in 2008 to support the development of 130 affordable homes in the West Don Lands;
- 8) Kick-start Lawrence Heights revitalization with planning and pre-development work;
- 9) Relief for moderate income first time home buyers from Toronto's new Land Transfer Tax and

- 10) Successful delivery of 1,300 housing allowance supports.
- 11) Development of an Aboriginal Homelessness Strategy, in partnership with the community, that sets out investment priorities to address aboriginal homelessness (including the completion of new transitional homes and shelter by March 2009).

Province

- 1) \$500 million expansion of Ontario Strategic Infrastructure Financing Authority (OSIFA) loan eligibility to permit public-sector social housing providers to access up low-cost loans to assist with social housing infrastructure investments;
- 2) 8,000 Toronto tenants assisted with their rents through the Rental Opportunities for Ontario Families (ROOF) program which provides a housing allowance of up to \$100 per month over a 5-year period to eligible low-income families;
- 3) \$20 million in affordable housing funding to Miziwe Biik support initiatives for 320 low income aboriginal households in the Greater Toronto Area.
- 4) “The Provincial-Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review – Facing the Future Together” includes a promise to consolidate existing housing and homelessness programs into a housing service managed at the municipal level.
- 5) Ontario’s newly-released poverty reduction strategy repeats commitment to renew the Provincial Rent Bank Program at \$5 million per year. The report also promises a new 10-year, \$60 billion infrastructure plan in 2009, which is expected to include social housing.” The government also noted that “we will work with our partners to develop a long-term affordable housing strategy.”

Federal

- 1) During the federal election campaign, the government announced more than \$1.9 billion in funding to “ensure that the Affordable Housing Initiative (AHI), the housing renovation programs, including the Residential Assistance Program (RRAP) and the Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) will not expire on March 31, 2009, and that they will be renewed for five years.”
- 2) The follow-up Throne Speech on November 19, 2008 noted “some Canadians face other barriers to participation in the economy and society, whether in the form of homelessness or debilitating illness. Our Government will extend the Homelessness Partnering Strategy and help more Canadians find affordable housing.” As of the writing of this report there are no specific details available on the nature or length of the affordable housing and homelessness program renewals promised by the government.

- 3) Finance Minister Jim Flaherty launches consultations for the 2009 federal budget in December. “Investing in housing” is listed as one idea that has “been proposed” as a way of stimulating the economy.

Housing Opportunities Toronto Consultations

Through public consultations and expert forums held in 2007/2008, more than 400 residents and organizations provided their views on the development of Toronto’s 10-year affordable housing plan.

Overall there is broad public support for the goals and priorities set out in the November 2007 HOT Framework. Specific ideas and comments will be considered during the preparation of the HOT Affordable Housing Action Plan 2010-2020.

HOT Consultations included:

- 1) ‘Tale of Three Cities’ – Experts from Vancouver, Ottawa and Montreal June 28, 2007;
- 2) ‘Affordable Housing: Finding Solutions’ – Public forum, The St. Lawrence Centre, November 28, 2007;
- 3) Stakeholder Meeting –Full-day consultation, Metro Hall, April 26, 2008;
- 4) Public meetings – Public consultations at Scarborough, North York and Etobicoke Civic Centres, May 14, May 28 and June 6;
- 5) Meeting with Provincial Ministries, June 13, 2008;
- 6) Community Outreach reports – 26 organizations supported by the City held consultations with vulnerable and hard-to-reach residents;
- 7) ‘Unleashing the Power of Affordable Housing: An International Forum’ – Experts from Ireland, UK and U.S. at St. Lawrence Hall, Sept. 29, 2008;
- 8) Deputations at the Affordable Housing Committee, June 16, 2008;
- 9) Submissions via a dedicated e-mail address and regular mail.

CONCLUSION

The steps taken by the City of Toronto in 2008 helped to advance the City’s affordable housing agenda. This included supporting advocacy by FCM and the Province of Ontario to secure federal support for affordable housing; the consultations on the development of Toronto’s 10 year plan; and new affordable housing investments made by Toronto.

Looking ahead into 2009 this report recommends that the City's affordable housing agenda include the finalization and approval of Toronto's 10-year plan, securing the renewal of federal/provincial affordable housing programs, contributing to the development of Ontario's long-term affordable housing strategy and working with our partners to achieve new federal investments and a national housing strategy.

Making progress on these priorities in 2009 provide more housing opportunities for Torontonians, while contributing to the city's ongoing prosperity.

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SIGNATURE

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