



# **Policy Statement: Service Manager Housing and Homelessness Plans**

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## Preamble

The Policy Statement provides guidance and direction to Service Managers to support the development of local housing and homelessness plans.

In 2010, the province launched the Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy to make progress towards a housing and homelessness prevention system that better meets the housing needs of Ontarians, in partnership with Service Managers and municipalities. In 2016, the province updated this strategy to continue this transformation with a focus on strengthening people-centred housing programs and improving service coordination.

Service Manager housing and homelessness plans provide a framework for integrated local planning to address housing affordability, coordination of homelessness and related support services and homelessness prevention. The plans can also be an important tool to support local poverty reduction. Strong partnerships and collaboration between the province, Service Managers, municipalities, Indigenous communities and organizations, housing providers and other stakeholders are essential to the successful implementation of local housing and homelessness plans. Leadership and a long-term funding commitment from the federal government is also vital.

## Legislative Authority

The Housing Services Act, 2011 (“the Act”) requires Service Managers to prepare local housing and homelessness plans that address matters of provincial interest and that are consistent with policy statements issued under the Act.

Section 4 of the Act states that “it is a matter of provincial interest that there be a system of housing and homelessness that:

- (a) is focussed on achieving positive outcomes for individuals and families;
- (b) addresses the housing needs of individuals and families in order to help address other challenges they face;
- (c) has a role for non-profit corporations and non-profit housing cooperatives;
- (d) has a role for the private market in meeting housing needs;
- (e) provides for partnerships among governments and others in the community;
- (f) treats individuals and families with respect and dignity;
- (g) is co-ordinated with other community services;
- (h) is relevant to local circumstances;
- (i) allows for a range of housing options to meet a broad range of needs;
- (j) ensures appropriate accountability for public funding;
- (k) supports economic prosperity; and
- (l) is delivered in a manner that promotes environmental sustainability and energy conservation.”

It is also a matter of provincial interest that the Service Manager housing and homelessness plans be consistent with other plans that may be prescribed under the Act.

## **Vision**

The Policy Statement is based on the vision that every person in Ontario has an affordable, suitable and adequate home to provide the foundation to secure employment, raise a family, and build strong communities. Working to achieve this vision will help reduce the number of people experiencing homelessness and increase the number of people experiencing housing stability. When people have access to stable, adequate and affordable housing it enables them to experience other positive outcomes in health, education, and employment.

In support of this vision, Ontario is working towards a long-term goal of ending homelessness, including a specific goal of ending chronic homelessness within ten years (2025-26). Ending homelessness is a key component of poverty reduction. Access to adequate, suitable and affordable housing is an essential part of the foundation to move people out of poverty.

The vision and long-term goal of ending homelessness supports Ontario's broad objective of fostering social inclusion and enabling community and economic participation for all Ontarians.

## **Policy Direction**

### **1. ACCOUNTABILITY AND OUTCOMES**

#### **1.1 Background**

Responsibility for housing and homelessness services is shared among multiple partners including federal, provincial and local governments, as well as not-for-profit housing and service providers, the private sector, sector organizations and community members. Ontario's 47 Service Managers are responsible for delivering and administering social and affordable housing and homelessness prevention services at the local level<sup>1</sup>. Ontario municipalities are the largest contributors of funding for local housing and homelessness services.

The Act sets out certain responsibilities for Service Managers and the province related to local housing and homelessness plans. Service Managers are responsible for developing local housing and homelessness plans that are consistent with the Policy Statement, providing their plan to the Minister, and approving plans at the local level.

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<sup>1</sup> The term Service Manager includes Municipal Service Managers that may be regional governments, counties or separated cities, and District Social Services Administration Boards, which are boards established in each of the 10 districts in Northern Ontario.

The province reviews Service Manager housing and homelessness plans. Both the province and Service Managers will provide reports to the public on the implementation of housing and homelessness plans.

## **1.2 Policy Direction**

Service Manager housing and homelessness plans will:

- a. Demonstrate a system of coordinated housing and homelessness services that assist households to improve their housing stability and prevent homelessness.
- b. Include strategies to promote client-centred, coordinated access to housing and homelessness prevention services.
- c. Be developed with public consultation and engagement with diverse local communities, including those with lived experience of homelessness.
- d. Be coordinated and integrated with all municipalities in the service area.
- e. Include local housing policies and short and long-term housing targets.
- f. Include strategies to measure and report publicly on progress under the plan.

## **1.3 Anticipated Results**

Service Managers undertake strategic planning on housing and homelessness prevention with community partners to reduce homelessness and improve housing outcomes in their community. As a result, people have improved access to locally responsive and coordinated housing and homelessness programs and support services. Over the long-term, in combination with strategies and initiatives implemented by other orders of government and community partners, there is a measurable reduction in the number of households experiencing homelessness and an increase in the number of households achieving housing stability.

## **2. GOAL OF ENDING HOMELESSNESS**

### **2.1 Background**

The province's long-term goal of ending homelessness is focused on assisting people who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness, to quickly access safe, affordable and stable housing and related support services. The province is working with partners to shift the focus of service systems from reactive approaches, such as emergency shelters, towards homelessness prevention and the creation of permanent and stable housing solutions. The province has identified four priority areas to guide provincial action in preventing, reducing and ending homelessness: chronic homelessness, youth homelessness, Indigenous peoples experiencing homelessness, and people transitioning from provincially-funded institutions and service systems, such as correctional facilities, hospitals, child welfare and youth justice systems, and shelters for women who have experienced violence. Service Managers are encouraged to adopt local priorities based on local needs.

## 2.2 Policy Direction

Service Manager housing and homelessness plans will:

- a. Be informed by the results of local homelessness enumeration.
- b. Include a strategy to prevent and reduce homelessness, incorporating innovative approaches and a Housing First philosophy<sup>2</sup>.
- c. Include strategies to reduce and prevent the number of people experiencing chronic homelessness and homelessness among youth and Indigenous peoples, as appropriate to the local context.
- d. Address collaboration with community partners and provincial ministries to reduce and prevent homelessness amongst those transitioning from provincially-funded institutions and service systems, as appropriate to the local context.

## 2.3 Anticipated Results

Service Managers have strategies to prevent and reduce homelessness and assist people who are homeless to access housing and maintain housing stability. Service Managers have measures in place to track progress in reducing and preventing homelessness. Over the long-term, in combination with strategies and initiatives implemented by other orders of government and community partners, this contributes to a measurable reduction in the number of people at risk of and experiencing homelessness.

# 3. COORDINATION WITH OTHER COMMUNITY SERVICES

## 3.1 Background

Housing stability is improved when collaboration and partnerships are built across different human service systems and providers. Increased coordination and integration of human services can enhance administrative efficiencies and help people access all the services they need in a timely manner. This includes access to supportive housing that provides people with housing assistance and support services appropriate to their needs and preferences, helping them achieve housing stability and live as independently as possible in a community setting.

Service Managers occupy a unique position as system managers and service providers in the areas of housing assistance, homelessness prevention and support services, income support programs, early learning and child care services. There are also opportunities for Service Managers to work with other related service systems - such as health, community services, children and youth, child welfare, corrections - to enable people to access the housing and supports that they need. The province is promoting coordination efforts across service systems to help maintain housing stability, prevent homelessness and improve outcomes for people.

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<sup>2</sup> Housing First is a term used to describe approaches that assist people who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness, to obtain and maintain permanent, affordable housing linked to flexible, appropriate support services.

### **3.2 Policy Direction**

Service Manager housing and homelessness plans will:

- a. Demonstrate a commitment to working with partners across service systems to improve coordination and client access to housing, homelessness prevention services and other human services.
- b. Demonstrate progress in moving toward integrated human services planning and delivery.
- c. Address collaboration, where possible, with Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs)<sup>3</sup>, to coordinate Service Manager social and affordable housing and homelessness services with LHIN-funded services.

### **3.3 Anticipated Results**

Service Managers implement strategies to improve co-ordination of housing and homelessness services with other community and human services. In combination with strategies and coordination efforts implemented by other service sectors and community partners, there is improved access to services for households seeking assistance, supporting housing stability.

## **4. INDIGENOUS PEOPLES**

### **4.1 Background**

First Nation, Métis and Inuit peoples are significantly over-represented among people experiencing homelessness in Ontario and have higher rates of core and deep core housing need compared to non-Indigenous Ontarians. In some northern communities, Indigenous peoples are acutely over-represented among the homeless population. Indigenous youth, Indigenous women experiencing violence and Indigenous people transitioning from the child welfare system, hospitals, and the justice system often face unique challenges and are at risk of experiencing homelessness. Indigenous peoples' experiences of homelessness are intricately related to inter-generational trauma and the legacy of the residential school system.

The province is committed to building constructive, cooperative relationships that are based on mutual respect and lead to improved opportunities and outcomes for all Indigenous peoples. This includes a commitment to engage with Indigenous organizations and communities to develop an Indigenous housing strategy. It also includes the implementation of a strategy to end violence against Indigenous women. Engagement with local First Nation, Métis and Inuit organizations and communities is vital to build strong partnerships and to support access to culturally appropriate housing, homelessness prevention programs and support services.

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<sup>3</sup> Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs) are not-for-profit crown agencies funded by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to plan, fund and integrate local health care services delivered by hospitals, long-term care homes, and a variety of other community agencies.

## **4.2 Policy Direction**

Service Manager housing and homelessness plans will:

- a. Include a strategy for engagement with Indigenous organizations and communities – including First Nation, Métis, Inuit organizations and communities, where present in the service area.
- b. Demonstrate a commitment to coordination and collaboration with Indigenous housing providers and service providers to support access to culturally appropriate housing and homelessness services for Indigenous peoples.

## **4.3 Anticipated Results**

Service Manager housing and homelessness plans are informed by engagement with Indigenous organizations and communities. Service Manager housing and homelessness services are coordinated with local Indigenous housing and service providers. This supports improved access to culturally appropriate housing and support services for Indigenous peoples.

# **5. A BROAD RANGE OF COMMUNITY NEEDS**

## **5.1 Background**

All Ontarians, including those experiencing or at risk of homelessness, deserve to be treated with respect and dignity. Homelessness and housing insecurity is experienced differently across the province, varying with a person's experience of trauma, mental health, geographic location, Indigenous identity, age, disability, language, sexual orientation, as well as racial, ethnic and gender identity. A comprehensive plan to address housing and homelessness should recognize the complexity and diversity of the people seeking assistance. Engagement with a broad range of community stakeholders and organizations, including those who have lived experience of homelessness, will help identify the diversity of local needs and how to implement effective housing and homelessness initiatives and solutions.

## **5.2 Policy Direction**

Service Manager housing and homelessness plans will:

- a. Include a strategy to address accessible housing and homelessness services for people with disabilities, as well as those who have mental health needs and/or addictions.
- b. Include a strategy to address the housing needs for survivors of domestic violence, in coordination with other community-based services and supports.
- c. Address the needs of different demographic groups within their community. This could include: seniors, Indigenous peoples, people with developmental disabilities, children and youth, LGBTQ youth, women, immigrants and refugees, persons released from custody or under community supervision, youth transitioning from the child welfare system and Franco-Ontarians.
- d. Demonstrate a commitment to service delivery that is based on inclusive and culturally appropriate responses to the broad range of community needs.



### **5.3 Anticipated Results**

Service Manager housing and homelessness plans are informed by engagement with a wide range of local communities, partners and stakeholders. As a result, the plans address the diversity of local housing and homelessness prevention service needs.

## **6. NON-PROFIT HOUSING CORPORATIONS AND NON-PROFIT HOUSING CO-OPERATIVES**

### **6.1 Background**

Non-profit housing corporations and co-operatives have an important role in providing safe and affordable housing and supporting community development. Non-profit housing is owned by non-profit housing corporations, municipal non-profit corporations and local housing corporations. These organizations are diverse in size, geographic location and the range of client populations they serve. Through active tenant involvement and coordination with other community services, non-profit housing organizations facilitate community-building and provide important opportunities for social and economic inclusion. Non-profit housing corporations and co-operatives play a significant role in providing housing solutions as part of the housing continuum.

### **6.2 Policy Direction**

Service Manager housing and homelessness plans will:

- a. Include strategies to engage non-profit housing corporations and co-operatives in current and future planning.
- b. Include strategies to support non-profit housing corporations and co-operatives in the delivery of affordable housing.
- c. Include strategies to support capacity building and sustainability in the non-profit housing sector.

### **6.3 Anticipated Results**

Service Managers undertake engagement and strategic planning with non-profit housing corporations and co-operatives. In combination with strategies and initiatives implemented by other orders of government and community partners, this supports sustainable and long-term affordable housing options at the local level.

## **7. THE PRIVATE HOUSING MARKET**

### **7.1 Background**

The vast majority of Ontarians live in private market housing. The private sector is therefore critical to the provision of a range and mix of housing, including affordable rental and homeownership opportunities for low- and moderate-income households.

Land use planning plays a fundamental role in the location, mix, and density of housing. Planning for compact and mixed forms of development, including multi-residential buildings, can result in the creation of more affordable housing in proximity to schools,

jobs, services and community resources and supports, while supporting the use of transit. Local authorities have also been provided with a range of enabling land use planning and financial tools under the *Planning Act*, *Municipal Act*, *City of Toronto Act* and *Development Charges Act* that can be used to facilitate or stimulate the development of affordable private market housing. Greater coordination and integration between the housing and homelessness prevention system and municipal land use planning efforts within the service area can enhance local affordable housing opportunities in the private market.

When combined with programs, like housing allowances and rent supplements, private market housing can support greater housing stability for low- and moderate-income households and reduce the risk of homelessness.

## 7.2 Policy Direction

Working with municipalities and planning boards<sup>4</sup> within their service area, Service Managers will develop housing and homelessness plans that:

- a. Identify an active role for the private sector in providing a mix and range of housing, including affordable rental and ownership housing, to meet local needs.
- b. Identify and encourage actions for municipalities and planning boards, where applicable, to support the role of the private sector, including the use of available land use planning and financial tools.
- c. Reflect a coordinated approach with Ontario's land use planning framework, including the Provincial Policy Statement.
- d. Align with housing strategies required by the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, where applicable.

## 7.3 Anticipated Results

Service Managers have integrated strategies that leverage the role of municipal planning and the private sector in meeting current and future housing needs, and have measures to track progress.

# 8. CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

## 8.1 Background

The province is committed to leadership in addressing climate change, supporting renewable energy, encouraging energy and water conservation and supporting initiatives that build a stronger, cleaner and more climate resilient economy.

Energy efficient housing is less expensive to operate, less vulnerable to increased energy costs, and provides for higher quality living environments. Housing located near public and community transit options can facilitate access to education, healthcare services and employment. This supports social and economic inclusion, reduces energy consumption and improves quality of life.

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<sup>4</sup> In some areas land use planning decisions are made by planning boards established under the Planning Act.

## **8.2 Policy Direction**

Service Manager housing and homelessness plans will:

- a. Demonstrate a commitment to improve the energy efficiency of social and affordable housing stock. This can include support for energy conservation and energy efficiency, tenant engagement, and locating affordable housing near transportation. It can also include innovative investment decisions such as the installation of renewable energy and low carbon technologies.
- b. Demonstrate a commitment to improve the climate resilience of social and affordable housing stock. This can include taking steps to limit vulnerability to flooding and extreme weather.

## **8.3 Anticipated Results**

Service Managers develop a social and affordable housing portfolio with greater energy efficiency and climate resilience, which supports the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.