# Introduction

Ottawa Community Housing Corporation (OCHC) is the second-largest social and affordable non-profit housing provider in Ontario and is the fourth largest in Canada. OCHC is unique. This is due to our size, relationship to, and with, the municipal Service Manager, and our level of organizational maturity. Our investment in talent and technology, successful sustainability endeavors, as well as early redevelopment efforts, has led OCHC to be recognized as a leader and an innovator in the housing sector.

We are key players in domestic and international housing associations and networks, including the Canadian Housing Renewal Association (CHRA), Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association (ONPHA), International Housing Partnership (IHP) and Housing Partnership Canada (HPC). OCHC provides housing to nearly 32,000 people in 15,000 homes across the City of Ottawa. We are a local housing corporation, incorporated under the Ontario Business Corporations Act. We were created in 2002 through a merger of two former municipal and provincial housing entities. The City of Ottawa, as Service Manager, is our sole shareholder.

OCHC’s feedback on the amendments proposed for the Provincial Policy Statement has been made in the context of our unique position, our desire for Ontarians to be able to find an affordable place to call home, and our knowledge and experience building new affordable housing.

# Feedback and Recommendations

The Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) is an important document and the foundation of planning policy in Ontario because it guides the development of the City’s Official Plan and all other land use planning. The types of permitted uses and how those are implemented can have a major influence on housing development, and ultimately, on housing affordability.

The need for affordable housing in Ontario is great. Approximately 185,000 people across the province are waiting for subsidized housing, while 12,000 are experiencing homelessness each night. In Ottawa, more than 10,000 people are waiting on the Social Housing Registry. According to the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association, the province needs to build 69,000 affordable rental homes and 30,000 supportive housing units over the next 10 years to meet demand. The review of the PPS is a perfect opportunity to look at ways to encourage affordability through land-use planning policies.

In its request for feedback on the proposed changes, the Government of Ontario requested that submissions respond to a series of questions. We will provide responses to two of those questions.

***Do the proposed policies strike the right balance?***

Certain elements of the reviewed PPS are encouraging, such as the provision in Paragraph 1.4.3 which encourages “transit-supportive development (…) in proximity to transit, including corridors and stations.” However, in the case of transit-oriented development (TOD), the government may not have considered the potential unintended consequences of this proposal. While encouraging density near major transit hubs will yield more efficient movement through cities and relieve congestion, it may also result in mostly high-priced condominium and rental construction, rather than offering a range of affordability, and a mix of ownership and rental properties.

Therefore, we recommend that:

**(1) The Government of Ontario require a defined percentage of affordable housing in TOD zones.**

***Are there any major policy changes that are needed to support key priorities for housing, job creation, and streamlining of development approvals?***

In its proposed changes, the Government has taken the position that increasing supply will resolve housing affordability issues within the market. While a lack of supply in the rental housing market is a huge part of the affordability problem, addressing that supply issue is only one part of the solution. There are also market failures in the housing system, which cause affordability issues.

There is a significant portion of the rental housing market that is not profitable for the private market to build or to operate. This is the portion of the market commonly referred to as the ‘missing middle.’ These are larger units (3+ bedrooms) built for families in a low- to mid-rise context. The needs in the market are continuing to change and this is a reality that we observe on a day-to-day basis.

Furthermore, for the 185,000 Ontarians awaiting a subsidized or a rent-geared-to-income (RGI) home, simply implementing policies to support increasing supply will not be enough to provide the deeper affordability required to meet the needs of these individuals.

Therefore, we recommend that:

**(2) The Government of Ontario offer formal definitions of housing affordability in the PPS; and**

**(3) The Government of Ontario amend the proposed changes to the PPS to ensure that in all areas, the policy is not only aiming to increase housing supply, but also the “range of housing affordability.” This could be accomplished through enshrining the inclusionary zoning principle into the policy.**

# Conclusion

The issues of supply and affordability are two sides of the same coin; the two cannot be separated, nor can they be addressed in silos. That is why we strongly recommend that amendments be made to enshrine the concept of affordability into the PPS and provide a definition for affordability. It is an opportunity to take a more holistic approach to this complex issue.

We thank the Government of Ontario for the opportunity to provide our input through this process, and we look forward to hearing the results of this consultation.

# List of Recommendations

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**(2) The Government of Ontario amend the proposed changes to the PPS to ensure that in all areas, the policy is not only aiming to increase housing supply, but also to “range of housing affordability.” This could be accomplished though enshrining the inclusionary zoning principle into the policy; and**

**(3) The Government of Ontario offer formal definitions of housing affordability in the PPS.**