

SMALL URBAN GTHA MAYOR'S RESPONSE TO THE ONTARIO HOUSING AFFORDABILITY TASK FORCE

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"The Small Urban GTHA Mayor's group would like to state that we support the goals and principles of increased missing middle housing, more rental housing, transit oriented development and intensification, which are outlined in the Ontario Housing Affordability Task Force report. We believe there are more balanced and moderate ways to achieve the outcomes than many of the methods suggested. We urge the Province to consult directly and meaningfully with municipal leaders before implementing any of the recommendations.

In general we believe:

1. The report has some promising policy outcomes for further investigation, in particular, increasing the supply of rental housing, missing middle housing, increasing second suites and garden suites and increasing density particularly in Major Transit Station Areas (MTSAs).
2. The Province should achieve these policy objectives at the macro level by setting intensification targets, unit targets and tenure targets through their approval of municipal official plans and then let municipalities achieve those targets as they see fit based upon their significant understanding of their communities and their own official plans.
3. The OLT should only hear cases that are based upon a claim that the municipality did not adhere to its own official plan in the planning decision it made. The OLT should not entertain De Novo hearings.
4. The Province must take a more comprehensive approach to housing affordability which focuses on issues beyond just housing supply but also explores issues such as: innovative funding options, rental housing incentives and policies, investor speculation, social housing, innovative financial tools, and use of Provincial Land including surplus school sites.

Our concerns with the report in general are:

1. It places an undue focus on Municipal process and politics thereby erroneously suggesting that there is lack of support for housing options and increased housing supply at the municipal level and erroneously suggesting that the housing affordability challenge could be meaningful addressed if municipalities would only 'allow builders to build' or by removing heritage protections or public consultation.
2. It fails to recognize that the majority of municipalities and municipal councils are fully and significantly engaged in supporting more housing options, intensification, transit oriented development and increased the supply of rental housing.



3. The report seems to suggest that local planning is best achieved at the Provincial level and fails to recognize the deep understanding that local elected officials and staff have in relation to their communities, including how best to achieve housing targets and intensification.
4. The report suggests, without evidence, that municipal red tape is responsible for the slow progress of new housing options yet fails to recognize that the greatest element of red tape in the planning process is the OLT.
5. The report fails to examine, in a meaningful way, the role the Province could play in addressing housing affordability through direct funding, financial incentives, or the provision of Provincial land for affordable housing projects.
6. The report suggests without evidence that housing supply is being limited as a result of the abuse of the OLT process by the public. The report calls for an end to the “politicization” of the planning process. This approach could result in the limitation of legitimate public participation and the ability of local elected officials to respond to the concerns of the public. Democracy and public participation cannot be seen as a barrier to development but should be seen as a part of a healthy and respectful dialogue.
7. The report suggests without evidence that Development Charges and Planning Fees are a cause of lack of housing supply and/or affordable housing supply. Artificially limiting or reducing development charges and planning fees will result in towns and cities that do not have the recreational or community infrastructure that is necessary for a healthy and vibrant and livable community and could in the long run undermine the financial stability of municipalities. There is no evidence that reduced fees will be passed onto the homeowner, but the community will be left without the financial resources to provide the required infrastructure and services to their growing community.”

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