

Ottawa housing advocates ready to work

DECLARATION

We believe everyone in Ontario has the right to live poverty-free and with dignity in housing that is stable, adequate, equitably accessible and affordable.

FOUR PRIORITIES

1. **The affordability of housing**, including measures to increase the supply of affordable housing and to make existing housing more affordable.
2. **The availability of affordable housing** that is stable, safe and in a state of good repair, and which effectively addresses the diversity of needs in communities across Ontario.
3. **Supports, programs and protections** that help all Ontarians equitably access and maintain adequate affordable housing and thrive in their communities.
4. **A clear way to measure progress**, with overall and population specific targets and timelines to ensure that housing insecurity and homelessness are being meaningfully reduced.

(Ottawa) **Ottawa housing advocates are welcoming Housing Minister Jim Watson's commitment that the Ontario government is back in the housing business.** It may have been a quiet summer evening but there was a standing-room-only crowd at Ottawa's Affordable Housing Consultation on July 27th. People were encouraged by the Minister's commitment to solve the problem of long affordable housing waiting lists and by Ontario's investment of \$622 million for its housing system. Local members of the Housing Network of Ontario are ready to start work right away with the Minister on solutions to build adequate and more affordable housing.

"We are encouraged to hear Minister Watson say that he wants to develop an immediate and long term affordable housing strategy to help the many thousands of people who have been stuck in Ottawa shelters and the households who are on the affordable housing waiting list," said Perry Rowe, Chair of the Alliance to End Homelessness. "Creating more affordable housing and helping people cope with the high cost of rent was a clear message to Minister Watson and we are ready to work with him to come up with real housing solutions." he added.

"I am sick and tired of living in a slum," said Karen Copeland, a consultation participant. She was not the only one who told Minister Watson about extreme hardship and difficulty coping with high rents and apartments in bad repair while they waited for housing on the Ottawa Social Housing Waiting List.

According to Vicky Smallman, Board Member with Somerset West Community Health Centre, **"Minister Watson heard the message loud and clear:** People in Ottawa expect the province to create and maintain affordable housing and to help tenants cope with high rents so they can afford to live in safe and decent housing."

Ottawa advocates along with partners across Ontario will be advising people they can send their solutions and stories until December 31st to the province's website at www.mah.gov.on.ca/Page6405.aspx to ensure that their concerns are not overlooked. They will also encourage people to ask their local riding Member of Provincial Parliament to host an Affordable Housing Consultation.

Ottawa groups such as *The Alliance to End Homelessness, Somerset West Community Health Centre, Ottawa Child and Youth Housing Advocacy Initiative (OCHAI), Seniors Network of the Centretown Citizens Community Association, Barrhaven Non-Profit Housing, Centretown Community Health Centre, Centretown Citizens Ottawa Corporation and People For A Better Ottawa* have formed a local branch of *The Housing Network of Ontario* and have endorsed its housing Declaration.

Community consultations continue in September in London, Hamilton, Lindsay, Sudbury and Thunder Bay. The Ottawa branch along with others in the Housing Network of Ontario looks forward to a speedy realization of the Ontario provincial commitment to safe, decent and affordable housing for all who need it.

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