

ROUND TABLE FINDINGS

National Housing Strategy Round Table

Burlington, Ontario

October 12, 2016

1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Members of Parliament

Karina Gould, Burlington

John Oliver, Oakville

Pam Damoff, Oakville North-Burlington

Key Themes

The main themes that were discussed during this round table discussion included:

- **Flexibility**
 - Regions and municipalities need flexible funding (i.e. not tied to specific criteria or groups) to develop customizable and innovative solutions that are tailored to local needs/demands
 - With flexible funding, innovative projects that demonstrate success could be scaled up or shared nationally as a template for other communities with similar demographics/challenges
 - Allow housing subsidies to travel with an individual; do not require them to be tied to a specific address/municipality/region
 - Make the Affordable Rental Innovation Fund less restrictive so great ideas do not get wedged into existing programs
- **Affordability**
 - Permanent, ongoing, sustainable funding is required so housing providers can plan and implement strategies that can help address the demands their communities are facing due to high house/rental prices with low supply and increasing demand
 - Transitional housing should be considered as a stop-gap measure and not a long-term solution; it is currently not as successful as it should be; transitional housing is being used long-term
 - Review land banked as part of surplus/crown lands to incentivize development to increase housing/rental supply
- **Inclusivity**
 - Promote inclusivity towards affordable housing. Potential projects often fall victim to NIMBYism (i.e. ex-National Defence lands project in Oakville, 2007); refrain from segregating subsidized housing so it is incorporated amongst the community which would help to avoid stereotyping



- Build spaces for disabled living and encourage being inclusive of all types of people – multigenerational units
 - Expand mixed use housing, i.e. supported living for seniors and people with disabilities. Look to existing models, ex: [Wellington Terrace](#), managed by the Halton Community Housing Corporation
 - Consider housing and mental health as interconnected issues – include access to mental health support in social housing
 - Develop supportive units – encourage non-profits working together so they can be more effective
 - Incorporate social and economic integration into the National Housing Strategy
 - Mandate developers to engage vulnerable people to help build units that they can later reside in as a form of social procurement
- **Investment & Policy**
 - Government needs to get more involved in the housing market. Market forces will not be enough for the affordable housing community to rely on
 - Increase funding to the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation
 - Streamline funding programs for regional/municipal governments/non-profit organizations
 - Focus on policy implementation and ensure that the policies designed by the federal government do not get diluted or changed altogether at the provincial level
 - Educate Canadians on financial management to understand the differences between 'good' and 'bad' debt
 - **Non-profit and For-profit builders**
 - When it comes to affordable housing, there is a financial disconnect between not-for-profit builders and those in the for-profit sector
 - There is not enough profit or incentives for corporations to build rental housing as opposed to building condos
 - Non-profit business models are not understood by Government; they want to do more but struggle to do so within the existing guidelines/framework
 - The Investment in Affordable Housing (IAH) funding requirements and rules (i.e. 120 days to build) present a significant challenge for non-profit builders to increase their housing developments
 - Not for profits need stable and continuous funding. Funding should focus on-marrying capital and operating funds
 - Think about those who are passionate about housing vs. those who are incentive-driven

Does this vision of housing in Canada (see below) resonate with you or not and why?

“All Canadians have access to housing that meets their needs and that they can afford. Housing is the cornerstone of building healthy communities and a strong Canadian economy where we can prosper and thrive.”

The vision resonated with the round table participants; however two key points were raised on this question:



- What is going to be defined by 'healthy communities'? Does this include support for healthcare, mental health, transit, etc.?
- Reframe the discussion on housing to be cognizant of 'house vs. home' terminology. A house is bricks and mortar; a home is a place where someone is safe and secure. The National Housing Strategy should focus on homes for people (i.e. including affordable rental units) and not necessarily houses.

Do you agree that these themes are important to housing in Canada?

The round table participants agreed that these themes are important to housing in Canada and the Region of Halton. However, it was suggested two themes were missing from this list: support and stability.

It is vital that the National Housing Strategy address housing first – by mitigating homelessness, many other social indicators (health, employment, etc.) are improved and associated costs are reduced.

Addressing mental health and addiction issues is one of the biggest challenges for rental housing support.

Key issues include:

- Financing costs and affordable lands for rental housing
- Low income and groups with distinct housing needs (e.g., homeless, seniors, persons with disabilities, newcomers)
- Affordable rental supply, including through increased private sector involvement
- Cost of housing in Canada's largest cities
- Social housing renewal and subsidized housing
- Laws and regulations
- Building a stronger affordable housing sector
- Housing that contributes to Canada's climate change goals

Key outcomes to measure the success of a National Housing Strategy include:

- Affordability (Canadians have housing that they can afford and that meets their needs)
- Sustainability (Housing is environmentally, socially and financially sustainable; Healthy housing; "Green" housing; Housing supports a better quality of life; Housing system that supports economic stability and growth)
- Flexibility (Communities have housing options that meet the diverse and changing needs of Canadians)
- Inclusivity (Housing helps distinct groups; e.g., homeless, seniors, persons with disabilities, newcomers)

