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13. Affordable and social housing

Municipalities, through [service managers \(https://www.ontario.ca/page/find-your-local-service-manager\)](https://www.ontario.ca/page/find-your-local-service-manager), play an important role in the delivery of housing and homelessness programs and services in Ontario. For example, service managers are the primary funders of social housing for low-to-moderate income households. In addition, service managers oversee numerous affordable housing initiatives that provide housing assistance for people at a range of incomes who cannot afford local market rents.

Service managers also play an important role in addressing homelessness. The Province provides annual funding to service managers who are given flexibility to design and deliver a wide range of programs and services for people experiencing – or at risk of – homelessness.

Additional information on Ontario's housing and homelessness programs can be found at the [Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing website \(https://www.ontario.ca/page/ministry-municipal-affairs-housing\)](https://www.ontario.ca/page/ministry-municipal-affairs-housing).

National Housing Strategy

On November 22, 2017, the federal government announced Canada's 10 year [National Housing Strategy \(https://www.placetocallhome.ca/\)](https://www.placetocallhome.ca/). The goal of this strategy is to make sure Canadians across the country can access housing that meets their needs and that they can afford.

On April 30, 2018, the federal and Ontario government signed a bilateral agreement under the National Housing Strategy.

Ontario and the federal government will continue to work together on implementation details related to the National Housing Strategy.

Housing and homelessness plans

Service managers play an important role in coordinating a wide range of housing and homelessness programs and services in their communities.

To support this, the [Housing Services Act, 2011 \(https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/11h06\)](https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/11h06) requires service managers to develop comprehensive, multi-year plans (10 years or more) to:

- assess current and future local housing needs
- plan for local housing and homelessness services to address needs
- measure and report on progress achieved towards meeting the objectives and targets set out in their plans

The Ministry encourages councillors to become familiar with the housing and homelessness plan for their service manager area.

At least once every five years, service managers must review their plans and make amendments, as necessary, to ensure alignment with provincial priorities and consistency with any policy statements issued by the Province. As initial plans were required to be in place by January 1, 2014, service managers were required to initiate a five-year review of their plan by January 1, 2019 and finalized their updated plan by December 31, 2019.

Affordable housing

Affordable housing generally refers to housing for low-to-moderate-income households priced at or below the average market rent or selling price for comparable housing in a specific geographic area.

A range of planning and financial tools are available to service managers to encourage the creation of affordable housing, including:

- property tax exemptions for municipal housing project capital facilities
- establishing inclusionary zoning policies
- loans and grants for municipal services corporations for affordable housing purposes
- establishing targets through official plans

For more details on municipal tools for affordable housing, please visit the [Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing website \(https://www.ontario.ca/page/ministry-municipal-affairs-housing\)](https://www.ontario.ca/page/ministry-municipal-affairs-housing).

Social housing

Social housing is government-assisted housing that provides lower cost rental units to households with low-to-moderate incomes and can include:

- public housing (owned directly or indirectly by service managers)
- not-for-profit and co-operative housing
- rent supplement programs (often in the private market)
- rural and native housing (owned by Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services)

The Social Housing Agreement (SHA) signed by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and Ontario in 1999, transferred responsibility for social housing from the federal government to the Province, with the exception of federal housing co-operatives.

Subsequently, the Ontario government transferred responsibility for administering and funding most social housing projects to service managers, including District Social Services Administration Boards (DSSABs) in 2000.

Under the [Housing Services Act, 2011 \(https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/11h06\)](https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/11h06), service managers are responsible for administering and funding social housing and maintaining service level standards.

In spring 2019, the ministry announced [Ontario's Community Housing Renewal Strategy \(https://www.ontario.ca/page/community-housing-renewal-strategy\)](https://www.ontario.ca/page/community-housing-renewal-strategy) which is focused on affordable housing for low-income households and the non-profit, co-operative and municipal housing sector. The strategy will help sustain, repair and grow our community housing system, making it work better for the people it serves.

For more details on social housing, please see the [Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing website \(https://www.ontario.ca/page/municipal-guides-and-programs\)](https://www.ontario.ca/page/municipal-guides-and-programs).

Supportive housing

Supportive housing refers to a combination of housing assistance (for example, rent-geared-to-income, rent supplements, group living) and support services (for example, counselling, life skills training, activities of daily living such as bathing or dressing, behaviour supports) to enable people to live as independently as possible in the community.

Supportive housing is funded by the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Children, Community, and Social Services, and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing provides funding to 47 local service managers across the province to deliver housing and homelessness services. Some service managers use this funding to assist clients experiencing or at-risk of homelessness with obtaining supportive housing.

Service manager homeless enumeration

The *Housing Services Act, 2011* (<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/11h06#BK25>) requires service managers to conduct regular homeless enumeration.

Homeless enumeration is the measurement of the number of people experiencing homelessness over a specific period of time. Enumeration will help communities to better understand the scale and nature of homelessness, which can be used to inform local service planning.

Service managers were required to conduct their first local homelessness enumeration in 2018 and are required to enumerate again in 2021.

Review the [minister's directive on enumeration](https://www.ontario.ca/page/ministers-directive-enumeration-homelessness) (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/ministers-directive-enumeration-homelessness>) requirements for service managers.

Helpful considerations: section 13

- Become informed on the full range of housing and homelessness needs and issues in your community and service manager area
- Understand the various municipal, provincial and federal housing and homelessness policies and programs
- Understand and promote municipal planning and financial tools for the creation of new affordable housing
- Promote and understand the benefits of delivering social services in an integrated fashion
- Participate on local housing and homelessness committees

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