



# Attainable Housing Task Force

Helping rural Ontarians get a foot in the door.

August 2022

## BACKGROUND

The Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA) formed the Attainable Housing Task Force in April 2022 as the first step of its action plan, *Opportunities For Rural Ontario in a Post-COVID World*, released earlier in 2022.

The Task Force is comprised of housing industry experts, municipal staff and ROMA Board members. Informed by survey feedback from ROMA members, the Task Force looked for practical steps to address the rural housing crisis, with three main priorities:

- **Prioritize attainable housing and purpose-built rentals:** To thrive and grow, rural Ontario communities need to offer a range of housing options to meet the needs of people of all ages, income levels and stages of life.
- **Address barriers to development in rural community:** Some provincial policies and regulations like settlement areas, the Provincial Policy Statement and intensification targets can undermine housing development in rural areas.
- **Consider incentives to spur housing development in rural Ontario:** Those proposing rural housing projects need to manage costs, risks and ensure a competitive return on investment on rural housing projects.

Housing is complex and requires a multi-pronged approach. The Task Force Report offers practical solutions to more than a dozen planning and financial challenges faced by rural Ontario's municipalities and communities. These solutions tend to fall into one or more of five themes:

1. Clarify provincial planning legislation and regulations to streamline the process for governments, those proposing housing projects, and citizens.
2. Give municipal governments authority and flexibility to encourage, review and approve housing solutions that fit their communities and are consistent with good planning principles and key planning documents like their Official Plans.
3. Accelerate planning processes for specific types of municipally-approved housing projects.
4. Provide incentives to reduce long-term risks for those proposing housing projects, and to support financially viable projects at scales that work in rural Ontario.
5. Undertake tasks that can get municipally-approved housing projects out of the gate faster to reduce costly delays.

The report identifies key challenges and detailed technical recommendations to improve rural housing opportunities. Key recommendations include:

- The province should update water and wastewater servicing guidelines to reflect the efficiency of modern fixtures and appliances and give local municipalities authority to develop the best solutions for their needs. Water and sewer capacity formulas also need to be updated.
- Regulations should be amended to support tiny homes, which could provide another source of attainable housing.
- The province, municipalities and Indigenous communities need to work together to address the challenges of archaeological studies to ensure significant findings are protected, while managing costs and the limited capacity of the archaeological sector.
- Minimum distance separation guidelines for agricultural land use need to be consistent. Currently there are different policies from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs and the Provincial Policy Statement.
- All authorities must understand the need for timely comment on development proposals. Provincial ministries, federal departments, conservation authorities and others may not recognize the impact of their reviews on the supply of housing.
- New limits are needed on the types of Land Tribunal appeals that can be filed to help prioritize attainable housing or purpose-built rental housing by disallowing appeals for these projects.
- A database of rural Ontario's housing supply/availability and demand should be established to help the housing sector identify short-term opportunities and provide a foundation for longer term analysis.
- Housing projects in rural Ontario come with lower volumes and as a result greater risk. Different approaches and tools are needed to reduce uncertainty, keep capital costs down, share or reduce risk to all parties, and ensure a sustainable operating model for the long term.
- Existing building stock should be leveraged to create new housing. This includes promoting secondary suites on existing residential lots, renovating vacant buildings or converting non-residential buildings into apartments.
- There should be an expedited path to approval for some types of residential development, including affordable housing and rental units. As these projects must already manage costs, simplifying approvals will save money and better support creative approaches.
- Review incentive programs, create new funding models and provide resources to support proposed housing projects and help municipalities foster attainable housing development.

Read the full report at [www.roma.on.ca/housing](http://www.roma.on.ca/housing) for the detailed recommendations.