



To: Mayor and Council
From: Karl Grenke, Manager of Development Services
Date: September 28, 2023
Committee of the Whole Date: October 2, 2023
Title: Ontario Housing Affordability Task Force – Priorities for Implementation

For Direction
 For Information
 For Adoption
 Attachments: 36 Pages

Recommendation:

THAT Council receives Report #2023-118, titled “Ontario Housing Affordability Task Force – Priorities for Implementation” for information; and

THAT staff be directed to advise the Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs of the Town’s recommended priorities for implementing the recommendations contained in the Task Force Report as per the Minister’s letter dated September 15, 2023.

Purpose: To respond to the letter sent by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to each head of council requesting that the top five recommendations contained in the Ontario Housing Affordability Task Force be prioritized for future implementation.

Background: On February 8, 2022, the Ontario Housing Affordability Task Force released a report that provided 74 unique recommendations that are intended to unlock housing supply in the province. The recommendations included 55 numbered recommendations within the report itself, plus additional recommendations in three appendices. The membership of the task force included developers, planners and housing providers. The Task Force’s report led to the establishment of the Province’s target of seeing the construction of 1.5 million new homes over the following ten years and a roadmap to achieve that.

Since that time, Planning staff have brought forward reports to Council reviewing a number of proposed legislative changes to the planning process as well as other legislation that impacts development more broadly:

- Bill 109 – *More Homes For Everyone Act* which delegated site plan approval authority to staff, established a fee refund schedule for certain planning applications and tweaked some subdivision processes, among other things.
- Bill 23 – *More Homes Built Faster Act* reduced the scope of site plan approvals, mandated additional density on residential lots (two additional residential units), established discounts on development charges and reduces the review scope for conservation authorities, among other things.

- Provincial Policy Statement Update – Draft released that, among many other things, adjusted the scope of official plan reviews and proposed policies that further prioritize residential redevelopment and intensification.

On September 15, 2023, the newly appointed Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing sent heads of council a letter requesting that each municipality provide a ranked list of the top five priority recommendations that should be implemented by the province, or implemented differently than they may have been. The Minister's letter noted that 23 of the recommendations have been implemented fully or partially.

*Minister Calandra's letter is appended to this report as **Appendix "A"***

*The Report of the Ontario Housing Affordability Task Force is appended to this Report as **Appendix "B"***

The Province's summary of the status of the implementation of the Task Force's recommendations as of the date of the preparation of this Report is located at the following link: [Housing Affordability Task Force report | ontario.ca](https://www.ontario.ca/housing-affordability-task-force-report)

Analysis and Options: Council is invited to recommend and rank five priorities for the province to focus on in continuing to implement the recommendations of the Task Force. In review of the Task Force report, staff have identified seven recommendations that are either not implemented or partially implemented and which could meaningfully contribute to facilitate housing development within the Town of Smiths Falls. These recommendations are presented in the order in which they appear in the report and are not ranked. Recommendations that are more specifically applicable to larger communities and would have no impact on our community were not considered in this Report. As the Minister's letter references the 74 recommendations, this Report also assesses the recommendations contained in the appendices in addition to the 55 numbered recommendations in the body of the Task Force report.

Recommendation #7 – Encourage and incentivize municipalities to increase density in areas with excess school capacity.

This recommendation is philosophically aligned with current provincial policies that direct intensification to areas where existing and planned services can absorb the population, such as major transit stations. This recommendation would serve to help ensure that existing schools remain viable within neighbourhoods and also potentially reduce demand for new infrastructure elsewhere. Any incentive program needs to be mindful that demographics of a neighbourhood evolve naturally as the neighbourhood ages, even without development, which impacts enrollment.

Recommendation # 15 – Require mandatory delegation of site plan approvals and minor variances.

This recommendation was partially implemented through Bill 109 that delegates approval of site plan applications. Delegating approval of some or all minor variances would be consistent with this approach and can facilitate the processing of residential development proposals, particularly small infill developments. Applications would continue to need to meet the "four tests" set out in the Planning Act for minor variance approvals.

Recommendation #22 – Simplify planning legislation and policy documents.

While the Task Force report does not identify specific areas in which this can be accomplished, beyond noting the compounding increase in scope and number of words in

the PPS and Planning Act, staff have included this recommendation in this report as it is an ongoing objective that we support as a matter of principle. Simplified legislation and policy that remains intact for a long period of time increases certainty and predictability in terms of interaction between developers, stakeholders and government, and should increase the efficiency of projects.

Recommendation #26 – Require appellants to promptly seek “leave to appeal” to Local Planning Appeals Tribunal and demonstrate that an appeal has merit.

While an accessible and functional appeals process is an integral part of the planning system that should build confidence in the system, the Province should be encouraged to screen meritless or frivolous appeals early in the process in order to conserve resources for appeals that raise genuine planning concerns.

Recommendation #30 – Provide additional resources to LPAT as well as mediators in conjunction with faster targets to achieve resolutions.

While this recommendation is not accompanied by a specific dollar value or procedural recommendation, it highlights the role the Province, through managing the appeals process, has in shortening timelines for development approvals. Increased opportunities for mediation may also result in faster settlements and less resources invested in costly adjudication.

Appendix B – 2nd Recommendation – Legislate clear, province-wide definition of “affordable housing” to create certainty and predictability.

As noted in the Town’s feedback to the province on the proposed Provincial Policy Statement (see Report #2023-071), the proposed removal of the “affordable” definition as well as its exclusion from the “housing options” definition de-emphasizes this critical element of developing housing policy. A clear, province-wide definition of “affordable housing” to be used in planning policy and any other applicable legislation, and which is based on consistent local data, would assist in developing incentive programs and support a coordinated approach.

Appendix B – 4th Recommendation – Amend legislation to enable municipalities to include cash-in-lieu, or incentive programs to provide additional flexibility on how inclusionary zoning¹ policies are implemented. For municipalities that do not have inclusionary zoning policies, incentive or bonus programs should be offered for affordable units.

Staff recommend that the province consider expanding the scope of the inclusionary zoning tool to give more municipalities the ability to consider implementation. A broader framework of accompanying incentives or operational flexibility, if done right, can allow communities to customize the planning tool to work for the specifics of each community so that it can be meaningfully used and not deter development.

The above seven recommendations are highlighted in this report as they represent good practices which have the potential to enable and expedite housing development in the Town of Smiths Falls. The Task Force report and this Report do not focus on specific implementation details associated with each recommendation, rather present these as approaches that should be prioritized for investigation.

¹ Inclusionary Zoning is a planning tool that municipalities can use to mandate the inclusion of affordable units within development projects, typically as a percentage, and within large developments. Unless otherwise prescribed or ordered by the Province, inclusionary zoning policies are only available around a “protected major transit station.”

Council is requested to select and rank the five of the above recommendations, or others contained in the Task Force report, and direct staff to convey Council's recommendations to the Ministry in response to Minister Calandra's request.

Budget/Financial Implications: None arising directly from this report. The implementation of these (or other) recommendations may have financial implications on the Town.

Link to Strategic Plan: Strategic Priority: Housing

Existing Policy: *Ontario Planning Act, other related legislation*

Consultations: Department of Public Works and Utilities; Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Attachments:

Appendix 1: Letter from Minister Calandra to Heads of Council (September 15, 2023)

Appendix 2: Report of the Ontario Housing Affordability Task Force (February 8, 2022)

Notes/Action (space for Council Member's notes):

Respectfully Submitted:

Original signed by

Karl Grenke RPP, MCIP
Manager of Development Services

Approved for agenda by CAO:

Original signed by

Malcolm Morris, CMO
Chief Administrative Officer

Appendix 1

**Ministry of
Municipal Affairs
and Housing**

Office of the Minister

777 Bay Street, 17th Floor
Toronto ON M7A 2J3
Tel.: 416 585-7000

**Ministère des
Affaires municipales
et du Logement**

Bureau du ministre

777, rue Bay, 17e étage
Toronto (Ontario) M7A 2J3
Tél. : 416 585-7000



234-2023-4597

September 15, 2023

Dear Head of Council,

**Subject: Responding to the Housing Affordability Task Force's
Recommendations**

As you know, in February 2022, the Housing Affordability Task Force delivered [its final report](#) with recommendations to help Ontario tackle the housing supply crisis and build at least 1.5 million homes by 2031. Including sub-items and appendices, the Task Force made 74 unique recommendations, some of which apply to all communities in Ontario, with others more specific to large and urban municipalities. While Ontario has made progress in acting on these recommendations — with 23 implemented to date helping to achieve the highest level of housing starts in over three decades — as the province grows at incredible speed, all levels of government need to do more.

To bring the dream of home ownership into reach for more people, I have asked my ministry to renew its efforts to review and, where possible, implement the Task Force's remaining recommendations with minimal delay. As part of that review, I am asking for you, as head of council, to prioritize your top five recommendations for future consideration. For these top five priorities, this could include your advice to revisit the way a recommendation has been implemented up to this point, as well as how some of the recommendations could or should be implemented with amendments.

Accompanying this letter, you will find a chart with space to rank the top five Task Force recommendations. While I know that some of the recommendations may not be applicable to all small, rural, and Northern communities, I ask that you rank those recommendations that you feel would be, or have been, the most useful in increasing housing supply in your community.

As we look to do more to solve the housing supply and affordability crisis together, it's important for the province to have a full understanding of our municipal partners' positions on these recommendations as quickly as possible. I ask that you **please return the completed chart to housingsupply@ontario.ca no later than October 16, 2023.**

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I look forward to continuing our work together to ensure that more people can afford a place to call home.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Paul Calandra', with a large, stylized initial 'P'.

The Hon. Paul Calandra
Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing

c: Hon. Rob Flack, Associate Minister of Housing
Kirstin Jensen, Interim Chief of Staff, Minister's Office
Martha Greenberg, Deputy Minister
Joshua Paul, Assistant Deputy Minister, Market Housing Division
Sean Fraser, Assistant Deputy Minister, Planning and Growth Division
Caspar Hall, Assistant Deputy Minister, Local Government Division

Attachment:

Top Five Housing Affordability Task Force (HATF) Recommendations for Response

Attachment: Top Five Housing Affordability Task Force (HA TF) Recommendations for Response

| Please identify the top 5 HA TF recommendations that you support, and rationale / comments | |
|---|--|
| 1. | |
| 2. | |
| 3. | |
| 4. | |
| 5. | |