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MEDIA RELEASE



Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada
Ontario Region

For Immediate Release

Wanted: Affordable Homes in Eastern Ontario

Tight markets, high energy costs mean housing hardship in Ottawa and Kingston

(Toronto, September 15, 2011) - Authors of a newly released report on housing issues are calling on provincial candidates to focus on creating affordable homes for more than 152,000 households on housing wait lists across Ontario.

The 2011 edition of *Where's Home?*, authored by the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association (ONPHA) and the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada Ontario Region (CHF Canada Ontario Region), analyzes 22 separate housing markets and highlights the need for more affordable rental housing across the Province.

This year's report shows that it is especially difficult for low and modest income people in Kingston and Ottawa to find affordable rental housing that is appropriate for their families. Vacancy rates in Kingston (1.0%) and Ottawa (1.6%) are the lowest in Ontario and well below the 3% vacancy rate threshold for a healthy rental housing market.

"Strong immigration rates, less than stable economic conditions and fewer tenants moving into homeownership are all placing stress on the rental housing system," says Sharad Kerur, ONPHA's Executive Director. "While both of these areas have seen increases in rental housing development over the past few years, it is still nowhere near enough to meet the growing demand for affordable housing options. When you combine high demand with inadequate supply you will inevitably see rent increases, and that is certainly the case in Ottawa and Kingston."

"This year's findings clearly demonstrate that the gap between homeowners and tenants' incomes is growing ever wider and many Ontarians of low and modest means are struggling to find a home that they can afford" said Harvey Cooper, Manager of Government Relations at CHF Canada Ontario Region. "I worry about families being forced to choose between paying for the necessities of life, putting food on the table and paying the rent."

In addition to inadequate supply, high energy costs are compounding affordability problems for low and moderate income renters across the province - making it even harder for them to make ends meet.

While this year's report brings attention to a number of troubling trends, there are bright spots that show progress can be made if communities have access to innovative ideas, government support, and sufficient levels of funding.

"While the number of new rental units being produced is not nearly enough to meet the growing demand, recent initiatives – particularly the Canada-Ontario Affordable Housing Program (AHP) - have helped create more affordable and supportive housing for those in need," said Kerur. "Since 2005, over 8,500 of these units were created by non-profit and, to a lesser extent, co-operative housing organizations – showing that with government funding and support, communities can create more affordable homes."

In order to meet increasing rental housing demand, over 10,000 new rental units would need to be built each and every year for the next ten years in Ontario. While the need is big, so is the commitment of the organizations that make up the membership of ONPHA and CHF Canada Ontario Region.

"We know that housing is a fundamental building block of people's lives," says Cooper. "Our members want to see senior governments take a balanced approach to the creation of more affordable housing for people across the income spectrum. By combining permanently affordable co-op and non-profit housing, private sector rental, renovation programs for existing housing stock and financial tools like rent supplements to fill vacant units, we can move people off housing waiting lists and into affordable homes."

"Where's Home?" can be found on www.onpha.on.ca or www.chfcanada.coop.

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