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Need for Affordable Housing Continues To Grow in Peel *New Province-Wide Report Highlights Housing Needs*

(Toronto) As Ontario continues slide into one of the deepest recessions in 50 years, access to affordable and safe housing continues to be a problem for many households in the Region of **Peel**. Much of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) is experiencing tightening housing markets. This is a particular problem in Peel, where there has been a net *loss* of 2100 rental units between 1997 and 2007.

The eighth annual edition of *Where's Home? A Picture of Housing Needs in Ontario (2008)* authored by the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association (ONPHA) and the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada (CHF Canada) Ontario Region, analyzes 22 separate housing markets across Ontario.

"One –in –five Ontario tenant households are still spending more than half of their income on housing," said ONPHA Executive Director, Sharad Kerur. "Many of these households are one paycheque away from losing their homes. I am really worried that as the economy moves deeper into recession, more and more households will be forced to choose between paying the rent and other necessities."

"Even during good economic times, the construction of new rental housing failed to keep up with demand. In Peel, families and singles can wait up to 21 years for subsidized housing," commented Harvey Cooper, Manager of Government Relations at CHF Canada Ontario Region. "We need to fix the housing we have and build more co-operative and non-profit housing. Affordable housing is a natural firewall against poverty – we need more of it."

Where's Home? 2008 shows that vacancy rates in major urban areas, such as **Toronto** and **Peel**, remained tight in 2008. In **Peel**, the vacancy rate has declined from 2.8% in 2006 to 2.4% in 2008, which reflects both insufficient production of rental housing and increasing demand from a growing immigrant population.

While rental housing completions have increased modestly in the region since 2002, the availability of affordable rental housing in Peel continues to be an issue of concern. 19% of tenants in Peel spend more than half of their income on rent, forcing them to make daily choices between necessities, and putting them at considerable risk of losing their homes. As

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the economic condition across the province deteriorates, such households may be at increased risk.

The production of rental housing in Peel continues to lag behind demand, which is reflected in the regions social housing waiting lists. The waiting list for social housing in Peel experienced a 10% increase, with wait times that can range up to 21 years.

The report argues that a larger inventory of permanently affordable non-profit and co-operative housing would offer low-income households a measure of stability as the economy worsens. Furthermore, the report argues that building new affordable housing can act as an effective stimulus strategy, benefiting Ontario's low-income households and creating jobs in sectors like construction.

"Housing affordability problems are getting worse and Ontario's low and moderate-income households are losing ground," said Harvey Cooper. "The situation could have been much worse in Peel if it wasn't for the Region's aggressive affordable housing policies. More work remains, and senior levels of government need to do their share."

"The time is now. The public wants economic stimulus, energy conservation and poverty reduction. Good housing policies can achieve all three." said Sharad Kerur.

ONPHA and CHF Canada Ontario Region want to see senior governments take a balanced approach to the creation of more affordable housing, combining permanently affordable non-profit and co-op housing, private sector rental, renovation of existing social housing, as well as rent supplements to fill vacant units.

"Where's Home?" can be found on www.onpha.on.ca or www.chfc.ca. For more information, contact:

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