

UPDATE

from the Ministry of Municipal
Affairs and Housing



May 2007

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MESSAGE FROM MINISTER JOHN GERRETSEN

Emergencies happen.....we all have a responsibility was the theme of this year's Emergency Preparedness Week, held during the week of May 6-12. [Read more.](#)



HELPING MUNICIPALITIES IN AN EMERGENCY

Natural disasters and other emergencies can happen anywhere, at any time. The Ontario government has a program in place to help communities when a natural disaster strikes. [Read more.](#)



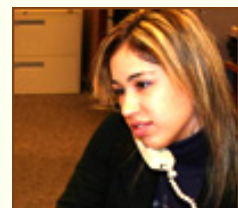
AFFORDABLE HOUSING AT HISTORIC PETERBOROUGH LANDMARK

It was the perfect gift. Just a few weeks before the end of 2006, the Woollen Mill affordable housing project officially opened. [Read more.](#)



RESOLVING LANDLORD AND TENANT DISPUTES

The Investigation and Enforcement Unit (IEU) responds to complaints from landlords or tenants about alleged offences under the new Residential Tenancies Act which took effect January 31, 2007. [Read more.](#)



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Message from Minister John Gerretsen



Emergencies happen.....we all have a responsibility was the theme of this year's Emergency Preparedness Week, held during the week of May 6-12.

As individuals, we have a responsibility to be prepared and to protect ourselves and our families. All three levels of government — federal, provincial and municipal — have a responsibility to protect our citizens, mitigate the damage caused by disasters, and help communities get back on their feet.

Every year, communities in Ontario are hit with natural disasters, such as flooding, tornadoes and severe winter storms. This month's UPDATE features the role of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing in assisting municipalities in meeting the extraordinary costs that arise from such

events.

Elsewhere in this month's issue, you will find a story highlighting an affordable housing project in Peterborough — one of the many successful projects that have come to fruition under the McGuinty government.

The three levels of government — federal, provincial and municipal — have signed the Canada-Ontario Affordable Housing Agreement and are investing almost three-quarters of a billion dollars, with the federal and provincial governments providing \$301 million each. The result will be 15,000 new units of affordable housing and 5,000 housing allowances for lower income families in Ontario.

I hope that you enjoy this issue of UPDATE. As always, we encourage your [feedback](#).

John Gerretsen
Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

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Helping Municipalities in an Emergency



Natural disasters and other emergencies can happen anywhere, at any time. The Ontario government has a program in place to help communities when a natural disaster strikes: the [Ontario Disaster Relief Assistance Program](#).

Through this program, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing co-ordinates provincial financial assistance to:

- Provide funding to municipalities that cannot cover the extraordinary costs of severe natural disasters
- Help individuals, small businesses, farmers and non-profit organizations in financial distress get back to basics because they do not have insurance coverage.

“Disaster management is, first and foremost, a local responsibility,” says Diana Jardine, director of the ministry’s Municipal Programs and Education Branch. “Some situations, however, are so extreme that the municipality asks for provincial assistance. In such cases, the Province looks at the magnitude and impact of the damages compared to the capacity and financial resources of the affected area.”

When a natural disaster strikes . . .

In many cases, emergencies can be handled at the community level.



Here’s how it works:

1. The local head of council activates the municipal emergency response plan.
2. The local police, fire, health services and public works respond first.
3. In cases of a severe natural disaster, the local council may declare a state of emergency and requests provincial assistance. They may also determine that financial assistance is needed from the Province, which requires Council asking the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to designate the impacted area as a disaster area for the purposes of the Ontario Disaster Relief Assistance Program.

To learn more, see the [Ontario Disaster Relief Assistance Program](#).

Are you ready for an emergency?



When an emergency occurs, everyone has a responsibility. We need to ensure our own safety and the well-being of our families. We may also need to make special arrangements for elder care.



For more information about how to be prepared, follow the link to [Emergency Preparedness Week](#). This is an annual national event to increase awareness about individual and community preparedness.

Related Links

- [Emergency Preparedness information for individuals and municipalities](#)
- [Ontario Disaster Relief Assistance Program](#)

Did you know? The [Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act](#) requires all municipalities and provincial ministries to put in place emergency management and response plans. Effective planning can help lessen the impact of a natural disaster or other emergencies.

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Affordable Housing at Historic Peterborough Landmark



It was the perfect gift. Just a few weeks before the end of 2006, the Woollen Mill affordable housing project officially opened, offering many low-income families in Peterborough a place to call home while preserving one of the city's architectural landmarks.

Originally constructed in 1911, the Woollen Mill was a factory that produced knitted goods for Canadian soldiers fighting overseas during World War I. In 1954, it was purchased by Sir Sandford Fleming College. Used for classrooms and offices until 1997, the building sat idle for several years before the college approached the Peterborough Housing Corporation in 2001 to donate the building and land for low-rent apartments.

A mission made possible

Through a partnership with the federal, provincial and municipal governments, Peterborough Housing Corporation gave the Woollen Mill a \$7.7 million makeover, which included \$1.45 million in funding through the Canada-Ontario Affordable Housing Program.

"Our goal was to build apartment units that anyone would want to call home, and thanks to our partners and to the creative genius of our architect, we have achieved that goal," said Peterborough Housing Corporation General Manager and CEO Darlene Cook. "We are very proud of this heritage building and believe that it will inspire others and be purposeful for another hundred years."



Back to the future



Fifty large, bright affordable housing units were created, giving a new life to one of Peterborough's great heritage buildings. A ribbon-cutting ceremony was held on December 8, 2006 to showcase the new and improved Woollen Mill and welcome its first tenants.

As the smell of drying paint hung in the air, more than 100 guests packed the lobby of the former yarn factory to see the building's transformation. Many were impressed with the units' original architecture, including exposed pipes and beams, high ceilings and wide windows.

The three levels of government — federal, provincial and municipal — have signed the Canada-Ontario Affordable Housing Agreement and are investing almost three-quarters of a billion dollars, with the federal and provincial governments providing \$301 million each. The result will be 15,000 new units of affordable housing and 5,000 housing allowances for lower income families in Ontario.

Related Links

- [Canada-Ontario Affordable Housing Program](#)
- [Gallery of announced affordable housing projects](#)
- [Looking for affordable housing in your community](#)

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Resolving Landlord and Tenant Disputes

The Investigation and Enforcement Unit (IEU) responds to complaints from landlords or tenants about alleged offences under the new [Residential Tenancies Act, 2006](#) which took effect January 31, 2007.



Each year, the unit's Call Centre handles around 20,000 calls and the unit ends up intervening in thousands of disputes between tenants and landlords.

"Our Investigation and Enforcement Unit has a significant role in informing tenants and landlords about their rights and responsibilities under the law," says Jim Torretto, manager of the unit. "By focusing on education and early compliance with the law, we're helping tenants and landlords avoid a more costly and time-consuming process through the courts."

Consider the following scenarios, some of the more common disputes between landlords and tenants:

- A tenant fails to pay the rent so the landlord stops paying the utility bills, resulting in the electricity being cut off.
- A tenant refuses to let a landlord enter the unit when the landlord has provided proper notice.
- Prior to moving into a unit, a landlord asks the tenant for a damage deposit in addition to last month's rent deposit.

These situations could all be offences under the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006, the law that establishes tenant and landlord responsibilities for Ontario's residential properties.

Reporting a Possible Offence

If a landlord or tenant believes an [offence](#) has happened, they can contact the Investigation and Enforcement Unit's Call Centre at 416-585-7214 or toll-free at 1-888-772-9277.





The first step is to make sure the matter is within the Investigation and Enforcement Unit's jurisdiction; otherwise, the caller will be referred to an agency that is better suited to handle the situation.

If it is determined that the Investigation and Enforcement Unit should deal with the complaint, the next step generally involves discussing the issue with the parties and encouraging the alleged offender to comply with the law. If a party does not comply with the law, a more formal investigation may take place. Should an investigation reveal that an offence took place, charges may be laid against the alleged offender who will have to appear before the Ontario Court of Justice (Provincial Offences Court). Upon prosecution, maximum fines under the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 are \$25,000 for an individual and \$100,000 for a corporation.

Filing applications with the Landlord and Tenant Board

In order to resolve residential disputes, tenants and landlords also have the option of filing an application with the new [Landlord and Tenant Board](#), an independent agency.

Did you know? Many municipalities have their own by-laws for property and maintenance standards, and have a responsibility to enforce them. In some parts of the province these municipal by-laws do not exist, which is why the Ministry of Municipal Affairs has the [Investigation and Enforcement Unit](#) (IEU) to handle possible infractions in these areas.

Related Links

- [Investigation and Enforcement Unit](#)
- [Offences under the Residential Tenancies Act](#)
- [Landlord and Tenant Board](#)

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