

# UPDATE

from the Ministry of Municipal  
Affairs and Housing



November 2009

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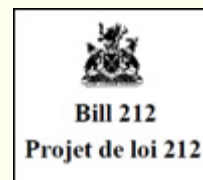
## MESSAGE FROM MINISTER JIM WATSON

In an *Ottawa Sun* article Terri Saunders wrote about an individual who has been helped by our Rent Bank Program. It tells how an individual was able to avoid eviction because the Rent Bank in Ottawa was there to help him out. [Read more](#)



## LEGISLATION PROPOSES MANY CHANGES

The government is proposing legislative changes to the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, the Municipal Act, 2001, the City of Toronto Act, 2006 and the Building Code Act, 1992, among other legislation. [Read more](#)



## GETTING HELP WITH THE RENT

A few months ago, Gary found himself in a situation he never imagined he'd have to face. The 42-year-old professional was out of work and had few prospects. He had fallen behind in his rent and had been served with an eviction notice from his landlord. [Read more](#)



## LOCAL GOVERNMENT WEEK 2009

Local Government Week was celebrated this year across Ontario between October 18 to 24 - engaging students and educators on how municipalities work. During this year's celebration Minister Jim Watson hosted a dozen former ministers of Municipal Affairs and Housing at a reception marking the ministry's 75th anniversary. [Read more](#)



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Minister's Message

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Welcome to UPDATE, keeping you abreast of news and progress in the municipal and housing sectors.

The government is proposing legislative changes to the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, the Municipal Act, 2001, the City of Toronto Act, 2006 and the Building Code Act, 1992. Bill 212, which is currently before the Legislature, would reform the municipal election process steps and strengthen the integrity of local elections. You can learn more about how this legislation would do that and the other proposed reforms in this issue of UPDATE.

This issue of our e-newsletter reprints a newspaper article from my hometown of Ottawa. Terri Saunders of the *Ottawa Sun* wrote about an individual who has been helped by our Rent Bank Program. It tells how an individual was able to avoid eviction because the Rent Bank in Ottawa was there to help him out. I am proud that our government has programs in place like this one, which has rendered assistance to those experiencing short-term rent arrears since 2004. The *Sun* tells us that this individual is back on his feet and we were more than happy our program was there for him when he needed a helping hand.

Another article on this year's Local Government Week outlines how Grades 5 and 10 students are learning more about the important work of municipal governments across Ontario.

We have completed the public consultation sessions on a Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy, which will provide a framework for affordable housing over the next 10 years. We conducted sessions in Sault Ste. Marie, Brampton, Windsor, Kitchener, Toronto, Ottawa, London, Hamilton, Lindsay, Sudbury and Thunder Bay. While the public sessions have ended, our Web consultation will continue until the end of the year.

If you want to contribute to the Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy, I encourage you to visit the ministry's website, read the consultation document, and make a submission.

Please provide us with your feedback. If this issue of UPDATE has been forwarded to you and you would like to continue receiving our e-newsletter, please take the time to subscribe.

Jim Watson  
Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing

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Legislation Proposes Many Changes

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The government is proposing legislative changes to the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, the Municipal Act, 2001, the City of Toronto Act, 2006 and the Building Code Act, 1992, among other legislation.

The proposed Good Government Act (Bill 112) was introduced in the Ontario Legislature the last week of October.

Municipal Elections Process

“Strong municipal governments depend on a fair and efficient municipal elections process,” says Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing Jim Watson. “We are proposing legislative steps that would strengthen the integrity of local elections.”

Bill 112 proposes several changes to the Municipal Elections Act, including:

- Moving the election date forward to the fourth Monday of October, beginning October 25, 2010.
- Promoting greater accessibility to the election process for voters and candidates with disabilities.
- Improving the accuracy of the voters' list.
- Bringing greater transparency to the voting process by requiring voter identification.
- Clarifying campaign finance rules and supporting a more level playing field for candidates.
- Creating a new contribution limit of \$5,000 per contributor in each jurisdiction, in addition to the existing limit of \$750 per candidate.
- Eliminating the carrying forward of surplus campaign funds by candidates from one election to the next (existing surplus will be grandfathered for use in the 2010 campaign).
- Strengthening the compliance and enforcement regime though firm deadlines for submitting financial statements and harmonized penalties.

Municipal and Planning Reforms

The changes to the Municipal Act and the City of Toronto Act proposed in Bill 112 are in the areas of finance and accountability and transparency:

- Clarifying that a municipal Auditor General's functions are to be carried out in an independent manner.
- Providing greater flexibility by reducing and streamlining prescriptive financial process requirements (e.g., the removal of deadlines for certain tax policy decisions).

1st SESSION, 39th LEGISLATURE, ONTARIO  
38 ELIZABETH II, 2009



1<sup>re</sup> SESSION, 39<sup>e</sup> LÉGISLATURE, ONTARIO  
38 ELIZABETH II, 2009

Bill 112

Projet de loi 112

An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain Acts and by enacting two new Acts

Loi visant à promouvoir une saine gestion publique en modifiant ou en abrogeant certaines lois et en édictant deux nouvelles lois

The Hon. C. Bentley  
Attorney General

L'honorable C. Bentley  
Procureur général

Government Bill

Projet de loi du gouvernement

1st Reading    October 27, 2009  
2nd Reading  
3rd Reading  
Royal Assent

1<sup>re</sup> lecture    27 octobre 2009  
2<sup>e</sup> lecture  
3<sup>e</sup> lecture  
Sanction royale

Revoking all municipal restructuring orders signed prior to January 2, 2005, except for provisions in orders that still have effect. (This would not undo any restructuring implemented by any of the affected municipal restructuring orders).

- Changing regulation making authority for municipal services corporations established by municipalities.

Proposed regulatory amendments would allow municipal services corporations to put in place corporate structures and subsidiaries.

Among other changes the government is proposing in the bill are amendments to the City of Toronto Act, the Municipal Act and the Planning Act that would:

- Provide additional authority for Toronto to require and govern alternatives to green roofs.
- Provide Committees of Adjustment with the ability to authorize variances from zoning by-laws that have been passed but that are not yet in effect.

“These legislative and regulatory amendments are aimed at increasing municipalities’ economic competitiveness, innovation, economic readiness and flexibility in meeting their needs,” says Minister Watson.

**Building Code**

To help speed up the building permit application process and to better protect homebuyers, the government is proposing a number of amendments to the Building Code Act in Bill 212 that would, if passed, streamline the permit process and help Tarion Warranty Corporation identify unregistered builders. These proposals include:

- Setting timeframes for building permit approvals.
- Identifying unregistered builders.
- Enhancing municipal enforcement of the Building Code Act.

Learn more about Bill 212, the proposed [Good Government Act](#).

Related Links

- [Bill 212](#)
- [The proposed Good Government Act, 2009](#)

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### Getting Help With The Rent

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The article below, written by Terri Saunders, appeared in the *Ottawa Sun* newspaper earlier this year.

It provides some insight into the ministry's Rent Bank Program, aimed at preventing the eviction of tenant households that have experienced short-term rent arrears. The program was established in 2004 and is administered by Ontario's 47 Service Managers.

The government, understanding the importance of keeping people in their homes when facing eviction due to a temporary financial setback resulting from an illness, a job loss or a family emergency, has invested almost \$29 million in the Rent Bank.

The program over five years has helped to prevent more than 21,500 low-income households from being evicted.

We are reprinting the *Sun* article because we know that many UPDATE readers across the province may not have had a chance to read it:

A few months ago, Gary found himself in a situation he never imagined he'd have to face.

The 42-year-old professional was out of work and had few prospects. He had fallen behind in his rent and had been served with an eviction notice from his landlord.

"I was down to the bitter end of the stick," said the Ottawa man. "I was facing losing my home and I wasn't sure how I was going to get out of the hole I was in."

A friend told him about the Rent Bank, a provincial program that offers temporary financial assistance to people who need help paying for their housing.

Gary applied and was given enough money to bring his rent up to date and avoid eviction. He then found a new job and is now back on his feet.

He is one of 221 households that have sought help from the program so far this year, up from the 63 that were helped by this time last year.

"We have seen quite an increase," said Laura Saunders, who administers the program through The Salvation Army. "There have been some challenges this year, from the socioeconomic troubles to the bus strike at the beginning of the year that have caused that number to go up."

Saunders said people have lost jobs in the economic downturn and have not been able to find new



ones or jobs that pay comparable salaries. The bus strike also forced some people into debt in order to cover the cost of alternate transportation.

Gary is surprised to hear about the increase, but not shocked.

“It hasn't been an easy year for a lot of people,” he said. “But programs like this can make things a little easier.”

**Related links:**

- [Provincial Rent Bank Program - Tenants FAQs](#)

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Local Government Week 2009

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Local Government Week was celebrated this year across Ontario between October 18 and 24 - engaging students and educators on how municipalities work.

The program's objective is to help to raise awareness and increase understanding about the important role local government plays in our communities.

An Excellent Opportunity

Local Government Week introduces students in Grades 5 and 10 to the world of municipal government – its leaders, the programs and services they provide, local decision-making, and career and volunteer opportunities in the local public service.

"Local Government Week is an excellent opportunity for highlighting the important role local government plays in our daily lives," says Municipal Affairs and Housing Minister Jim Watson.

Second Year

Now in its second year, Local Government Week is a project of the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario. It is supported by both the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario.

The Ontario Teachers Federation and other education experts also worked closely on the development of the program.

2009 Highlights

Schools and communities across the province this year celebrated Local Government Week with some interesting activities.

Smiths Falls, for example, marked their town hall's 150th anniversary – a very "fitting" thing to do during Local Government Week – said Mayor Dennis Staples when he addressed the large crowd gathered for the celebrations.

In Brant County, Grade 5 students investigated the workings of local police and fire departments, transportation, environmental services and waste collection, water treatment and enforcement bylaws.

In Owen Sound, members of council and city staff visited Grades 5 and 10 classes to discuss the importance of local government.

Dear Mrs. Hensel,

Thank you for visiting our Grade 5 class and teaching us more about government. This was an excellent lesson for local government week.

From Grade 5 Holy Name of Mary School



Janice Hensel, a municipal finance advisor at the Ministry's office in London, visited the Grades 5 and 6 classes at Holy Name of Mary School in St. Marys during Local Government Week.

In Brantford, students got classroom visits from city staff members, prepared displays about municipal services and took tours of city hall.

Students from Rideau Lakes attended a committee meeting of council and Mayor Ronald Holman of Rideau Lakes presented them with a Township Pin.

Students in Marmora visited council and were presented with a framed certificate which read in part, "Young people are the future."

Schools in Fort Frances held essay contests, and the winners read their essays at a council meeting. Tours of town facilities were also organized, with stops scheduled at the museum, civic centre, courthouse and public works building.

**Year-long Activities**

Schools and communities across the province are organizing similar activities throughout the school year.

Some initiatives include:

- The City of Burlington is offering year-round interactive school tours for Grades 3 and 5 students to city departments. Students will also be participating in mock council meetings as part of the regular curriculum.
- In Owen Sound, city staff visit Grades 5 and 10 classrooms year-round to take part in environmental workshops. The city also encourages students to attend council meetings and makes time on its agenda for youth delegations.
- In the Town of Fort Frances, Clerk Glenn Treftlin told the local newspaper that the town has extended an invitation to Grade 5 and 10 classes to mentor with town officials. Treftlin added that Fort Frances is also looking to host a mock election later in the school year.

Learn more about [Local Government Week](#).

**Related Links:**

- [Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario](#)
- [Association of Municipalities of Ontario](#)

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