

UPDATE

from the Ministry of Municipal
Affairs and Housing



December 2009

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MESSAGE FROM MINISTER JIM WATSON

I was honoured to speak at the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association's annual conference in Toronto recently. It presented me with an outstanding opportunity to meet with housing providers and thank them for all they do to bring affordable housing to Ontario. [Read more](#)



LEGISLATIVE REFORMS

Changes are coming for the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, the Building Code Act, 1992, the Municipal Act, 2001, the City of Toronto Act, 2006 and the Planning Act. The Good Government Act, 2009, which amends this legislation, has received Royal Assent. The reforms will take effect as parts of the legislation are proclaimed. [Read more](#)



MAKING A SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE

Action Ready – that was the theme for this year's Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association's annual conference held in Toronto in November. A theme that reflects the economic stimulus for Ontario's housing industry. [Read more](#)



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Minister's Message

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Welcome again to UPDATE, the e-newsletter of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, that keeps you informed of developments in the municipal and housing sectors.

I was honoured to speak at the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association's (ONPHA) annual conference in Toronto recently. It presented me with an outstanding opportunity to meet with housing providers and to thank them for all they do to bring affordable housing to Ontario.

You can read more about this year's ONPHA meeting in this issue of UPDATE.

The Legislature's passage of the Good Government Act, 2009 is bringing about changes to the municipal elections process. As outlined in an UPDATE article, the date for local elections next year will be October 25. Ontarians will now vote for their municipal representatives and school trustees on the fourth Monday in October every four years.

The aim of the legislative amendments is to make local elections more transparent, accountable and efficient and to create a more level playing field for all candidates. Our government also wanted to promote greater accessibility for voters and candidates with disabilities.

Ministry officials have been travelling across the province over the past several weeks giving briefings on these changes. The municipal election period is about to start, and we want to help ensure that everyone involved is familiar with the reforms. A revised Municipal Election Guide will soon be available on the ministry website to provide assistance for those organizing next year's elections, as well as for potential candidates.

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.

I also want to wish you and your families the best of the holiday season and a happy new year.

Jim Watson
Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing

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Legislation Proposes Many Changes

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Changes are coming for the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, the Building Code Act, 1992, the Municipal Act, 2001, the City of Toronto Act, 2006 and the Planning Act.

The Good Government Act, 2009, which amends this legislation, has received Royal Assent. The reforms will take effect as parts of the legislation are proclaimed.

“Through these reforms we are strengthening the integrity of local elections and will better protect homebuyers,” says Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing Jim Watson.

Municipal Elections Process

Several changes are being made to the Municipal Elections Act, which will create a more level playing field to for candidates and promote greater accessibility. Some of these changes include:

- moving the election date forward to the fourth Monday of October, beginning October 25, 2010;
- a new contribution limit of \$5,000 per contributor in each jurisdiction;
- greater accessibility to the election process for voters and candidates with disabilities; and
- elimination of 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).

Building Code

Amendments to the Building Code Act will:

- facilitate more effective enforcement action against illegal builders;
- establish clearer criteria for building permit applications; and
- enhance municipal enforcement of the Building Code Act.

Municipal and Planning Reforms

Changes to the Municipal Act and the City of Toronto Act will be in the areas of finance and accountability and transparency. They include:

- clarification that a municipal Auditor General's functions are to be carried out in an independent manner; and
- all municipal restructuring orders with effective dates prior to January 2, 2005 will be revoked,



except for provisions in orders that still have effect. (This would not undo any restructuring implemented by any of the affected municipal restructuring orders.)

Regulatory amendments will allow municipal services corporations to put in place corporate structures and subsidiaries.

Among other changes will be amendments to the City of Toronto Act, the Municipal Act and the Planning Act that:

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

Related Links

- [Municipal Elections](#)
- [Ontario Building Code](#)
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Making a Significant Difference

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Action Ready – that was the theme for this year's Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association's (ONPHA) annual conference held in Toronto in November. A theme that reflects the economic stimulus for Ontario's housing industry.

Municipal Affairs and Housing Minister Jim Watson acknowledged the association, which has grown to include more than 760 non-profit providers in 220 communities across Ontario.

"Some 400,000 people are benefiting from your efforts," Minister Watson told the delegates. "There is no doubt you are making a significant difference in the lives of a great many people."

The Conference

During the three day conference there were over 75 workshops, networking opportunities and more than 150 expert speakers. Workshop topics included Ontario's Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy, the recession, tenant's rights and the Poverty Reduction Strategy. There were approximately 1,400 delegates including housing providers, tenants, staff and government from across the province.

Building Relationships

"This conference gives me an opportunity to repeat what I found to be so enjoyable last year – meeting directly with your members in small groups to discuss issues and concerns within the non-profit sector," said Minister Watson.

The small delegations allowed the Minister to focus on housing providers, share information and strengthen relationships.

Action

In his address Minister Watson said, "This conference is a good opportunity for me to review how our government has done during the past year in fulfilling what we consider one of our most important beliefs – that every Ontario family should have a safe, healthy, affordable place to call home."

Minister Watson spoke about Ontario's "action ready" strategies and investments. "Under the Canada-Ontario Affordable Housing Program, all three levels of government have been working together to provide affordable housing, with an investment of more than \$700 million."

In his conclusion Minister Watson said, "Low-income families, single men and women, senior citizens, vulnerable persons and those who struggle with homelessness, all benefit from non-profit housing."



Minister Watson spoke to members of the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association in Toronto last month.

Links

- [Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association](#)

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