



Media Release

October 21, 2005

Affordable Housing Forum Aims to Address Local Needs

NIAGARA REGION- Over 100 people attended the Affordable Housing Development Forum held today in St. Catharines to learn about housing needs across Niagara region. The full-day event was hosted by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and Niagara Regional Housing.

"By working cooperatively with our community partners and all levels of government, we can ensure Canadians can have a safe, affordable place to call home," said the Honourable Walt Lastewka, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Member of Parliament for St. Catharines, on behalf of the Honourable Joe Fontana, Minister of Labour and Housing. "Today's forum is an excellent opportunity to share ideas and best practices as we look towards future development in affordable housing and homelessness services at a community level."

"The McGuinty government is committed to providing safe and affordable housing for the people in this province who need it," said Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing John Gerretsen. "I am delighted that the Region of Niagara shares that commitment; the success of the Canada-Ontario Affordable Housing Program depends on the active participation of municipal governments. By investing together in affordable housing, we are investing in the people of Ontario and strengthening our families and our communities."

"There are over 4,000 households on our waiting list. Niagara Regional Housing is projecting that every year, for the next 10 years, 488 new affordable housing units need to be built to meet current and future demand," said Dave Eke, Niagara Regional Housing Board Chairman and Regional Councillor for Niagara-on-the-Lake. "Many people are facing challenges in finding affordable homes, including people earning less than \$30,000, seniors on a fixed income, and people who need support to live successfully in the community," he added.

"Living in decent, reasonably priced housing gives people the opportunity to focus on other necessary things in their lives like raising their children, going back to school or simply enjoying their retirement," said Lora Beckwith, General Manager, Niagara Regional Housing. "With a new wave of funding being allocated to this region through the Canada-Ontario Affordable Housing Program, we want to ensure that we have the local interest and capacity to put the funding to the purpose for which it is intended."

Developers, builders, business associations, community agencies, and social service providers were on hand to hear about building incentives, partnership approaches and existing incentive programs.

Under the new Canada-Ontario Affordable Housing Agreement, signed on April 29, 2005, \$602 million — \$301 million from each the federal and provincial governments — has been committed toward the creation of affordable housing in Ontario. With this commitment, the federal, provincial, and municipal governments will have invested at least \$734 million over the life of the Canada-Ontario Affordable Housing Program, to assist some 20,000 Ontario households.

The Region of Niagara has been allocated \$7.35 million for capital projects, which will produce a minimum of 105 units of affordable rental housing, and \$2.14 million for 170 units of housing allowances under the new Canada-Ontario Affordable Housing Program.

Under the pilot round of the Affordable Housing Program, in the Region of Niagara, eight projects with a federal-provincial funding of \$5.3 million have been announced. This will create 196 affordable rental housing units for lower-income families, singles, seniors and others.

For copies of presentations, residents can call Niagara Regional Housing at 905-682-9201 or visit www.nrh.ca.

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