



SENIORS FOR SOCIAL ACTION (ONTARIO)

Editorial

HOUSING IS HEALTH CARE – A LOOK AT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING IN ONTARIO

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Supportive housing can take the form of houses or apartments providing some assistance to older adults and individuals with a range of disabilities. Personal support is provided through funding from the Ministry of Health with staff often available to respond 24 hours a day to provide personal care, light housekeeping and laundry, medication reminders, safety checks, light meal preparation and a range of wellness activities as well as system navigation assistance. Care Coordinators available through Ontario Health at Home can assist individuals to work with community partners to determine individuals' eligibility (Ontario Health at Home, 2026).

Supportive housing is owned and operated by non-profit corporations like municipal governments, housing cooperatives or other groups or agencies including service clubs, cultural groups, faith groups and seniors' organizations.

Most are rent-geared-to-income, or market level rentals are subsidized through the Ministry of Housing.

SOUNDS GOOD DOESN'T IT?

It all sounds great until you run up against the waiting lists for supportive housing, which can be years long. The fact is that we need a lot more supportive housing in this province to accommodate the need.

Some municipalities have heard the call and are responding. In Halton Region, Halton Housing is building seniors' residences with PACE Wellness Hubs built in (Halton Region, 2026).

But too many other municipalities and non-profits are ignoring what is now an excellent climate for building new supportive housing units.

“Build Canada Homes is Canada's new federal agency that will build affordable homes, support builders with financing, and encourage innovative building methods – using Canadian technology, workers and lumber, and sustainable building practices” (Build Canada Homes, 2026). Build Canada Homes is actively seeking partnerships with non-profits, co-operatives, and organizations supporting older adults and people with disabilities – anyone in need of supportive and transitional housing.

Ontario Health at Home is examining innovative ways of providing integrated care tied to where individuals requiring it live.

So what's the problem? Why are so many non-profits and municipalities sitting on the sidelines?

OTHER SECTORS ARE MOVING

Other sectors have begun building housing with support services built in.

A case in point. 90 Dunn Avenue in Toronto is a four-storey modular housing building with 51 rent-geared-to-income and supportive homes. It is Canada's first-ever social medicine supportive housing initiative, made possible through a partnership with the University Health Network, the United Way of Greater Toronto, and in conjunction with Fred Victor.

People exiting homelessness have studio apartments, with a shared laundry, communal areas, and space for programming.

Dunn House is geared to preventing emergency room visits and in-patient admissions.

IS THE ONTARIO GOVERNMENT WAKING UP?

It appears that the Ontario government has finally decided to move on supportive housing.

In March of this year, the Government of Canada signed the Canada-Ontario Partnership to Build with the goal of significantly boosting the supply of housing in this province. The plan is for the Government of Canada and Ontario to cost-match a total of \$8.8 billion over ten years to support housing infrastructure projects especially in municipalities that "reduce and maintain reductions on development charges" (Ontario Government, 2026).

Some examples of previous and new initiatives currently underway:

- Credit River Way, located at 200 Missinnihe Way in Mississauga, is a seven-storey rental apartment building with 150 units that was completed in October 2024. It offers a mix of one-, two-, and three-bedroom units, and supports low- and moderate-income individuals with mobility needs. The project received over \$12.4 million under the joint Ontario Priorities Housing Initiative (OPHI). A further \$24 million investment through the federal-only Affordable Housing Fund was previously announced in 2020. <https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/media-newsroom/news-releases/2026/new-affordable-housing-coming-peel-region>

- Basswood Senior Residences, located at 527 Main Street North in Brampton, will offer 198 affordable rental units for seniors once complete in 2027. Part of Peel Region’s Campus of Care, a community that delivers a continuum of care that enables residents to age in place, the site will provide residents with easy access to transit, essential services, support programs, and a variety of community and health services. <https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/media-newsroom/news-releases/2026/new-affordable-housing-coming-peel-region>
- Dunn House Phase 2 will build on the success of Canada’s first-ever Social Medicine Housing initiative. Phase 2 will deliver 54 rent-geared-to-income studio units for at-risk seniors, with all residents having access to health and social services on-site. On behalf of the City, CreateTO will develop the site using modular construction to reduce costs and accelerate delivery, helping to get homes built faster for those who need them most. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/bulletin/1006943/canada-ontario-and-toronto-work-together-with-build-canada-homes-to-invest-in-dunn-houses20-to-provide-supportive-housing-in-toronto>
- Located at 135 Francis Street in the Town of Renfrew, the Francis Street Triplex was completed in February 2026 and is expected to welcome residents beginning in June 2026. This project is designed to foster an inclusive and supportive community, with wheelchair-accessible units ensuring barrier-free living for all residents. Priority will be given to individuals with medical and accessibility needs. <https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/media-newsroom/news-releases/2026/new-affordable-supportive-housing-coming-renfrew-county>
- Epworth Place, located at 7B Aldersgate Drive in Belleville, is an 84-unit residential building designed to support the senior community. The project offers a mix of market-rate and rent-geared-to-income (RGI) rental apartments, with amenities such as lounges, recreation rooms, community gardens, and a library service. The \$375,000 investment through COCHI will support 18 RGI units, including 3 accessible units. <https://news.ontario.ca/en/bulletin/1007071/canada-and-ontario-support-new-affordable-homes-for-seniors-in-belleville>
- Halton Region continues its major building initiative on behalf of older adults with 1258 Rebecca Street in Oakville, where Halton is building a new assisted and supportive housing community for older adults. This project is on track to be completed in just 12 months, with residents expected to move in by early 2026. 14 semi-detached one-bedroom bungalows for older adults (energy efficient). Supportive housing for homeless older adults with mobility challenges. <https://www.halton.ca/news/chairs-corner/2025/delivering-more-supportive-rental-housing-for-older-adults>

- Toronto is responding to the urgent need for more affordable and supportive housing by building a three-storey modular housing building at 185 Cummer Ave. Set for completion by early 2026, the new housing development will provide rent-geared-to-income homes with supports for seniors and older adults exiting homelessness. The 59 new homes will be private studio apartments, each with a kitchen and bathroom. The building will also include shared laundry facilities, a lounge and dining room, and programming space. Woodgreen Community Services will manage the building. <https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/housing-shelter/building-affordable-homes/housing-initiatives/supportive-housing-developments/185-cummer/>
- Thorold Municipal Non-profit Housing (TMNPH) Corporation is celebrating the completion of a 60-unit housing complex geared toward seniors at 5 Baker St. <https://www.thoroldtoday.ca/local-news/must-read-new-housing-complex-for-seniors-in-thorold-a-great-achievement-12316626>
- The Government of Canada has announced 58 new homes across two projects in Woolwich and Oxford. The first project is located at 33 Front Street in St. Jacobs, where Beyond Housing has built the Sprucelawn apartments. The building includes 28 units designed for senior citizens, particularly single senior women. It makes use of a full universal design, with four of the units exceeding accessibility standards. <https://www.mpamag.com/ca/news/general/federal-government-announces-funding-for-senior-housing-in-ontario/477665>

MORE MUNICIPALITIES AND NON-PROFITS NEED TO STEP UP

All of these initiatives are wonderful starts. But much more needs to be done.

This is a no brainer folks. Once the mortgages on these new housing initiatives are paid off, rent money flows into municipal and non-profit coffers. It is a win/win – for those needing housing and for those providing the housing.

It is time for those not yet on the bandwagon to step up.

Dr. Patricia Spindel is the Chair of Seniors for Social Action Ontario

Comments on this and other editorials are welcome at seniorsactionontario@gmail.com

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