



NIAGARA FALLS NATURE CLUB

P.O. BOX 901, NIAGARA FALLS, ONTARIO, L2E 6V8.

March 14, 2022

Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing

RE: Housing Affordability Task Force Report

On behalf of the members of the Niagara Falls Nature Club, I found some excellent suggestions in this report although I have grave concerns about some of the proposals.

Helpful recommendations include those increasing density. I agree with allowing secondary suites and multi-tenant housing in residential neighbourhoods. Greatly increasing intensification around transit stations and eliminating minimum parking standards is an excellent idea.

Niagara Falls has many underutilized commercial properties and I agree that they should be converted into residential properties, preferably mid-rise apartment complexes, perhaps encouraged by a tax break for the first few years after the development is completed.

We fully agree with stressing intensification in built up areas and not developing on greenfield lands.

Although this report is titled Housing Affordability Task Force Report, it states that building new affordable housing is not part of its mandate. Market priced homes will never be sufficient to house everyone who needs a place to live. Here in Niagara Falls, tenants have recently had power and water cut-off during January in a motel where many of the close to homeless are forced to live. There isn't even enough of this housing for all who need it. Housing starts should begin with those who need it most. The government also needs to get involved in seeing that more multi-tenant housing is built with affordable rents. The market may be able to handle this without government interference eventually, but people who need shelter cannot wait. Tenants must have adequate protections guaranteed by the Province. Home ownership is not the ideal solution for housing all who need shelter.

The report's proposal to limit public participation is a step in the wrong direction. Residents of a municipality have a right to be heard and many have extensive knowledge of their communities.

Municipalities should not be prevented from hosting public gatherings. Public forums should be made more robust with participant's concerns being heard and answered.

The \$10,000 fee for a third-party appeal would disenfranchise most of the Ontario public. Awarding full costs to the winning party in an appeal would mean that only the developers, with deep pockets and the ability to raise funds from investors, could afford their day in court. These changes would allow developers to build where and how they want regardless of the public good. Please do not silence the voices of community members.

Not all those opposing developments are “not in my backyard” homeowners. Some citizens opposing developments are doing so because the places where the developer wants to build have natural areas and features that need to be preserved. Saving our natural assets would benefit not just environmentalists but all residents of a region both immediately and far into the future.

I receive letters from investors in my mailbox at least twice a week wanting to buy my house. I have read that a quarter of all home buyers are investors and this certainly is driving up prices. Speculation needs to be curbed.

Those on the task force spoke from their lived-experience. They are developers, bankers and home builders. Please convene a task force with representatives who work on providing housing to those with low incomes, environmentalists, municipal planners and those struggling or who have struggled to find housing they can afford.

Ontario’s housing affordability problem cannot be solved simply by building more market-rate houses. We need real solutions that consider all the residents of Ontario, not just the wealthy.

Sincerely,

Joyce Sankey, Conservation Director
Niagara Falls Nature Club

C: Wayne Gates, MPP for Niagara