

Co-op Presence Strong in the Soo, Materials are available... and much, much more

Hello All Federations,

Hats off to the Co-op folks in Sault Ste. Marie !!!

The Minister of Municipal Affairs & Housing Jim Watson launched the Province's Affordable Housing Strategy Consultations on Tuesday evening in Sault Ste. Marie. The co-op housing presence and voice was strong and quite significant. While there are only 6 co-ops in the Soo, that fact that over 20 co-op reps actively participated in this public event, when the overall count was about 70, was certainly not lost on anyone present. This includes Minister Watson who oversaw the whole evening and made a point of talking to practically every participant personally.

Structure of Consultation Session

To give folks a sense of what will take place when the consultations come to your region, below is the rough structure followed in Sault Ste. Marie. We understand this approach will be duplicated around the province.

- 6:30 -7:00, greetings from Minister Watson, Facilitator, logistics, etc.
- 7:00 – 8:00, Break into work groups, each working on a specific question of the five posed by the Province, but free as well to work on other questions if time available
- 8:00 – 9:00, Plenary – report backs from groups with time for comments from any participants
- 9:00 – 9:30, Plenary- Open Q & A's with Minister Watson and Assistant Deputy Minister Kathleen Blinkhorn, (Senior Public Servant in Ontario responsible for Housing)

Co-op Materials to Assist Participants:

We have produced 2 documents to assist co-op participants to take part in these public meetings across the province:

- A background paper – *A Place for co-op housing in Ontario's Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy*. This document discusses many key co-op and housing issues that members and Ontario Region has raised over the last number of years. The paper is available on the special section of our website dealing with the Affordable Housing Strategy Consultations link directly below:

http://www.chfcanada.coop/eng/pdf/ontdocs/AHS_backrounder.pdf

- *Guide to the Province's five consultation questions for co-op housing participants* - We encourage co-op housing attendees to speak to the overall issues that are important to them and not to be bound to the five specific and fairly narrow questions that are posed by the Province as part of the consultation. This document gives a number of suggestions for each of the five questions on how you can link issues from the background paper to the specific question. It bears mentioning that that overall people were not held to the narrow confines of the 5 questions in the Soo session. Link to this document, again from our website is below:

http://www.chfcanada.coop/eng/pdf/ontdocs/AHS_Key_questions_guide.pdf

Mobilizing our membership to speak to our issues:

An important element for us to keep top of mind in these regional consultations is that this is the "public" part of the process. Our strength is our members coming out in strong numbers across the province and speaking in their own words about the success of co-operative housing. That is, what it has meant to them, their family and their community. Those voices collectively will greatly assist in laying the ground work and resonating with Province as we try and ensure that there is a strong role for co-operative housing in the Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy.

As we have mentioned previously, we strongly encourage Federations to begin organizing co-ops and members to attend the upcoming sessions in your regions.

Summary

Much more to come in the weeks and months ahead. But I believe we have gotten off to a great start on Day One when the Minister and crew trooped up to Sault Ste. Marie and wherever they turned, they heard, about co-operative housing. We know that similar efforts by co-op housing participants are about to be duplicated in other cities and communities across this province

Feel free to contact me further regarding any of the above

All the best,

Harvey

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