

# Unlocking Co-op Housing in Ontario

Co-op Housing Day 2025

Co-operative housing is a well-documented success story. For over 50 years, co-ops have provided good-quality, secure, affordable homes. In Ontario, there are 550 non-profit housing co-ops, home to 125,000 people. These co-ops are found in towns and cities all across the province.

Non-profit housing co-ops are a unique form of housing where there is no outside landlord. They are owned and democratically controlled by their members, who elect board and hire staff to manage operations. Co-ops set housing charges (similar to rent) based on what it costs to run and maintain their homes over the long-term. Co-ops are inclusive, mixed-income communities welcoming anyone who is ready to accept the terms of membership.

**Unlocking co-op housing in Ontario is key to creating the affordable housing Ontarians need. CHF Canada recommends the government:**

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**Preserve existing co-operative homes by ensuring that the implementation of the provincial service agreement framework is fair for everyone.**

Over 250 Ontario co-ops, representing over 21,000 homes, are legislated as part of the provincial Housing Services Act (HSA). These co-ops, along with HSA non-profits, were originally developed by the province and later downloaded to the municipal Service Managers.

In 2022, Ontario introduced a new regulatory framework that updated how municipal Service Managers and HSA housing providers (the co-op or non-profit) work together after their original mortgages end. The framework, among other things, was meant to:

- Confirm that Service Managers would continue to fund rental assistance for low-income households who join the housing provider through municipal social housing waitlists; and
- Provide greater flexibility for both parties when negotiating new agreements that would support better housing outcomes and growth.

Since the framework's release, CHF Canada and regional federations have supported co-ops as they negotiate new service, exit, or interim agreements. While some Service Managers have implemented the regulations fairly, others have not — finding loopholes that threaten co-ops' financial stability and community well-being.

CHF Canada urges the province to:

- **Increase oversight** to ensure all Service Managers comply with the regulations, particularly on funding agreements for co-ops and non-profits.



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- **Guarantee full interim funding** for rental assistance while new agreements are being negotiated. Some co-ops and non-profits have waited up to three years for negotiations to begin, losing hundreds of thousands of dollars in the process.
- **Enable refinancing** so co-ops and non-profits can repair aging buildings and develop new affordable homes.

## 2 Partner with the co-operative sector to build the next generation of co-operative homes

Ontario has the second-highest average rent in Canada. 12 per cent of Ontarians are living in housing that they cannot afford, is overcrowded, and/or needs major repairs.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, co-op housing waitlists stretch 10–15 years, with many closed entirely.

Ontario needs a critical shift towards building more affordable co-op and non-profit housing.<sup>2</sup> The province has a unique opportunity to leverage federal investments in co-op housing to build more housing supply and create deeper levels of affordability. This would create the affordable homes Ontarians need while supporting construction jobs and local supply chains.

To build more affordable housing at scale, CHF Canada recommends the province:

- **Remove barriers** that prevent the Building Ontario Fund (BOF) from fulfilling its mandate to provide low-cost loans for affordable housing. Despite active projects, affordable housing proponents have had little success accessing the fund. The government should identify these barriers and have BOF partner with organizations like CHF Canada to make the program effective.
- **Create a revolving pre-development fund** for co-op and non-profit housing providers to help spur further development.
- **Provide surplus or underutilized provincial land** to co-ops and non-profits at little or no cost.
- **Offer incentives** to municipalities that meet or exceed affordable housing targets through the Build Faster Fund.

A recent analysis by Deloitte found that if Ontario increased the share of co-op and non-profit housing to the OECD average, it could boost productivity by up to 9.5% and add \$50.3 billion to the province's GDP.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada. Core Housing Need in Canada. September 21, 2022. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-627-m/11-627-m2022056-eng.htm>

<sup>2</sup> United Way, CHF Canada, and SHS Consulting. Built for Good: Delivering the Housing Ontario Needs. August 12, 2025. <https://www.unitedwaygt.org/our-work/public-policy-and-mobilization/built-for-good/>

<sup>3</sup> Canadian Housing and Renewal Association. Economic Study: The Impact of Community Housing on Productivity. November 27, 2023. [https://chra-achru.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Community-Housing-and-Productivity-Study\\_final.pdf](https://chra-achru.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Community-Housing-and-Productivity-Study_final.pdf)



CHF Canada is the national voice of co-operative housing, representing over 2,200 co-operatives, home to a quarter of a million people in every province and territory. In Ontario, alongside the five regional co-operative housing federations, we represent more than 550 non-profit co-ops, home to approximately 125,000 people.