September 29, 2025

The Honourable Gregor Robertson
Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and Communities
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Ms. Ana Bailão, Chief Executive Officer
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Dear Minister Roberston and Ms. Bailão,

Re: EOWC Recommendations for Build Canada Homes Implementation

On behalf of the Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus (EOWC) – representing 103 municipalities across eastern Ontario – we commend the Government of Canada for launching *Build Canada Homes* (BCH) to catalyse an entirely new housing industry. The EOWC and our member municipalities stand *ready to work, and ready to grow* as committed partners to deliver housing quickly.

Rural and Small Eastern Ontario's Competitive Advantage

Small and rural municipalities across eastern Ontario face opportunities and challenges that are distinct from those experienced by other regions of the province. With the right buy-in, we can further capitalize on these opportunities for growth and ideally position the region to support Build Canada Homes' ambitious goals.

- **Direct Municipal Involvement:** Unlike other provinces and territories, Ontario's municipalities own and operate community housing and long-term care homes, placing municipalities at the centre of housing delivery.
- **Accelerating Population Growth to Supply Workforce:** Across the region, **by 2051 the population is expected to grow by 25%**. Additional scaling-up of existing housing and infrastructure will be required to meet this steady growth in demand.

- **Faster Housing Delivery:** On average, the EOWC's 103 municipalities are building housing at nearly double the rate of Toronto (39 vs. 17 units per 1,000 population as of 2024). With the right tools, we can further expedite the pace of homebuilding and development of housing-enabling infrastructure in our region.
- **Infrastructure Burden and Opportunity:** Canada's **municipalities manage 60% of public infrastructure but receive only 10% of total tax dollars**. This discrepancy is particularly challenging to navigate in smaller regions with a less robust, and aging tax base. Despite substantial local investment, eastern Ontario's infrastructure deficit now exceeds $6 billion, a 58% increase since 2011. To keep pace with growth and repair needs, small and aging communities require upfront, flexible, and accessible federal investments.
- **High-Impact Returns:** Relatively modest federal investments in smaller communities create ripple effects – supporting workers, attracting business investment, strengthening families' quality of life.
- **Regional Coordination Advantage:** The EOWC provides a single, unified voice across 103 municipalities, enabling a "one-window" approach to engagement with our region. This allows governments to consult more efficiently, identify pilot projects, and scale proven solutions - as demonstrated through our successful private-public partnership broadband initiative, the Eastern Ontario Regional Network (EORN).

Recommendations for BCH Design and Implementation

To ensure BCH succeeds in our region's communities, we recommend:

1. **Prioritize deeply affordable and supportive housing.** Federal programs must include acquisition, development, repair, and maintenance of community housing.
2. **Provide direct funding contributions in addition to financing.** Municipalities need upfront capital and operating supports. Low-cost financing alone does not address local fiscal realities.
3. **Streamline processes and increase flexibility.** Move from a project-by-project model to a portfolio-based approach. Accept greater risk tolerance and simplified approvals to speed up development.

4. **Align with municipal planning roles.** Partner with those directly responsible for land-use planning, service delivery, and identifying the best-positioned housing developers.
5. **Support housing-enabling infrastructure and innovative building technologies.** Invest in water, wastewater, roads, and servicing to unlock housing supply. Encourage new building methods while recognizing rural and regional differences.
6. **Adapt to local realities.** Engage directly with the EOWC and our members to ensure policies and programs reflect the needs of small, rural, northern, and urban communities alike through flexible program design.

In addition to Build Canada Homes, we were pleased to see your government introduce legislation to eliminate the federal Goods and Services Tax (GST) for first-time home buyers on new homes up to $1 million and reducing the GST for first-time home buyers on new homes between $1 and $1.5 million. We encourage your government to pass this legislation at the earliest opportunity to ensure these benefits can be realized as quickly as possible.

Federal, provincial, and municipal governments must work together to ensure investments flow to the communities that know their residents best. The EOWC is *ready to partner, ready to deliver, and ready to grow* with your government.

Sincerely,

Chair Bonnie Clark

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