



— **OBCM** —
Ontario's Big City Mayors

Ontario's Big City Mayors (OBCM), Minister's of Finance and Municipal Affairs and Housing Meet on Key Municipal Priorities

February 13, 2023 – OBCM welcomed Ontario's Minister of Finance, Peter Bethlenfalvy, and Ontario's Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Steve Clark, to their meeting Friday to discuss the upcoming provincial budget, the *More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022*, increases to infrastructure funding, and a solutions-based approach to address mental health, addictions, and homelessness.

OBCM spoke with the Ministers about their commitment to doing their part to reach the province's goal of 1.5 million homes in 10 years. Municipalities play a critical role in the building of new housing; facilitating approvals and building the infrastructure needed for new homes, with the responsibility of other critical parts of the process falling to the province, development, and home building sectors. OBCM continues to call on the province to put in place its Housing Supply Action Plan Implementation Team (HSAPIT) to bring together all partners in the homebuilding process and ensure the province's goals are implemented as quickly as possible. This includes the creation of an accountability framework, under the HSAPIT, that would regularly review the role of each partner and address with that partner any delays that occur.

OBCM also reminded the province of its concerns around the impacts of the More Homes Built Faster Act including development charges and parkland fee changes. While the Mayors are thankful for the government's commitment to keep municipalities whole, they requested to be made whole dollar-for-dollar until a new long-term permanent municipal infrastructure funding program can be put in place.

The Mayors also approved a motion to adopt a Health and Homelessness Strategy with five recommendations for the Ontario government to make an immediate impact on the mental health, addictions and homelessness crisis. These recommendations were developed using information gathered through consultation with local health partners to identify services required to ensure there is a health care continuum and appropriate response to this crisis affecting our cities. (see below)

"OBCM has been dedicated to tackling the homelessness, mental health and addictions crisis. We are happy that we can provide the government with these recommendations, and we look forward to presenting them to Minister Jones at our upcoming meeting," said OBCM Chair Bonnie Crombie. "These are issues that cannot be ignored, and municipalities do not have the resources, expertise, or financial capacity to do it on our own. It is critical that the province fund programs that can help to address this crisis within our communities."

MOTION – OBCM RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE HEALTH AND HOMELESSNESS CRISIS

WHEREAS municipalities do not have the expertise, capacity, or resources to address increasingly complex health care issues that lead to homelessness or extend chronic homelessness; and are diverting municipal funds for other priorities like affordable housing, transit, social programs etc. to manage these complex health care issues we are seeing in our communities;



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AND WHEREAS because traditional housing and shelter spaces are not equipped to serve people with severe mental health and addiction challenges, people often live in the rough in encampments in parks, public spaces or on streets.

AND WHEREAS this is an unprecedented health crisis – leading to unsupervised and dangerous substance use, overdoses, strain on the healthcare system, increased volatility and violence, public safety concerns, business, and downtown degradation;

AND WHEREAS OBCM municipalities have responded to this health care crisis with various housing-driven support programs with limited success and some of our municipalities have taken steps to initiate stronger community partnerships, break down care silos to facilitate better access to support with less barriers;

AND WHEREAS there is no coordinated system response and a lack of the wrap-around health care support services people need – the physical health, mental health, and addiction expertise the province is responsible to provide;

THEREFORE IT BE RESOLVED THAT OBCM adopts the strategy created by the City of London and the City of Kingston in consultation with local health partners to address these challenges including five recommendations for the Ontario government to make an immediate impact on the mental health and addictions crisis we are experiencing. These include:

1. Centralized and integrated intake and dispatch process

- An intentionally designed and consistent triage, warm transfer, and dispatch process operating 24 hours a day, 7 days a week year-round by a multidisciplinary, multi agency team, that is well resourced, low/no barrier, trauma and violence informed, culturally aware and flexible to meet the needs of individuals across a range of circumstances and levels of acuity. Inputs to this process could include Community Outreach and Support Teams (COAST), local service providers, and businesses.

2. More provincial investment in low barrier hubs

- Residents need more options for 24/7 low barrier drop-in services with basic rules and a pathway into stabilization options with experienced staff with mental health and addictions expertise. The Hub model provides 24/7 low barrier and wrap around services to people with high acuity that have not been accessing the traditional shelter services. The ICH (integrated care hub) can be combined with a Consumption Treatment Services site.

3. More stabilization and treatment beds with experienced staff to support those in their treatment journey

- Communities need a greater variety of options to support high acuity clients on their stabilization pathway. This includes provincial treatment and rehabilitation facilities and additional stabilization, rehab and detox beds.



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4. More flexible and predictable funding for supportive housing

- There needs to be a range of supportive housing and options which could include small scale options (i.e., scattered housing), harm reduction housing solutions where municipalities can financially support with the property acquisition/development, but provincial funding is needed to finance ongoing support services as tenants are not capable of living fully independently. This service can prevent evictions and homelessness.

5. More provincial ministry and agency collaboration to reduce red tape and duplication

- Municipalities are increasingly forced to wade into provincial jurisdictions, navigating a siloed system, trying to break down health care silos to best support unhoused individuals suffering with mental health and addictions challenges. However, we need better provincial ministry collaboration to reduce red tape, duplication and financial resources and better coordinate wrap-around support for residents in need.

AND THAT Ontario's Big City Mayors will present this five point plan to the Deputy Premier and Minister of Health Sylvia Jones at the meeting/summit that we have requested to address the homelessness, mental health, safety and addictions crisis impacting our cities.

About Ontario's Big City Mayors

Ontario's Big City Mayors (OBCM), formerly known as the Large Urban Mayors' Caucus of Ontario, includes mayors of 29 single and lower-tier cities with a population of 100,000 or more, who collectively represent nearly 70 percent of Ontario's population. OBCM advocates for issues and policies important to Ontario's largest cities.

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