

# Coming Up

## SEPTEMBER 23

**Durham Region Council**, 10:00 a.m.

**Brampton Council**, 1:00 p.m.

## SEPTEMBER 24

**York Region Council**, 9:30 a.m.

## SEPTEMBER 28

**Whitby Planning & Development Committee**, 7:15 p.m.

**Ajax Council**, 7:00 p.m.

**Oshawa Council**, 6:30 p.m.

**Oakville Planning & Development Council**, 7:00 p.m.

**Milton Council**, 7:30 p.m.

## SEPTEMBER 29

**Durham Region Planning Committee**, 9:30 a.m.

**Richmond Hill Council**, 7:30 p.m.

**Markham Development Services Committee**, 9:00 a.m.

**Markham Council**, 7:00 p.m.

## SEPTEMBER 30

**Brampton Urban Design Awards**, Rose Theatre, 5:30 p.m.

**Mississauga Council**, 9:00 a.m.

**Halton Region Planning & Public Works Committee**, 9:30 a.m.

## SEPTEMBER 30-OCTOBER 3

**CIP/OPPI—Building A Better World: Practical Solutions to Challenging Issues**, Niagara Falls.

## OCTOBER 5

**Urban Land Institute—Mixed-Use Development from Urban to Suburban**, Toronto Board of Trade, First Canadian Place, 100 King Street West, 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. Register online at <http://toronto.uli.org/>.

**Mississauga Planning & Development Committee**, 1:30 p.m.

**Brampton Planning, Design & Development Committee**, 7:00 p.m.

**Ajax Community Affairs & Planning Committee**, 7:00 p.m.

## CONSULTING THE PUBLIC

# Affordable housing strategy

In a week's time the provincial government will wrap up its public consultation sessions on the development of a long-term affordable housing strategy for Ontario. The province wants to know what the public thinks about the roles of housing partners, potential changes to the *Social Housing Reform Act*, improvements to the current housing system and changes to existing housing programs.

Though the last public session takes place September 30 in Thunder Bay, Ontario residents and stakeholders will be able to submit comments and ideas online, at [www.ontario.ca/housingstrategy](http://www.ontario.ca/housingstrategy), until the end of the year.

"Affordable housing should be more than just shelter," said municipal affairs and housing minister **Jim Watson** at a talk yesterday morning focussing on the provincial strategy and hosted by **Global Public Affairs**. Watson noted that the province expects to unveil its affordable housing strategy next spring.

Both Watson and **Toronto** councillor **Paula Fletcher**, who is on the **Toronto Community Housing Corporation** board, noted that building new affordable housing is not enough. Watson highlighted a \$100-million fund created by the province last year to repair and upgrade existing affordable housing units. Fletcher brought up the city's own affordable housing strategy, **Housing Opportunities Toronto**, which sets out the city's goals for the next 10 years.

"We want seniors and others on fixed incomes not only to keep their homes, but keep them in a state of good repair," Fletcher told the audience.

**Toronto Star** columnist **Joe Fiorito** also pressed the issue of maintenance in affordable housing complexes, specifically noting ongoing problems with bedbugs, particularly in Toronto.

"You can build all the houses you want, but if you have bedbugs in them you can't live in them," Fiorito said. "We are the landlords. It is our responsibility."

Fiorito proposed that a system be set up where someone living in subsidized housing for 25 years or more would be given ownership of the unit. Fiorito's logic behind the proposal is that tenants have been essentially paying a mortgage through rent payments and if they are given the opportunity to own their home and leave it to their children or relatives, it would provide a better chance to "break the cycle of poverty."

**Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association** executive director **Sharad Kerur** also spoke at the event, stressing that any housing strategy must connect at some level to other policy areas.

"Good housing policy is interlinked with good health policy, good education policy and good economic policy."

"In order to be successful, the strategy needs to be more than just a funding program," Kerur said, adding that affordable housing issues are in many cases community specific and the province needs to address that in the strategy. "Ontario needs a housing system that responds to those community needs." NRU

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