

Re: ERO Number 019-5287 Seeking Feedback on Housing Needs in Rural and Northern Municipalities

1. What are the key barriers impacting your municipality in meeting its housing needs that may be unique to northern and rural communities?
 - Rural communities are affected by similar market forces that drive demand to the suburbs in urban areas due to safety concerns and work-from-home arrangements from the pandemic. However, it is much easier for housing demand to overwhelm supply in rural municipalities due to much smaller urban boundaries.
 - Saugeen Shores has the additional challenge of being affected by large employers such as Bruce Power, who drives significant fluctuations in demand (typically growth) with new projects.
2. What kind of flexibility is needed to address housing needs in your municipality?
 - The ability to update official plan and zoning by-law provisions quickly to reflect the current needs. Changes that involve both upper- and lower-tier official plans still tend to take more than six months from the time of submission to the time of implementation due to certain statutory requirements (approvals, notices, public meetings).
 - Proper financial and regulatory support like those targeted at the GTHA. For example, communities like Saugeen Shores cannot leverage incentives related to Transit Oriented Developments (TODs), even though they are experiencing similar rates of rapid growth due to in-migration (16% according to the 2021 Census). Fast-growing small towns also need resources to plan for nodes and corridors.
3. What potential tools or policies could the government consider to address housing needs in your municipality while balancing other provincial priorities?
 - Lower-tier municipalities often have to depend on upper-tier municipalities on housing resource distribution, as they are not the appointed authority on affordable housing. This can induce longer timelines, uncertainty, and discontent as lower-tier municipalities have no control over where affordable housing units will be built.
4. Do you have other suggestions for ways to improve housing supply and needs in rural and northern municipalities?
 - Provide provincial funding or advocate for federal funding on a percentage of municipal hard infrastructure, particularly in communities with partial services, or on studies for infrastructure capacity.
 - Incentives to grow the construction workforce in the Bruce-Grey area, potentially through local supports for related education and training.