

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Canadian cities are facing a housing crisis, as the cost of homeownership and rental rates are increasing beyond the affordability of many Canadians. As the number of purpose-built rental units has remained stagnant for the last 15 years, and the average cost of a new home has nearly doubled from 2001 to 2010, municipalities are facing a major challenge in providing housing at affordable levels while ensuring a quality stock of all dwelling types. Secondary suites are units built within existing dwellings or in accessory buildings, that have private entrances, kitchen and washroom facilities and living space. These units utilize the existing housing stock and are a form of intensification that capitalizes on Canada's primary dwelling type: single-detached homes.

The City of Kingston is a medium-sized Ontario municipality that has recently developed a secondary suites program to combat increasingly unaffordable rents. The City is marred by low vacancy rates and a comparatively low number of rental units considering the demand for rentals by seniors, students and other demographics. Kingston has one of the highest percentages of senior residents in the province and it is estimated that the number will continue to rise as the baby

rental units. Kingston's existing program for secondary suites has produced initiatives that successfully address many of the housing challenges facing seniors in Kingston, by providing rebates and grants that alleviate the financial barriers of creating and updating existing suites. Edmonton's successful Cornerstones program provides some lessons learned that may be beneficial for enhancement of Kingston's program. These include permitting suits in accessory buildings (garages, etc.) and using City funds to leverage funding from intergovernmental partners. Edmonton also demonstrates where Kingston is already successful, by permitting suites in more unit types than its Alberta counterpart.

This report concludes with a series of recommendations that stem from the analysis providing Kingston, and other Canadian municipalities, with a comprehensive review of secondary suites and their ability to provide affordable housing for Canadians. The recommendations from the analysis are:

Kingston should continue:

1. The Municipal Fee Rebate program, which removes the cost of the zoning law amendment for suites in areas where they are not permitted as-of-right;
2. To provide Affordable Housing Grants, which assist homeowners developing suites while ensuring rents are kept at an affordable level; and
3. To permit units in various building types, such as single detached, semi-detached and row house dwellings.
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financial burdens of developing secondary suites are cl