



What We Heard – Summary Report, Hamilton Café

Thought Leaders

Leigh Bursey, Margie Carlson and Jeff Neven shared their experiences of business transformation and workforce development in Ontario. Discussion highlights included:

- Government practices and processes, although well intended, can pose barriers for not-for-profit community housing providers – especially lengthy funding applications, zoning regulations
- It is important to consider community housing in the same league as other forms of infrastructure (e.g. transport, sanitation, electricity)
- Allies, collaborations and partnerships are useful for sharing knowledge and building capacity in the sector, especially when faced with funding shortages
- Having a strong sense of purpose, vision and a clear mission helps to guide priorities and drive community housing solutions
- Community housing needs to be integrated with social support and other services

A resilient community housing sector...

- Is adaptable, collaborative, ongoing
- Reimagines the vision of community housing in a changing environment
- Is actively preparing to respond to challenges now and in the future
- Develops creative solutions to provide affordable housing
- Does more than the bare minimum

A sustainable community housing sector...

- Understands its assets, needs, values, resources and approaches in context
- Is driven by cross-sector stakeholder collaboration, with outcomes greater than the resources invested
- Draws on inclusive and adaptive models that address changing needs and barriers to achieve a long-term vision

Who was in the room?

Sectors represented	# present
Community housing providers	16
Municipal departments & agencies	7
Networks & associations	1
Housing advocates	4
University (excl. research team members)	2
Health & health care	1
Lived experience	2

“ If you’re trying to avoid risk and mitigate risk, there is no housing development for you. It’s not possible.”

Towards Responses and Solutions: Seven Priorities

Asset-based community

- Viewing housing as community fabric
- Promote community housing as a societal good, not only a private good/asset
- Development of *community* through housing

Show me the money!

- Diversify revenue streams
- Predictable funding required
- Seek/create new funding sources
- Embrace entrepreneurship and growth-promoting business models
- No/low interest mortgages for housing providers
- Business models that function with unpredictable funding

It's about people

- Need to humanize resources and consider tenants as assets
- Build around and with people
- Putting the right person in the right place (tenants and staff)
- Create *communities* through diversity
- Involve tenants in policy consultations

Reflect and renew

- Challenge and reimagine barriers
- Acknowledge the impact of history
- Determine the long-term vision for community housing
- Sector must drive solutions
- Government accountability
- Improve clarity of roles and terminology

Lead with evidence

- Leverage data for business intelligence
- Pursue technological advancement
- Measure outcomes: safe and supported tenants at the core of conversations

Team up, scale up

- Involve other sectors
- Bring in unlikely allies – esp. private sector
- Collaborate to leverage scale, diversity and expertise
- Share models (of funding, infrastructure, programming) across providers
- Build board capacity

Try new things

- Freedom to experiment and take knowable risks
- “Expand the toolkit”:
 - Inclusionary zoning
 - Neighbourhood land trusts
 - Tenant ownership models
 - Social enterprises

