



## **New partnership to jumpstart rural Ontario community's efforts to bring homes to its residents.**

Town of Hawkesbury will conduct pre-development work with the Alberta Rural Development Network (ARDN) in an effort to relieve mounting pressure on residents caused by a lack of affordable housing.

March 11, 2020

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Edmonton** – Alberta-based ARDN announced a new partnership with the Town of Hawkesbury, Ontario to determine the town's capacity to develop affordable housing. This partnership is a major move for the town with its mission to promote continuous growth in a community recognized for having the lowest median household income in Canada (2016 census) and where almost half of the town's 10,000 residents rent.

"Hawkesbury is in urgent need of support for their efforts to revitalize and improve their community's economic well-being," says Zain Abedin, Director of Community Development at ARDN. "The town is limited in its ability to expand its workforce because there's no place to live. As a result, the median age of the community has been increasing coupled with the lowest median household income in the county. ARDN's support will help Hawkesbury build affordable housing units and introduce them to tools that will help them grow their housing stock and attract workforce, which could help redefine the community's economic future".

"Housing is becoming increasingly unaffordable in rural Ontario," says Dee Ann Benard, ARDN's Executive Director. "Although it may seem surprising to find an Alberta-based non-profit working in Ontario, we have recently increased our mandate to include all of rural Canada, as we see many similarities among the issues faced by rural municipalities across the country. We are starting in Ontario because our relationship with the Rural Ontario Institute has made us aware of the growing demand for affordable housing in the province, and because of local municipalities' willingness to partner."

"This news has brought a great sense of hope, pride and a positive impact on our morale," says Paula J. Assaly, the mayor for the Town of Hawkesbury. "Being one hour away from the city of Ottawa, Hawkesbury is in a precarious situation due to the identical cost of building materials. The low capacity to afford housing by our population is a major impediment for developers to build rental facilities. The key deliverables [from this project] will assist the Town in targeting land and developers in building affordable housing and finally respond to the needs of our citizens without the means to find adequate shelter."

This partnership resulted from an Expression of Interest (EOI) launched in Ontario by the ARDN to provide free housing pre-development work for a rural community with the most need. The factors for selection included the need in the community, secondary data, and the feasibility of



the project. The rest of the 20 community applicants will receive a free consultation from ARDN to guide them through possible next steps.

**About ARDN:** The Alberta Rural Development Network (ARDN) is a not-for-profit partnership of nine Alberta post-secondary institutions dedicated to addressing key issues in rural communities at a local level. The Sustainable Housing Initiative (SHI) is an initiative created by ARDN to support rural and remote communities across Canada to successfully develop affordable housing. SHI has authored the Step-by-Step Guide to Developing Affordable Housing, available for free, in French and English, from ARDN's websites: [ardn.ca](http://ardn.ca); [housingredefined.org](http://housingredefined.org).

**About the Town of Hawkesbury:** Hawkesbury is a community of 10,000 located east of Ottawa, along the border with Quebec. Some of the largest industries in the town are Retail Trade and Manufacturing. As per data from Statistics Canada Census 2016, the population of the town of Hawkesbury dropped by nearly 3% from 2011 to 2016. Over a fifth of households are in Core Housing Need.

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