[Your name/Parish name]

[Your address]

[Date]

The Hon. Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario

The Hon. Paul Calandra, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing

[Your MPP]

Re: Protecting and Advancing the Human Right to Housing

Dear Premier Ford, Minister Calandra, and Mr./Ms. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Canada has recognized the human right to housing in multiple international instruments, and has recently enshrined it in the National Housing Strategy Act, 2019. Yet across Canada, and especially in south-central Ontario, realizing that right to adequate and affordable housing is increasingly difficult for people on low and moderate incomes, many of whom are tenants.

We applaud your government’s commitment to increasing the supply of housing, including purpose-built rental housing, in Ontario. Yet we cannot simply build our way out of the housing affordability crisis. For every new affordable rental unit created, many more are lost as rapidly increasing rents far outpace the rise in incomes, and an increasing number of rental units are converted to short-term rentals. To address this crisis, governments at all levels must act not only to create new, but also preserve existing, affordable housing stock.

Average rents for one-bedroom units are now over 50% of the gross income of a full-time minimum wage worker in places like Barrie, Peterborough, and Durham Region, over 75% in Peel and York Region and over 85% in Toronto. To add to the stress, new units are not subject to rent control, and the lack of vacancy control creates an incentive for landlords to displace sitting tenants. A recent study found that tenants who have moved in the past year have seen their rental costs increase by an average of 34% between units. Even where rent controls are in place, landlords are able to seek Above Guideline Increases – sometimes in back-to-back years. All of these stresses are compounded by an increasingly backlogged and inaccessible Landlord Tenant Board. Tenants facing an unreasonable rent increase or bad-faith eviction are likely to lose their housing before they are able to get justice.

Short-term rentals in Ontario have also proliferated in recent years. From 2022-23 there was a 42.1% increase in the number of short-term rental properties in Ontario (and a 56.5% increase in the GTA) compared with a 26.4 increase in Canada overall. Ontario now represents over 1/3 of the short-term rental stock in Canada. While a certain number of short-term rentals can be beneficial for local tourism, the unchecked proliferation of short-term rental properties exacerbates already low vacancy rates and helps to drive up rents beyond affordable levels. Some Ontario municipalities have sought to introduce restrictions on short-term rentals, but lack the resources needed to enforce these measures.

We have seen first-hand the effects of this worsening housing affordability crisis in our communities. The Anglican Diocese of Toronto, of which our parish is a part, is committed to advocating for policies and programs that protect and advance the human right to adequate housing. Our parish recently adopted a motion that calls on both federal and provincial governments to do their part to reduce barriers to the realization of housing as a human right.

Specifically,

1. We call on the Province of Ontario to extend rent control to all rental units, including those first occupied after 2018, enact vacancy controls, and put restrictions on Above-Guideline Rent Increases
2. We call on the Province of Ontario to work with municipal governments to enact and enforce restrictions on short-term rentals to protect rental housing stock

We look forward to hearing from you on ways in which we can work to address the housing affordability crisis and make our province a place where all Ontarians can thrive.

Yours truly,

[Your name and/or parish name]