

**Comments to
Minister of Finance, Dwight Duncan
for 2012 Provincial Budget
by Sharad Kerur, Executive Director, ONPHA**



December 13, 2011

Minister:

My name is Sharad Kerur and I am the Executive Director of the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association. Thank you for having once again invited us to speak with you as you prepare what will be a very difficult 2012 budget. Our association represents 760 non-profit housing providers who house over 400,000 low-income people and those needing additional supports.

At the outset let me say how much we appreciate your government's financial investment in housing since 2003, the long-term affordable housing strategy, and more recently the Investment in Affordable Housing program. Your government's provincial interest in housing is unquestionable.

Minister, we know that this is a time of economic turmoil and global hardship. We know that dollars are tight, and that your government must make tough choices about where those dollars go. But, now is NOT the time to let housing investments slide. In fact, now is the very time you will

need to shore up the housing sector, to ensure people have a stable foundation as they seek employment or continue to be employed.

During this term, your government is placing great emphasis on health, education and the economy. And it is decent, affordable housing that will ensure these policy areas are successful. Study after study shows the positive link between stable and adequate housing to physical and mental health, and educational success. And when there are positive outcomes in these areas, the long-term cost savings emerge.

As such, our recommendations focus on repurposing existing budget dollars as follows:

- First, repurpose a portion of the health and education budgets to ensure an ongoing commitment to the supply of new affordable housing particularly in the areas of supportive and alternative housing
- Second, reconfigure the social assistance system by creating a housing benefit for low-income households that is commensurate with local housing costs rather than a one-size fits all, and
- Third, continue the investment in existing assets by using Ontario's financial clout in the refinancing of the existing stock as mortgages expire or to enable the non-profit housing sector to repay debt at levels which are commensurate with their financial capabilities.

In closing Minister, over 152,000 households are currently on social housing waiting lists. This is a big cost to us as a society and to our

economy. Affordable housing is a valuable tool at your disposal to help contain if not eliminate this cost.

Thank you.

Sharad Kerur

Executive Director

ONTARIO NON-PROFIT HOUSING ASSOCIATION