



January 30, 2014

Hon. Charles Sousa
Minister of Finance
c/o Budget Secretariat
Frost Building North, 3rd Floor
95 Grosvenor Street Toronto, ON M7A 1Z1

Dear Minister Sousa:

RE: ONPHA's Recommendations for the 2014 Ontario Budget

The Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association (ONPHA) represents 770 non-profit housing providers in 220 communities across Ontario. ONPHA members house approximately 400,000 Ontarians including seniors, low-income families with children, Aboriginal people, the working poor, victims of violence and abuse, people living with developmental disabilities, mental illness, HIV/AIDS or addictions, and the formerly homeless/hard-to-house.

Housing Opens Doors

In 2013, ONPHA conducted its *Housing Opens Doors* campaign, a public outreach initiative that called attention to the importance of affordable housing as a key determinant of Ontario's prosperity. A broad coalition of stakeholders came together to promote affordable housing, including:

- TD Bank Financial Group,
- Greater Toronto Civic Action Alliance,
- Daily Break Food Bank,
- Registered Nurses Association of Ontario,
- Canadian Mental Health Association,
- Centre for Addiction and Mental Health,
- Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, and
- Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies.



Affordable housing plays a vital role in the success of every Ontario community. It's an investment that saves money, reduces poverty, creates jobs, and helps to ensure the long-term success and prosperity of our province. Housing is the home of all issues:

- **Ontarians are healthier** - Investing in affordable housing relieves pressure from our health care system and ultimately saves Ontario money.
- **Students learn better** - Stable, affordable housing can be the difference between pass or fail for Ontario's students. Students are able to succeed in school when they know they have a safe home.
- **Everyone is more productive** - Ontarians are more productive when they have stable, affordable housing, making Ontario more competitive. Investments in affordable housing are investments in the strength of our economy and the skills of our people.

Unfortunately, housing challenges persist for too many Ontarians. Too many Ontarians end each day without a home at all.

An ambitious plan

ONPHA has undertaken independent research to quantify the scope of Ontario's housing challenges and craft specific, costed policy solutions. The scope of housing need in Ontario is great. Our goal is to zero in on Ontario's most pressing housing challenges. Ontario can take ambitious long-term action to address them. In the coming months ONPHA looks forward to discussing our plan with Ontario's government.

Ontario's local governments have worked diligently to produce local housing and homelessness plans at the direction of the Province. Now they require sustained funding to put their plans into action, to prevent and end homelessness and to guide local housing systems that serve all Ontarians.

Immediate actions

There are several actions that the Province can take right now to strengthen Ontario's affordable housing system:

1. The Investment in Affordable Housing program (IAH) is the sole source of new funding for affordable housing. The federal government has pledged to extend IAH. Ontario's 2013 budget signaled the Province's willingness to make it happen. We are reaching the end of the current funding timeline. To secure the future of the IAH, it is crucial that Ontario conclude a renewal agreement with the federal government at the earliest possible opportunity. Ontario can demonstrate its commitment to affordable housing by investing beyond the IAH requirement.



2. Across Ontario the existing social housing stock is threatened by worsening disrepair. This means inadequate conditions that threaten tenants' health, safety, and wellbeing. And, it means that some units are simply uninhabitable. This is a problem that is shared by the Province. It can be traced to the Province's decision to download housing to municipalities without adequate dollars for future repairs.

Now, municipalities need the Province's help to get Ontario's existing investment in housing up to par. Social housing is crucial infrastructure and should be explicitly included in the definition of "infrastructure" in the *Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act*, and must be part of Ontario's long-term investment plans for infrastructure renewal.

3. Many of Ontario's most vulnerable citizens call social housing home. These people – the elderly, people living with serious physical or mental illness – need help to keep a roof over their head. Social housing providers are funded to operate housing, not to provide the type of intensive support that many tenants need. Without support, many tenants experience health and safety crises, landing on the doorsteps of costly public services, such as emergency rooms and jails.

The Province has the opportunity to save money and stop health and safety crises before they happen. A new provincial fund for support services directly targeted to vulnerable social housing tenants is the answer.

Thank you for this opportunity to participate in Ontario's 2014 pre-budget consultation process.

Sincerely,

Keith Hambly
President
ONTARIO NON-PROFIT HOUSING ASSOCIATION

cc. Hon. Linda Jeffrey, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
Janet Hope, Assistant Deputy Minister (Housing), MMAH