

November 9, 2012

Barbara Hall, Chief Commissioner
Ontario Human Rights Commission
Office of the Chief Commissioner
180 Dundas St. W., 8th Floor
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 2R9



Dear Ms. Hall:

RE: ONPHA's Response to OHRC's *Minds that Matter*

I am writing on behalf of the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association (ONPHA) to express our appreciation for the opportunity to provide input into the OHRC's human rights, mental health and addictions consultation process, and to thank you for including our comments in your *Minds that Matter* report.

ONPHA represents 760 non-profit housing providers in 220 communities across Ontario. Our members believe that housing is a basic human right, fundamental to health, well-being and inclusion, and are committed to ensuring access to decent affordable housing for low income and disadvantaged Ontarians, including people living with mental health and/or addictions challenges.

In reviewing the report, we were pleased to see a number of recommendations to federal, provincial and municipal governments intended to improve housing affordability, including increasing the supply of affordable housing. The lack of affordable housing across the province is a significant barrier to meeting the needs of people living with mental health and addictions challenges.

We are also pleased to see the OHRC's commitment to provide guidance to housing providers and for-profit landlords on when the *Code* may apply when organizations deny housing to people with psychosocial disabilities. As we noted in our earlier submission, our members face



a variety of challenges in understanding and carrying out their duty to accommodate tenants with mental health issues or addictions, including:

- balancing the rights of an individual with the rights of other individuals and families who may also be members of Code-protected groups
- understanding the line between the housing provider's duty to accommodate and the tenant's responsibility to meet the obligations of tenancy
- negotiating conflicting legal, regulatory and funding requirements
- fulfilling corporate responsibilities without adequate resources including staffing

Our members, particularly the numerous small providers across the province, need support to understand and meet their duties under the *Code*. We welcome your commitment to provide clear guidelines as well as education on human rights, mental health and addictions to tenants and providers, and would like to reiterate our offer to partner with the OHRC to develop the resources needed to support our members to meet the duty to accommodate tenants with psychosocial disabilities.

The report also includes recommendations and commitments related to application procedures for supportive housing providers, and mandatory treatment requirements in social, supportive and private rental housing. We addressed these concerns in our previous submission. As the Commission begins to develop the final policy, ONPHA would like to work with the OHRC to explore these concerns, including providing additional information or facilitating a discussion with supportive housing providers to develop a better understanding of these issues.

Once again, thank you for taking ONPHA's comments into consideration, and we look forward to working directly with the OHRC to develop policies and resources which will assist housing providers to make social housing accessible for persons living with mental health issues or addictions.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Sylvia Patterson

President

ONTARIO NON-PROFIT HOUSING ASSOCIATION