



ONPHA

Board Connections

Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association | www.onpha.on.ca

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Ministries of Health & Corrections Announce new Housing

In early January, the Province allocated \$28 million toward community-based services to keep people with mental illness and addictions out of the criminal justice and corrections system. As well as providing for short-term residential crisis support beds, outreach and other services, it includes funding for approximately 400 units of supportive housing.

Four lead agencies are receiving funding for rent supplements and housing supports for people who live with mental illness and inappropriately end up in the justice system

ONPHA responded positively to this initiative, which would appear to be a "one off" arrangement and not part of the provincial promise of 6,600 supportive housing units.

ONPHA Invited to Federal Consultation

ONPHA attended a community consultation and two Expert Roundtables on the federal government's New Canadian Housing Framework, a promising process intended to lay the basis for the drafting of a National Strategy.

The Benchmarks are Here!

It finally happened. On Jan. 27, Housing providers affected by the *Social Housing Reform Act's* new funding model were sent out their draft benchmarks by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The remaining benchmark numbers will be provided by the Service Manager.

ONPHA immediately sent out an *Urgentfacts* to our members, along with the Recommendations of the Social Housing Benchmarking Advisory Team which apparently form the new methodology from which your draft benchmarks have been derived.

Administration and maintenance are now being combined into one benchmark number. This is positive for providers. Benchmarks for **Alternative providers** will be negotiated individually between the Service Manager and the provider.

Don't miss the Special Benchmarking **Regional Meeting** that ONPHA is holding in your area between Feb. 15 and Mar. 3, to give staff and board members the opportunity to review the benchmarking methodology and discuss how to deal with it.

ONPHA's Online Benchmark Analysis Tool Version 2.0 (our new resource to help you crunch your numbers) will be demonstrated at the Regional Meetings, and information will be provided on developing a business case should you need one. ONPHA will be helping our members through the benchmarking process.

Service Managers have until mid-April to get back to the Ministry with completed input forms. By then they should have discussed the data with housing providers and, hopefully, resolved any discrepancies.

Will the upcoming Provincial Budget fund the Housing Election Promises?

This budget marks the mid-way point in the government's mandate, and time is running out for housing. ONPHA's challenge is to get the Liberals' 3 election promises-- matching funding for the Federal/Provincial Affordable Housing Progra, 35,000 rent supplement/shelter allowances, and 6,600 supportive housing units-- moved onto the "essential" list and included in this key budget.

ONPHA has launched a Member letter-writing campaign to meet this challenge. You can help by using the letter-writing kit enclosed with this newsletter to write to Premier Dalton McGuinty and Finance Minister Greg Sorbara. Remind them that housing is an essential service.



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Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act

The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act had 2nd reading on Dec. 2, and has been referred to Standing Committee. The purpose of the bill is to achieve accessibility for people with disabilities by developing and enforcing standards in key areas of life-- such as employment and building environments. How this affects Ontario's non-profit housing providers and their tenants is going to depend on standards that have yet to be established. ONPHA will be approaching our supportive housing provider members about advocating on behalf of residents with disabilities, and will be tracking this legislation.

National Coalition on Housing and Homelessness Takes Shape

ONPHA is a member of the National Coalition on Housing and Homelessness, which has asked the Prime Minister to include the promised \$1.5 billion in the Feb. 23 federal budget. One of our challenges is that so little of the existing funding has been committed in provinces like Ontario.

SHRA Regulations: ONPHA Reacts to 3 Work Groups' Reports

ONPHA's response to the Reports of the 3 Service Manager Work Groups set up by the Province to review specific aspects of the *Social Housing Reform Act* Regulations has been posted on www.onpha.on.ca. ONPHA reacted to a theme in the "Definition of Income" Work Group Report around the benefits of aligning RGI more closely with the Ontario Works/Ontario Disability Support Program rules. ONPHA's position is that there is no reason to take this direction and that OW/ODSP rules do not always make sense in the context of RGI.

Ministry's Special Priority Access Workgroup Begins its Work

ONPHA is represented by President Angie Hains at the Ministry's Stakeholder Work Group to look at the Special Priority Access policy for victims of abuse. ONPHA and CHF prepared a presentation to the workgroup which clarified why some housing providers are experiencing difficulty with the policy. The workgroup intends to have final recommendations ready by late 2005 or early 2006.

Minister's Advisory Committee on Seniors Housing

Little has yet to occur in the 3 meetings held since the committee's first meeting in July of 2004. Presumably the committee will see increased activity should the government fund its election commitments in the next provincial budget. ONPHA will work as part of this committee to ensure that the interests of our senior housing members are strongly represented.

Pilot Phase Begins for SHSC's Energy Management Program

With input from both ONPHA and CHF, a series of housing providers have been selected for a 6-month pilot of the SHSC's Energy Management Program expected to be launched in March.

SHSC sets up Advisory Group on Performance Indicators

The SHSC's housing provider Advisory Group has held its first meeting, and has already made significant progress with some of the common definitions. ONPHA, CHFC-Ontario Region and SHSC will be looking to identify interested non-profits and co-ops to participate in the pilot project stage next.

MCSS Announces New Initiatives for Victims of Violence

On Dec. 13, Queen's Park announced a \$1 million annual increase for the Transitional and Housing Support Program; a one time investment of \$2 million to refurbish existing women's shelters and second stage housing; an increase in annual funding for community based counselling services; and \$500,000 towards training social housing providers on issues facing abused women. ONPHA has already submitted a proposal to do this provider training in partnership with CHF, the YWCA and Education Wife Assault.

Dream Team Launches Campaign

The Dream Team group of supportive housing tenants launched a campaign to get the Province to live up to its election promises and fund 6,600 units of supportive housing starting in this year's budget. Please take a minute to sign their petition by visiting www.thedreamteam.ca.

Spotlight on Waterloo Region

Inspiring new supportive housing projects by **Cambridge Kiwanis Village Non Profit Housing Corp.** and **House of Friendship** have been profiled in *Quick Connections*. Read all about it!

Toronto's New \$18.4M Plan

Toronto's Housing and Homelessness Plan includes \$11.2 million to build 1,000 units a year of affordable housing, \$3 million for transitional housing, and 6 newly hired outreach workers to approach homeless people and find them medical help or shelter space.



ONPHA