

January 26, 2009

The Honourable Madeleine Meilleur
Minister of Community and Social Services
Hepburn Block
6th Flr., 80 Grosvenor St.
Toronto, ON M7A1E9



The Honourable Dwight Duncan
Minister of Finance
Frost Bldg. S.
7th Flr., 7 Queen's Park Cres.
Toronto, ON M7A1Y7

RE: Proposed AODA Information and Communications Standard

Dear Ministers Meilleure and Duncan:

I am writing to you on behalf of the 760 non-profit housing provider organizations which form the membership of the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association (ONPHA) regarding the proposed information and communications standard under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*.

Let me take this opportunity to congratulate the government for taking important and bold steps toward ensuring Ontarians with disabilities are treated fairly and with dignity. In fact, the individuals the Act and its standards are designed to assist are the very individuals who are being housed by our members. Our members operate more than 160,000 non-profit housing units and provide housing for approximately 400,000 people such as the elderly, low-income families with children, the working poor, victims of violence and abuse, people living with developmental disabilities or mental illness and the homeless/hard-to-house.

In the area of accessibility to information and communications, ONPHA strongly supports the requirement for such a standard and financial assistance from your government will be needed to help non-profit housing providers to meet the annual cost requirements of such a standard. Based on the KPMG costing study undertaken by the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario, we estimate that the annual cost for our members will be between \$10 million



and \$60 million per year once the standard is fully applied. This cost is based on providers needing to develop the ongoing capacity and resources required to meet the standard such as access to specialized consulting services, technology and new equipment, to name a few. Given these significant amounts we would encourage the government to phase in whatever requirements are determined to be part of the standard.

As you know, non-profit housing providers operate in a highly regulated environment where legislation or operating agreements that are in force prevent them from raising rents beyond prescribed amounts. In addition, the ability of providers to raise sufficient revenues from non-rent and fundraising sources and the capacity of their low-income tenants to pay additional rent, even if permitted to do so, is highly limited. As such, without financial assistance from government, it would be impossible for them to comply with the standard as currently drafted.

We highly recommend that the government include within the upcoming 2009 provincial budget an amount that will provide financial assistance to non-profit housing providers to meet the requirements of the information and communications standard and we would be pleased to work with you and your government towards the standard's implementation.

Thank you for your consideration regarding this important initiative.

Sincerely,

Hugh Lawson
President

ONTARIO NON-PROFIT HOUSING ASSOCIATION

cc. Hon. Jim Watson, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
Brian Teefy, Senior Policy Advisor - Housing, Office of the Minister, MMAH
Kathleen Blinkhorn, Assistant Deputy Minister, Housing Division, MMAH