



ONPHA



Board Connections

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

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Board Members Take on the Challenge

With devolution, the Toronto network of non-profit housing providers put out a call for board members interested in educating municipal politicians about non-profit housing.

Over 20 board members accepted the challenge-- a diverse group which included members of the business community, lawyers, members of the clergy, community workers and people who are retired. What they had in common was an interest in taking the lead on this important task, and first hand knowledge of the importance of social housing in our community.

Together with provider network reps we developed a councillor outreach strategy and honed the messages we wanted to present. Our volunteers went out in pairs and met with a total of 28 City Councillors to date.

This stellar Councillor Outreach team currently includes: Pearl Quong, Deep Quong Non-Profit Homes; John Woodburn, Swansea Town Hall Residences; Nick Volk, Toronto Community Housing Corporation; Ron Alltree, Old York Tower Non-Profit Seniors Housing; the Reverend Tim Dutcher-Walls, Jim Pike and Don Armstrong from Ecuhome Corp. We can't thank them enough.

-Angie Hains, ONPHA President

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Federal Election Puts Housing Back on the Agenda

The housing issue hit the front page early in the federal election campaign, when NDP Leader Jack Layton held Paul Martin responsible for cut-backs to social housing and an increase in the number of deaths due to homelessness.

We urge you to get involved in this important election for housing. Ask your local candidates these questions:

1. Do you support a National Housing Strategy that will commit the federal government to helping build 25,000 units/year of social housing?
2. Do you agree there should be a separate fund dedicated to social housing that cannot be used for other purposes?
3. Would you invest in repairs and renovations to preserve the social housing assets we have now?

We also need the next federal government to support permanent supportive housing under its homelessness (SCPI) program, not just transitional housing and hostels.

Get involved!

Help make housing happen by engaging your local candidates with a copy of ONPHA's new election booklet *Non-Profit Housing: A Lasting Investment in a Strong Community*, already mailed out to ONPHA members or available from our website www.onpha.on.ca. Attend an all-candidates meeting, or, better still, hold one in your building!

Encourage your tenants to get involved, and to vote. Use ONPHA's VOTE HOUSING flyer outlining the 3 main parties' housing platforms (watch for updates on our website!) And don't forget to vote yourself!

Housing Commitments Sacrificed in Budget

The May 18 provincial budget was an important-- and largely disappointing-- budget for housing advocates. With some small but important exceptions, the primary housing promises contained in the provincial Liberals' election platform were sacrificed to the government's priorities of health, education & the deficit.

Please see ONPHA's May 20 *Urgentfacts* for our detailed budget analysis. The good news is the budget did contain some money for community mental health, shelters for victims of violence, long-term care, non-profit projects in difficulty, and homelessness prevention programs under MCSS.

ONPHA has been holding follow-up communications with government officials and exploring our future strategic direction with our members at our Regional Meetings, and with our Board of Directors. We will keep you posted.

Replacing the Tenant Protection Act: Update

ONPHA has been talking to our members at our Regional Meetings about your reaction to the provincial government's plans to replace the *Tenant Protection Act* with legislation that is "more fair" to tenants. ONPHA will be meeting privately with the Ministry on June 11 to make a submission that includes the input we've had from our members to date, and will post this on www.onpha.on.ca.

Important Update on Simcoe County Tribunal Case

A recent case in Simcoe County raised the issue of reasonable accommodation for a disability. A tenant with bi-polar affective disorder had been served with an eviction application due to his disruptive behaviour. The tenant maintained that his landlord, the Simcoe County Housing Corporation, should be required to provide him with housing because of his disability. The Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal Adjudicator disagreed. A number of tenants, many of whom also suffer from mental illness, had argued in favour of the eviction, claiming that manic-depressive disorder is treatable and should not be used as an excuse for disruptive behaviour.

Are Benchmarks Still Alive?

Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing staff now seem hopeful that, in the not-too-distant future, they will have a decision from the Minister on whether he will give the go-ahead in principle to release the draft benchmarks. We are confident that the Ministry's Benchmark Reference Group (including ONPHA) will be called back to the discussion table before draft benchmarks are released.

'Over 2 Million Canadians Can't Be Wrong' Campaign

On June 1, the National Coalition on Housing and Homelessness, supported by ONPHA, launched a national campaign to seek federal action on affordable housing. The "Over 2 Million Canadians Can't Be Wrong!" campaign draws attention to the fact that until 1993, Canada had a national affordable housing program that created housing for over 2 million Canadians. To have your organization added to their list of endorsers visit their website www.housingnow.ca.

SHSC Performance Indicators and Best Practices System

The SHSC is looking at establishing a centralized system of Performance Indicators and Best Practices so that housing providers can measure how effectively they are operating their projects, can benefit from each other's experience, and have a framework from which to work towards continuous improvement.

ONPHA and the Co-operative Housing Federation have contracted with the SHSC to do a feasibility study on the prospect of such a system. ONPHA has been exploring it at our Regional Meetings with members across the province.

SHSC Insurance and Abuse Policy

For providers prescribed under the *Social Housing Reform Act*, in order to be covered under the Social Housing Services Corporation's Insurance Program in situations of abuse, it is necessary to have an Abuse Policy that has been approved by the insurer. SHSC's sample Abuse Policy can be accessed on the SHSC website at www.shscorp.ca.

Improved support dollars for MOH/MCSS transferred agencies?

For groups that have not received an increase to their base budgets for 12 years, nothing explicit in the provincial budget, but hints of something to come for the mental health sector. Some agencies funded by MCSS "that have not received a funding increase for several years" get a 3% increase to base funding, but the Ministry has not confirmed who will be affected. There is some speculation that something similar is in the works for the support services that are funded by Health.

Watch your Hydro Bills!

There is a problem with some members paying too much for electricity since the hydro rate change came into effect on April 1, 2004. For a typical non-profit housing provider with one meter per building, the weighted average for hydro should be in the range of 4.78 cents/ kWh.

If that is not the case, you should pursue the matter with your local hydro distributor or call ONPHA's Leah Beck at 1-800-297-6660 ext. 106.

Upcoming Regional Meetings

Don't miss our upcoming Regional Meetings in London (June 8), Windsor (June 9), Toronto (June 16), Oshawa (June 17), Thunder Bay (June 22) and Sudbury (June 24).

Call for 2004 ONPHA Awards

Small providers welcome! Nominate a candidate for the 2004 ONPHA Award of Excellence, Tenant Achievement or Outstanding Leadership. Nominate online at www.onpha.on.ca.



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