



ONPHA

Board Connections

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Provincial Affordable Housing Consultation

The Province's affordable housing consultation will be finishing off this month. The Ministry held 10 all-day sessions around the province with housing providers and other interested parties. Despite the extremely short notice, these seem to have gone well.

ONPHA had our own successful meeting with Assistant Deputy Minister Doug Barnes and his staff; Andy Stein, Minister Caplan's Housing Policy Advisor, also attended.

We are advised that the Ministry will be digesting the comments over the next little while and that it expects a new revised Federal/Provincial Agreement early in the New Year. If they can get the deal they are looking for from the Feds, along with a nod from Ontario's Ministry of Finance, things could get rolling again sooner than we might have thought.

Committee to Examine Special Priority Access

A new committee looking at the difficult issue of Special Priority Access for victims of violence was announced by MMAH Minister Gerretsen at the ONPHA Conference on November 19. Our representative on the committee is ONPHA President Angie Hains.

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Benchmarking Report to Minister

Progress! Since Municipal Affairs and Housing Minister John Gerretsen confirmed the timeline at the ONPHA Conference, the Benchmarking Advisory Team has completed its report on the Benchmarking Methodology and is sending its recommendations to the Minister. (Non-profit housing providers have been represented on the Advisory Team through ONPHA.)

Ministry staff are scheduled to brief the Minister during the week of December 13 and after that, we expect that we will be able to make the recommendations public.

Benchmarks coming in January

The Ministry has indicated that Service Managers will be sent numbers on Jan. 15, 2005 and housing providers will be sent their numbers a week later on Jan. 22, 2005.

Watch for Regional Meetings to be held by ONPHA in late February/early March. These meetings will include training on understanding your benchmarks and dealing with the appeals process if you need to.

For **Alternative providers**, the Advisory Team concluded that there is no way to set benchmarks based on a statistical approach, and is recommending benchmarks for Alternative providers be negotiated between Service Managers and providers.

This Benchmarking Advisory Team still has work to do on process-type issues like the appeals process.

ONPHA is updating our interactive Benchmark Analysis Tool to reflect the current recommendations. We want to be ready to help members assess their status as soon as draft benchmarks are available. We will keep you posted!

Wither the Federal/Provincial Program?

The Federal and Provincial Housing Ministers as a group are moving on in their stately way to the next round of policy making, after a recent meeting in which the Provinces insisted that they control the design and delivery of the program with no requirement to match the federal funding.

Meanwhile, Ontario's municipalities are taking a wait-and-see approach because the Province, by putting in place two new branches focused on housing implementation, is signalling there will be a revitalized program ready to go soon.



The most positive signs are coming from Minister Fontana, including his speech at ONPHA's Nov. Conference, indicating his determination to break the logjam. The word is he is offering to put the federal money into the program "up front" to ease the immediate cash flow shortage that is holding Ontario back.

News in Brief

What's Happening with the *Tenant Protection Act*?

Introduction of the new landlord/tenant legislation is expected to be delayed. Rumour has it that Cabinet has been divided on the rent control/vacancy decontrol promises, and that drafting the bill has proven to be very complex.

SHRA Regulations: Attention to Three Specific Areas

ONPHA requested input into the recommendations contained in 3 reports from Service Manager/provincial government staff workgroups looking into specific SHRA Regulation issues: Definition of Income, Utility Charges and Service Level Standards. ONPHA's initial review suggests that some recommendations are positive and some are not. The Ministry has given us until Dec. 20 to respond.

2004 ONPHA Conference Highlights

Visit www.onpha.on.ca for highlights of the conference, including photos and free handouts from the sessions that you missed. The 2004 ONPHA Award winners were: Neighbourhood Link/Senior Link, Catherine Boucher of CCOC, and Club 280, the Tenant Association of North Bay's PHARA. Congratulations, all!

Polls Show Affordable Housing a Priority with the Public

Recent surveys done by the Cities of Ottawa and Toronto both showed that of all municipal programs, residents consider affordable housing to be their second or third highest priority for increased level of service!

ONPHA Supporting SHSC's Energy Management Program

ONPHA is supporting the SHSC's planned comprehensive energy management program, to include low-interest loans to providers to install energy-saving retrofits identified via an energy audit, to be paid back from the energy savings realized. A web-based utilities management system to monitor the provider's utility and water consumption has been proposed. ONPHA will continue to work with SHSC on this exciting program and will keep you apprised of developments.

Social Housing Peer-Based Performance Improvement System

SHSC has reviewed ONPHA's report on developing a Social Housing Peer-Based Performance Improvement System, and has agreed to develop the new system based on the principles we recommended--from provider-driven to voluntary--starting with a pilot phase. We will be helping to set up a user advisory group of 9 providers, with the aim of having the pilot up and running by the Fall 2005. We will likely begin work on linking in a 'Good Practices' resources early in 2006.

400 Shelter Allowances Announced

400 households from the waiting list will receive housing allowances under a Toronto Pilot developed by the charitable Toronto Community Foundation, funded equally by private landlords and MMAH (which committed \$3.6 million).

Amendments to Planning Act Include ONPHA Recommendation

The *Strong Communities (Planning and Amendment) Act* just passed, stating that municipal plans "should be consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement," making the latter more significant (as ONPHA had recommended.)

Ministry of Health 'Transformation Project' moving at Warp Speed

For ONPHA members who have been transferred to the Ministry of Health/LTC, the reorganization of the Ministry's allocation and delivery process around Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs) and community-connected, front line decision making is promising to be as significant a change as devolution was to providers under the *Social Housing Reform Act*.

The Ministry's innovative regional consultation process, which wrapped up on December 9, attracted 200-400 people per session, including a number of well-armed ONPHA members. The mental health issues made the top 10 priority list in almost every instance, reflecting excellent participation from the Mental Health and Addiction Sector.

The target date for local area plans is Sept, 2005. The final decisions as to what authorities will be transferred to the LHINs have not been taken yet.

London & SW Housing Forum

The City of London's Nov. 18 affordable housing forum, held with CMHC and MMAH, was an amazing success, opening the door to more networking and progress on affordable housing.

Considering New Development?

Would you like to investigate developing some new affordable housing, but don't have the money to get started? CMHC is now taking applications for up to \$20,000 in Seed Funding. Visit www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca or call 1 800 668-2642. Deadline is Jan. 10, 2005.



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