

October 15, 2009

Jane Weldon, Director General,
Homelessness Partnering Secretariat
Human Resources and Skills Development Canada
Place du Portage – Phase II, 7D185
165 Hotel de Ville
Gatineau, Quebec
K1A 0J2



Dear Ms. Weldon:

RE: Federal Housing and Homelessness Investments Program

The Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association (ONPHA) is pleased to submit comments on Federal Housing and Homelessness Investments. ONPHA represents 760 non-profit housing providers in 220 communities across Ontario. 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.

We were pleased to attend a recent consultation session to discuss federal funding for homelessness between 2011 and 2014 as outlined in the paper, *“Moving Forward on Housing and Homelessness – 2009 Consultations on Federal Housing and Homelessness Investments”*.

ONPHA strongly supports continuation of this program. The key strength of this program lies in its community-based delivery approach which we believe recognizes that housing needs are unique across communities and therefore require tailored solutions. Furthermore, it recognizes that local community groups are best equipped to prioritize issues and identify local solutions accordingly – an approach that maximizes federal investments and ensures the best outcomes.

The program has a successful and proven track record and, as such, ONPHA recommends that federal funding of this initiative be increased and be made permanent so that effective and efficient longer term planning and implementation can occur.

Another recommendation we would make includes the need to reduce the administrative oversight of the program. For example, we have heard from many providers that they spend

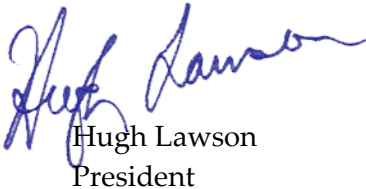


too much time repeatedly filling out detailed forms. They believe that there is a great deal of room to streamline the reporting and accountability process and by so doing would save time and administrative expense.

ONPHA believes that the federal government needs to have a sustained role in the provision of affordable housing in Canada. This includes ensuring that federal funds continue to be made available to provinces and territories. One source of additional funds available to the federal government is from the expiration of existing federal housing operating agreements. These funds could not only further enhance the Federal Housing and Homelessness Investments Program to help make that program permanent, the funds could also assist in the development of new affordable housing units and provide ongoing capital assistance needed to maintain housing assets.

ONPHA appreciates the opportunity to comment on the homelessness investments. The program works well and should be extended with a continued focus on remaining flexible, locally-delivered and responsive to community plan priorities.

Yours truly,



Hugh Lawson
President

cc: Brian Teefy, Senior Policy Advisor - Housing, Office of the Minister, MMAH
Dana Richardson, Assistant Deputy Minister, Housing Division, MMAH