

June 15, 2009
For Release at 8 am

ONTARIO'S WAIT LISTS FOR SOCIAL HOUSING GETTING LONGER

Concern over Ontario's social housing waiting list grows recession continues

(TORONTO) Nearly 130,000 households are currently on the waiting list for social housing in Ontario and that number could grow as the economy worsens, according to a report released by the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association (ONPHA).

The *ONPHA 2009 Report on Waiting List Statistics for Ontario* shows that the number of households seeking social housing in the province grew from 124,032 to 129,253 between January 2008 and 2009 – a four percent increase in just one year.

“The number of low income seniors, families and singles seeking social housing continues to increase,” said Sharad Kerur, ONPHA’s Executive Director. “There simply is not enough community-based affordable housing being built to meet the massive need.”

In fact, the actual number of people in need of affordable housing is likely much higher than waiting list statistics suggest since many households, discouraged by lengthy waiting times, walk away without filling in an application.

“You can spend years on the list waiting to be housed,” said Hugh Lawson, President of ONPHA. “In Peterborough, seniors may have to wait up to seven years and in Peel Region, families can wait over 20 years. Applicants need help now.”

The urgent need for more affordable rental housing was highlighted in another report released earlier this year by ONPHA and CHF Canada Ontario Region. *Where's Home?-2008* showed that 1-in-5 Ontario tenant households were spending more than 50% of their income on rent, putting them at significant risk of losing their housing and crowding out other expenditures.

“With a long and potentially slow economic recovery ahead, the need for community-based affordable housing will only continue to grow,” said Sharad Kerur. “It is fortunate that the government is undertaking development of a long-term affordable housing strategy to specifically include a mix of non-profit and co-op housing.”

“Recent budgetary investments made by the Federal Government and the Province will help build and repair social housing, but a lot of hard work remains if Ontario is going to tackle the affordable housing crisis” said Hugh Lawson. “We hope that the Province’s long-term affordable housing strategy will provide Ontario with a workable and adequately funded housing plan that will help lift households out of poverty.”

For over 20 years, ONPHA has been the voice of non-profit housing in Ontario. Our 760 member organizations 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.

A copy of the report and more information about ONPHA and non-profit housing can be found at: www.onpha.on.ca

For Further Information Contact:
Sharad Kerur
Executive Director,
Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association

Tel: 416-927-9144 ext. 102
(Cell): 416-723-2835

Email: sharad.kerur@onpha.org

-30-