

NORTHERN ONTARIO SERVICE DELIVERERS ASSOCIATION

**SUBMISSION TO THE MINISTRY OF MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS
AND HOUSING**

**RE: LONG TERM AFFORDABLE HOUSING STRATEGY
UPDATE**

JUNE, 2015

Submitted to:

Janet Hope, Assistant Deputy Minister, Housing Division
Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
777 Bay Street, 14 Floor
Toronto, ON
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1. Background

The Northern Ontario Service Deliverers Association (NOSDA) brings together 10 District Social Service Administration Boards (DSSABs) and 1 Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM) who are responsible for the municipal delivery of social services in Northern Ontario. NOSDA members are primarily responsible for the service system management of Social Housing, Emergency Medical Services (EMS), Child Care and Ontario Works programs.

We are pleased to provide this feedback on the Province's Long Term Affordable Housing Strategy Renewal (LTAHS) to the Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH). We endorse the 'quick win' approach and recommendations made in the joint submission made by the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA) and Housing Services Corporation (HSC) entitled *Building Sustainability in the Housing System - Submission on the Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy Renewal: Early Wins for Long Term Gains*, March, 2015. This Brief goes on to expound on the Northern perspective on a few specific recommendations made in the OMSSA and HSC paper.¹

2. Context

In early 2015, the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA) and its Service Managers Housing Network (SMHN) along with the Housing Services Corporation (HSC) collaborated on offering a number of considerations "to address housing need in their communities and build sustainability in the housing system". NOSDA was represented on that Working Group.

As noted in that report's Introduction, "*the intent of this report is to emphasize actionable areas that can be facilitated both in the short-term and medium-term towards achieving housing affordability, sustaining important public assets and greater community health and well-being.*"

NOSDA applauds this collaborative effort and strongly supports the OMSSA/HSC March, 2015 LTAHS submission and recommendations therein. All these recommendations need to be considered in the context of the inter-related activities and operating environments between municipal, provincial and federal levels of government and the broader economy that we find ourselves in at this time.

¹ For further background, please see Northern Ontario Service Deliverers Association. *Consolidated Pan-Northern Housing and Homelessness Report*, November 2014

3. Specific Endorsements of the OMSSA/HSC Paper

In addition to the DSSAB specific documents that may be submitted to the Minister, NOSDA submits the following information to contribute to the renewal of the Long-Term Affordable Housing Program:

NOSDA has reviewed the submission from OMSSA and HSC and supports all of the recommendations outlined in the document, In addition, there are several specific issues contained therein that require additional clarification from a Northern Ontario perspective. Specifically, Recommendations -

#6 Financing – We urge the Province to work with Service Managers to establish economic tools of sufficient scale to minimize risk. This may involve financial tools that cross Service Manager borders and should involve the Province underwriting initiatives in order to build a credit story that is attractive to investors.

#9 Use of Municipal tools to develop affordable housing – We ask that the Province continue to work with DSSAB's to clearly define the role and standing of DSSABs in municipal legislation (Planning Act, Municipal Act, etc.) to allow for DSSABs to take advantage of tools that are available to municipalities (i.e. opportunity for early access to school property tenders, access to MPAC information and property data)

#23 Amend the HSA and Regulation 367/11 for consistency with the DSSAB Act particularly regarding the levy and apportionment formula.

We wholeheartedly endorse this recommendation from the OMSSA/HSC Paper and concur with the recommendation that Section 117 of Regulation 367/11 must be removed. We have asked for the lifting of this onerous and wrong-headed Regulation for a number of years.

Apart from these specific endorsements, NOSDA also recommends that:

A. The Province should work with NOSDA and its Northern Service Managers to develop an allocation model for program funding (AHP, IAH, CHPI, etc.) that accounts for Northern circumstances. The short construction season, lack of contractors, price of fuel, cost of hydro, price of materials, and required transportation all result in increased costs while allocations are smaller due to the fact that they are based on household counts which means that SM must do more with less. This is not sustainable and is a bad investment strategy for the Province and a hidden download for the municipalities that must make up the difference.

B/ The Province should eliminate the 'Use it or lose it' funding policy associated with program dollars. Service Managers need the flexibility to pool program dollars across fiscal periods in order to optimize program delivery and generate scale for project development. This is a quick and easy win. The Provinces of Alberta and BC already demonstrate program funding models which are not based on a 'use it or lose it' policy.

C/ The Province must expand the network of ministries required to sustain housing and service development. The partnership table created to bring together Health and Housing must include education, finance, corrections, and others in order to truly bring the Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy in line with the Poverty Reduction Strategy. More importantly, in Northern Ontario, when it comes to developing and sustaining housing in tenuous economic situations multiple strategies are required, such as economic development plans, tourism plans, education plans, etc. Housing development is difficult in communities where seniors have no market in which to sell their homes to free up the equity need for long-term rents in supported units and new families will not move to communities where elementary schools and emergency rooms are closing. A coordinated system management approach is needed and it must include high level ministry personnel along with DSSAB and municipal representatives.

4. Conclusion

NOSDA members appreciate the ongoing communications and closer relations that we have enjoyed over the past few years with the MMAH, OMSSA and HSC as well as with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) and its two Northern counterparts – the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association (NOMA) and the Federation of Northern Municipalities (FONOM). By working together, great strides can be taken to address the need for and provision of Affordable Housing in Northern Ontario. We look forward to continuing to build on our positive working relationship.

4.0 RESOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Websites:

1. Kenora: <http://www.kdsb.on.ca>
2. Rainy River: <http://www.rrdssab.ca>
3. Thunder Bay: <http://www.tbdssab.ca>
4. Algoma: <http://www.adsab.on.ca>
5. Sault Ste. Marie: <http://www.ssm-dssab.ca>
6. Manitoulin-Sudbury: <http://www.msdsb.net>
7. Greater Sudbury: <http://www.greatersudbury.ca>
8. Nipissing: <http://www.dnssab.on.ca>
9. Cochrane: <http://www.cdssab.on.ca>
10. Timiskaming: <http://www.dtssab.com>
11. Parry Sound: <http://www.psdssab.org>

Publications:

Ontario Municipal Social Services Association and Housing Services Corporation. *Building Sustainability in the Housing System - Submission on the Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy Renewal: Early Wins for Long Term Gains*, March, 2015.

Northern Ontario Service Deliverers Association. *Consolidated Pan-Northern Housing and Homelessness Report*, November 2014.

Ontario Municipal Social Services Association. *Enabling the Service System Management Role in Affordable Housing and Homelessness Prevention*. August, 2014.

Northern Ontario Service Deliverers Association. *Homelessness in Northern Ontario Pre-feasibility Study for Implementing the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System in Northern Ontario*. July, 2014.

Northern Ontario Service Deliverers Association. *NOSDA Strategic Plan 2013-2016*. October, 2013.

Northern Ontario Services Deliverers Association. *Voices in the Wilderness: A Pan Northern Ontario Homelessness Summit*. June, 2012.

Northern Ontario Service Deliverers Association. *A Pan-Northern Ontario Inventory of Homelessness Problems and Practices*. February, 2011.