ONPHA's Provincial Election Kit



ONPHA Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association

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What the Issues are

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Keep housing on the public agenda:

- 1. Write a letter to your MPP NOW!
- 2. Send information sheets to named candidates

3. Distribute sample letter and information sheets to tenants



Make this kit work for you

ONPHA's Provincial Election Kit is designed to help board members, staff and tenants make non-profit housing an election issue. To make the most of this kit:

- 1. Give copies of the entire kit to your board
 - Also give copies of letters and issues sheets to your tenants
- 2. Suggest that your board members, staff and tenants contact your MPP <u>now</u> once an election is called, your MPP's schedule will be full!
 - Write a letter: sample letters to MPPs are on pages 15 and 20. The issue sheets (beginning on pages 8 and 16) are meant to be attached to the letter as additional information for your MPP.
 - Set a meeting with representatives drawn from your board, staff and tenants, or invite your MPP to attend a tenant event. The issues sheets (beginning on pages 8 and 16) will help you to prepare for your meeting with your MPP or other candidates. The questions sheets (beginning on pages 14 and 19) will also help with your meeting. The best questions are those that pertain most directly to your riding. Also, if you have local information or experiences to share, combine it with the questions in this kit. Use the *Comebacks to frequently heard statements* starting on page 11 to respond to statements that your MPP or candidate may make.

3. Once an election is called:

- Bring materials to all candidates meetings. Photocopy issues sheets (beginning on pages 8 and 16) and leave them behind at the meetings
- Encourage tenants to ask questions when candidates knock at their door
- Ask questions and hand out the issue sheets to candidates who knock at your own door.

4. Network

• Work with other non-profits in your area, and other organizations and individuals who care about the people you serve. Feel free to distribute copies of this kit to other organizations, agencies or individuals.



Where Each Party Stands

The Ontario Liberal Party

The Ontario Liberal Party made affordable housing part of its *Plan for Clean, Safe Communities.* That plans says, "We believe the provincial government has a responsibility to help provide affordable housing." The plan includes:

- Matching the Federal Government's \$245 million contribution to the Affordable Housing Program with cash and land contributions. Goal: new housing for 20,000 moderate and low-income families
- To make appropriate Ontario-owned lands available at reduced or no cost for affordable housing construction
- \$100 million for shelter allowances for working families paying more than 50% of their income on rent. Goal: subsidies for 35,000 families
- Rent controls in regions where CMHC reports vacancy rates under 3% (or higher rate determined in consultation with landlords and tenants)
- \$10 million for a Provincial Rent Bank, offering one-time assistance with short-term arrears
- An Ontario Mortgage and Housing Partnership to work with CMHC to provide competitive financing rates
- An increase in the operating budgets for community mental health agencies that provide counselling, early-intervention and self-help
- 6,600 additional supportive units for mental health patients by year four
- Creating a mental health services registry that will provide 24/7 access to information about available services.

The Ontario New Democratic Party

The Ontario New Democratic Party's *Public Power: Practical Solutions for Ontario,* identified two "practical solutions:" "protect tenants by freezing rents for two years and bringing back real rent control" and "reduce homelessness by building 32,000 new, affordable housing units over the next four years, plus 11,200 additional supportive housing units for the homeless." The plan includes:

- A transfer of \$536 million from the provincial land transfer tax to municipalities to spend on affordable housing. The funds would be pooled province-wide, and then distributed to municipalities on the basis of need.
 - The fund would pay for 32,000 units over four years in mixed income building, 11,200 supportive housing units, and to increase the shelter portion of social assistance to 85% of the average rent.
 - Up to 20% of the fund could be spent on repairing existing social housing.
- A two-year rent freeze, followed by rent controls applied to both vacant and occupied units.



The Ontario Progressive Conservative Party

The Ontario Progressive Conservative Party published their platform – "The Road Ahead" in May, 2003. Their approach during their past two terms in office has focused on "getting out of the housing business," getting developers building again by removing barriers to private rental development, and funding supportive housing, though narrowly defined to exclude alternative housing providers. **Their record includes**:

- Cancelling all funding for new social housing, in many cases paying out considerable compensation rather than completing projects
- Devolving social housing administration to the municipal level
- Funding a \$45 million Mental Health Homelessness Initiative, creating 3,000 "beds" for people with serious mental illness, and announcing \$67 million to fund new housing for developmentally disabled people
- Allocating \$50 million dollars in transferred federal funds to a new rent supplement program. Because they capped their commitment to 5 years, many municipalities did not take up this funding. In the March budget they renamed the program and extended it to 2023. The target remains "about 8,000 households".
- Offering \$20 million dollars to match the \$245 million federal contribution to the Affordable Rental Housing Program (the rest of the matching funds must come from municipalities or participants in the program)
- Providing \$150 million in land transfer tax rebates to new homeowners since 1996.
- Providing \$4 million in PST rebates on construction materials for new rental units that meet certain size restrictions
- Regulatory changes to encourage rental construction, including removing rent controls of vacant units, removing many barriers to condo conversions and demolition, changes to the *Ontario Building Code*, simplifying the *Planning Act*, and giving municipalities the power to offer incentives to private housing developers
- Pressing the federal government to change the *Income Tax Act* and CMHC's mortgage insurance program to facilitate rental housing development
- The March, 2003 budget announced \$250 million over 5 years for "mental health care reform", with details to be announced later. This is to cover a wide range of reforms, which could include some housing

The May, 2003 Conservative platform added two key housing policies to their approach:

- If re-elected a Conservative government would pass legislation allowing homeowners to deduct \$5,000 of their mortgage payments from their taxable income. When fully implemented, they estimate it would create a \$500 savings for every household in Ontario with more than \$5,000 in mortgage interest payments, at a cost to the provincial treasury of at least \$700 million annually.
- The government will also pass a "scoop" law allowing homeless people to be taken off the streets forcibly, while promising to also bring responsible care to the homeless.

Where ONPHA Stands

We believe:

That the government of Ontario must join the other levels of government in providing significant support for the development of an affordable rental housing program that:

- creates housing that is accessible to people on social housing waiting lists
- puts greater resources into supportive housing
- focuses the taxpayers' money more on new permanent housing rather than leased housing
- provides significant funding to maintain and regenerate existing stock
- provides rent supplement support directly to households that have spent years on waiting list for new units.

It's time for Ontario to seize the \$360 million federal opportunity to get close to 15,000 units of affordable rental housing built!

In 2001, the Federal Government took the lead, promising \$245 million to create affordable homes for 10,000 Ontario families. In the 2003 Throne Speech, the Federal Government promised another \$ 115 million in Ontario for this program to produce another 4,600 affordable units.

This is a matching program. Without Ontario funds, only "market rent" units will be created – the very rents that are unaffordable now to the 300,000 Ontario tenants who now pay over 50% of their income on housing. But so far, the Ontario Government has committed only \$20 million dollars in matching funding for this program, leaving the rest for municipalities to cobble together.

We call for the Ontario Government to provide \$360 million over 5 years to match the Federal funding.

The units created by this program should also be affordable to the hundreds of thousands of individuals and families on Ontario's waiting lists.

- The government must therefore commit approximately \$44 million annually to ensure that at least one half the 14,600 units created by this program receive rent supplements the only guarantee these units will be **truly affordable** to the families now waiting for a non-profit housing unit
- The government must also ensure that most of these units remain permanently affordable not just for 15 years as the program now calls for. At least half the new housing must be owned by non-profit organizations the only guarantee that rents will stay **affordable forever**. Buildings registered as condominiums should not be eligible.

Where ONPHA Stands

Over 11,000 Ontarians need a home, and need support

The Ontario Government has made a good start. Since 1999, its Mental Health Homelessness Initiative has created almost 3,000 homes for people with mental illness. But it only funds a narrow band of eligible clients struggling with mental health and addiction. The program must be expanded to embrace the full range of groups that provide housing for individuals and families that are homeless, living in shelters or threatened with homelessness. It must also now focus more on building new permanent supportive housing (rather than temporarily leasing units) and ensure the existing supportive housing is adequately funded.

Now we need to:

- Commit \$125 million in total for capital contributions to create 3,600 new units over 5 years for "phase 3" of the Mental Health Homelessness Initiative program to house people with mental illness who are still homeless, poorly housed or struggling without support.
- Commit to an annual lease subsidy of \$6.4 million to subsidize rents in about 1,840 leased units (for the same client group) down to a rent equal to the shelter allowance provided to people with disabilities.
- Develop a new "twin" program with \$125 million in equivalent funding to fund 5,500 units to be created by "alternative" supportive housing groups serving homeless and hard-to-house people. These are people who do not have mental illness, but still need supports to stay housed. Provide \$6.4 million for head leased units for this client group as well.
- Provide funding so that service agencies can provide the necessary daily living, medical and counselling support to the additional 11,000 tenants that will no longer have to be institutionalized or provided for in shelters.
- Protect the supportive housing we have now, by setting operating budgets that keep pace with inflation.

Protect Victims of domestic abuse

Women and children who are escaping from violence need extra security, counselling and other support in order to regain control over their lives. ONPHA calls for the Ontario Government to restore the support funding for transitional housing, through the Ministry of Community, Family and Children's Services. In addition, we call for more permanent, rental housing for all families on social housing waiting lists.

Where ONPHA Stands

Protect the housing we have

ONPHA also calls for the Ontario Government to release reports showing the under-funding of capital reserves and operating budgets for the existing 228,000 social housing units, and establish funding mechanisms to ensure these precious social assets are not allowed to run down. Ontario does not need to face the kind of problems of massive rebuilding being undertaken in the US and Britain.

Protect those who are waiting

Finally, ONPHA calls for the Ontario Government to provide rent supplements to tenants on social housing waiting lists who are experiencing extreme poverty while waiting years for a vacant unit to become available.



Issue Sheet: Affordable Housing

Non-profit housing. Affordable now. Affordable forever.

The problem:

Over 300,000 households – 22% of Ontario's tenants – still pay more than half their income on rent

And their rents are rising. Over the past two years, Ontario's average rent increased at **twice the rate of inflation.** In Toronto, the average rent for a two-bedroom apartment is \$1,039. But rents have climbed across Ontario: in Barrie, Peel, Ottawa, London and 15 other major centres, rents have gone up this year and last.

At the same time, rental units are disappearing. For every rental apartment built over the past 10 years, Ontario has lost 1½ units to condo conversion or demolition. That's in the multi-unit buildings that Canada Mortgage and Housing tracks. Census Canada reports that from 1996 to 2001, 40,780 Ontario rental units disappeared, many of them duplexes, basement apartments and condo rentals.

The wrong solution: Assume the private market will meet the need.

The Ontario Government has removed the regulatory barriers to rental housing development. Mortgage interest rates are down. Rent controls have gone. Rents are up. And a sagging stock market makes rental property look like a great investment. Yet even in these "best of times" for rental investors, Ontario is losing, not gaining, rental housing.

The fact is, the private sector can never meet the needs of Ontario's lowest income households. Even the Ontario Government's own Housing Supply Working Group, a private-sector advisory group, says that its recommendations to reduce government taxes, charges and regulations "will not generate new rental projects which are affordable to tenants with very low incomes."

The Government needs to step in with its own housing programs, targeted to the people who need it most. And the limited programs it has, need to be expanded and improved.

The tested solution: Non-profit housing that is truly affordable, and affordable forever.

Right now, over 500,000 individuals-- families, seniors and people with disabilities-- have a permanent home in non-profit and co-op housing. Over 80% of these Ontarians cannot



afford market rents. Yet their homes are attractive and well maintained. Their rents are secure, and affordable forever.

The opportunity: \$360 million in Federal funds, waiting to be invested in new affordable housing

In 2001, the Federal Government announced its Affordable Housing Program, promising \$245 million (with an additional \$115m recently added) to Ontario in grants for new, affordable rental housing. But this housing will only be affordable if provincial governments match the Federal contribution.

Some provinces, such as Quebec, matched the Federal contribution immediately, and new truly affordable rental housing is now being built.

So far, the Ontario Government's sole commitment has been \$20 million. Municipalities – equipped only with their outdated property tax base – are being asked to cobble together the rest of the matching funds to meet the needs of their residents. After two years, the Ontario Government and the municipalities have still not reached an agreement, and *no* new rental housing in Ontario has been built under this program.

It's time for Ontario to catch up

The Ontario Government must match the federal government's funds, and make the potential 15,000 affordable units promised under the Affordable Housing Program **truly** affordable. Without Ontario's contribution, these new apartments must charge average market rents – the very rents that 300,000 tenants **can't** afford right now!

The Ontario Government must also target these funds to the people who need help most. At least half the housing created by this program should receive provincially funded rent supplements – the only guarantee these units will be **truly affordable** to the thousands of families languishing on municipal waiting lists.

At least half the new housing must be also be targeted for non-profit organizations. Right now, the Ontario Government's rules allow ¼ of these new units to be registered as condominiums. *None* of the new units need to stay affordable after the first 15 years.

Non-profit organizations don't have to maximize rents for their investors. They won't hike their rents or convert to a condominium in 15 years. Non-profit ownership is the only guarantee that rents will stay **affordable forever**.



Issue Sheet: Affordable Housing

Non-profit housing is affordable now, and forever.

Every western democracy knows what Ontario has re-discovered over the past five years. Loosening government regulations and cutting taxes can help create a good climate for rental investment. But these measures will never help the thousands of people who cannot afford market rents.

That is why every western democracy has its own government-funded housing programs. In Ontario, much of the rental housing we have now was built through social housing government programs, and private sector programs such as MURBS, Limited Dividends, and Renterprise, to name only a few.

But *only* the investments in non-profit housing have paid off in permanently affordable housing. For over 500,000 Ontario people--families, seniors and people with disabilities--having a home in non-profit and co-op housing has been the solution.

With the Federal Government ready and willing to give money to Ontario, and municipalities gamely trying to make up the difference, it's a solution we can't afford to miss.



Comebacks to Frequently Heard Statements

"Non-profit housing was devolved to the municipal level. It's not a provincial responsibility any more."

But it should be. In 1999, the Golden Report on the homelessness crisis led the way, showing how each level of government could play its part. Here's what it said. "Paying for social housing out of local property tax revenues contravenes all of the accepted principles for assigning tax and expenditure responsibility between levels of government."

That report called for the Ontario government to do its share. Housing redistributes incomes, it addresses poverty, it plays a central role in health and mental health. Those are provincial responsibilities. And so is housing.

What I'd like to see is an end to inter-governmental shuffling, and have all three levels of government sit down, and work out what they are going to do to fix the recurring housing crisis.

"I understand the housing market is jumping, and rental construction is on an upswing."

It has been a great year for housing. Mortgage interest rates are down. New home construction has boomed. And high income tenants are buying their own homes, leaving vacant units to trickle their way down through the rental market. There are even a handful of rental starts – although to keep things in perspective, Ontario has lost 1½ units for every rental unit started over the past 10 years.

Unfortunately, the boom may be coming to an end. The Bank of Canada has already announced an interest rate hike, and predicts more. Experts report most tenants with the \$27,000 down payment needed for the average priced home have already made the move.

More importantly, the boom never reached the 300,000 tenants who now pay 50% of their incomes on rent. That's why the government needs to step in with housing programs that create truly affordable housing.

"The government tried non-profit housing. It was a boondoggle."

You know, right now the federal government has an Affordable Housing Program that promises \$50,000/unit to developers who will build housing that rents at market rates. Funnily enough, that's about the same amount of money that used to go to non-profit developers to make the economics work for them.



Comebacks to Frequently Heard Statements

I think the government has just learned what every other western democracy already knows. Affordable housing is a public good, just like affordable health care and affordable education. It costs money. To hope for the "magic" of the free market to solve these problems is to ignore the lessons of history right here in Ontario, and around the world.

"Why not shelter allowances? Give money to the people and let *them* find the housing."

The current government promised shelter allowances in the Common Sense Revolution. But when it investigated, it rejected shelter allowances as too expensive, too difficult to target, and not likely to stimulate new rental construction anyways.

But you are right. Low income people *do* need subsidies to afford market rents. And new government supported affordable housing must be truly affordable. That is why we're calling for new rent supplement funding to ensure that at least half of all new units built with government support are truly affordable. ONPHA is also calling for a companion program to offer rent supplements for tenants on social housing waiting lists who live in extreme poverty while they wait for vacant units to become available.

"Non-profit housing is too expensive."

Look at it this way. Right now, the Ontario Government pays \$38 a night for every shelter bed, and that doesn't cover the entire cost – municipalities need to make up the extra 20% of the cost, and sometimes more. That's upward of \$47 a night. For that amount of money, you could house that shelter resident in their own non-profit apartment, complete with their own kitchen, bathroom and support, and have money left over.

Here's another example. Over the past five years, the Ontario Government has rebated \$24 million every year to first time homebuyers. It seems to be the province's biggest housing program. In today's market, that would cut the mortgage on a typical home by about \$8.40 a month – a welcome treat, but hardly a good use of public money when compared to the kind of problems faced by renters paying over 50% of their income in rent!

So why isn't the government getting the biggest bang for the buck, by investing in non-profit housing?



Comebacks to Frequently Heard Statements

"The best protection for tenants is a strong private rental market."

Agreed. Anything that will stimulate more private rental construction is a good thing. But we need to look at reality. The Ontario Government has done everything within its power to create a friendly environment for private rental construction. Yet we have lost 1½ rental units for every new rental unit built. And any new rentals are being built at the high end.

The private sector can never meet the needs of Ontario's lowest income households. The Government needs to step in with its own housing programs, targeted to the people who need it most.

"In our community, we don't need new housing. It's an affordability issue."

This is where rent supplements can help. Rent supplements extend the reach of that housing to the people who need it most.



Questions for Candidates on New Affordable Housing

1. Two years ago, the Federal Government agreed to give Ontario \$245 million in grants for new affordable rental housing. Now they have promised an additional \$115 million. It was supposed to be a matching program. Yet so far, the Ontario Government has only committed \$20 million toward its \$360 million obligation, and municipalities are being asked to pick up the difference.

If elected, would you match the Federal Government's \$360 million contribution, and commit to a rent supplement program sufficient to ensure that at least 50% of the units can house people on our waiting lists?

And would you make sure at least half the units are owned by non-profit organizations, so the rents will stay affordable forever?

2. People who move into our non-profit are happy and relieved to finally get a stable home they can afford. But there are many, many people still on our local waiting list. They're on the list because they are paying way too much rent, often for sub-standard housing.

If elected, what steps would you take to create affordable housing for the people waiting on Ontario's social housing waiting lists?

3. Like all prudent homeowners, non-profit housing needs to ensure money is at hand to replace roofs, furnaces, fridges and stoves. In 1999, the Ontario Government hired IBI Consultants to study whether the Province had contributed enough to non-profit housing capital reserves to keep that housing in good condition.

That study was completed in October 2000, but never released. If elected, would you publish the findings of the Province's own study, and make up any shortfalls in provincial capital reserve and maintenance funding?

4. In 1995, the Ontario Government cut the shelter allowance for people on social assistance by 21%. Since then, Ontario rents have gone up at double the rate of inflation.

In the Greater Toronto Area, to give a concrete example, in 1994 a family of four would get a shelter allowance of \$700, and the average rent was \$780. Today, that same family would get \$544, while the average market rent is \$1,055.

Do you think shelter allowances for people on social assistance should keep pace with the average rent? We know the real answer is more affordable rental housing. But in the meantime, what are these people supposed to do?



Affordable Non-Profit Housing

Sample Letter to MPP from Staff/Board/Tenant

From:	Date:	
To:		
Dear		
profit organization is home to	Board Member for/am a tenant of o (<i>indicate type/number of tenants</i>) rides permanently affordable rental housing t	
who have low incomes.		

We know non-profit housing works and we also know first hand of the critical need in the province right now.

- Approximately 165,000 low-income households are on non-profit housing waiting lists across the province.
- One in four renters pay more than 50% of their income in rent.
- Ontario has fewer rental units today than it did 10 years ago, due to demolition and conversion to condominiums.

The hardest hit in a rental crisis are people of low income and those are the people that nonprofits are committed to housing.

We are asking the Provincial Government to:

- Build more non-profit housing in partnership with the Federal Government through the Affordable Housing Program
- Provide rent supplements to low income people on non-profit housing waiting lists
- Maintain the non-profit rental housing that we have now.

Attached, you will find some additional information about affordable housing. I hope you will read it over, and then let me know your plans to support the commitments of the other levels of government.

Sincerely,

Enclosed: Where ONPHA Stands and Info Sheet on Affordable Housing



Issue Sheet: Supportive Housing

Supportive Housing: Permanent homes for people most in need

The problem: Over 11,000 Ontarians need a home, and need support

The most recent task force to study the homelessness crisis, chaired by Ann Golden, called for 14,000 more supportive housing units across Ontario over a five year period.

The task force had discovered that half the people in hostel beds each night are not transients, or people facing a temporary crisis. They are people who live in hostels year after year. Give these people a permanent home, the task force argued, and you would cut the need for shelters in half.

Some of Ontario's most vulnerable people would get a permanent address: a place to cook meals, keep their possessions, build social connections, and begin to make a contribution to their community.

Taxpayers would get a break too. Today, the Ontario Government pays up to \$38/night for a shelter bed – and that is only part of the cost. Municipal governments pay another 20% of the cost or more. For this same price, the Ontario government could create a new non-profit apartment, complete with kitchen, bathroom and a supportive community, and still have money left over. It's also well known that institutional costs of hospitals, long term care institutions, or addiction recovery centers are far greater than supporting people in their communities.

The solutions: More supportive housing for people with mental illness

To its credit, the Province has invested \$45 million to create supportive housing for 3,000 people through Phases I and II of the Mental Health Homelessness Initiative. But that leaves us short 11,000 units if we are to meet the need identified by Ann Golden's task force on homelessness.

And the program as it stands only funds a narrow band of eligible clients struggling with mental health and addiction. The program must be expanded to embrace the full range of groups that provide housing for individuals and families that are homeless, living in



Issue Sheet: Supportive Housing

shelters or threatened with homelessness. It must also now focus more on building new permanent supportive housing (rather than temporarily leasing units) and ensure the existing supportive housing is adequately funded.

We call for \$125 million in total capital contributions for a 5 year Phase III Mental Homelessness Initiative, to build 3,660 new housing units for people with mental illness who are still in hostels, under-housed, or struggling without support. The government should also commit to providing ongoing annual lease subsidies of approximately \$6.4 million to subsidize rents in about 1,840 leased units for the same client group down to a rent equal to the shelter allowance provided to people with disabilities. Together this will make available over 5,500 units.

This initiative should create and favour new housing. So far, the Mental Health Homelessness Initiative has favoured head leases. But head leases don't create new housing. They aren't permanently affordable. And in many parts of the province, there are simply no leased units available. **The best buy for our tax dollars is permanent housing, owned by non-profit providers.**

More permanent, supportive homes for other homeless people

About 35% of the people living in hostels are mentally ill. But most people who live in hostels, or on the street, need supports to keep themselves permanently housed. For these individuals, "alternative housing," now funded by the municipal level government, has been the answer. These homes are almost identical to supportive housing for people with mental illness. Yet they are often struggling with cobbled-together programs and short term funding to provide the supports their tenants need.

We call for an additional \$125 million Ontario Government investment in a "twin" program to create 3,660 supportive housing units for alternative providers, as well as \$6.4 million annually for 1,840 leased units for the same client group.

Dependable funding to provide the necessary support

The tenants coming off the streets and out of institutions will require medical and daily living support. It must be dependable and it cannot be absorbed by struggling agencies whose funding for this kind of support has been flat-lined for almost 10 years.

We call for a commitment to fund support services to support these tenancies and to ensure the 11,000 tenants in these new units of housing stay off the streets permanently.



Issue Sheet: Supportive Housing

Real protection for victims of domestic abuse

In 1995, the Ontario Government cut support funding for transitional housing, including funding for extra security, counselling and other support that would help victims of domestic abuse gain control over their lives.

As an alternative, the Government gave victims of domestic abuse priority access to social housing. This alternative, however, does not protect those women whose lives are in danger without extra security or support.

We call for restored support funding, through the Ministry of Community, Family and Children's Services, for transitional housing. And we call for more permanent, rental housing for all families on social housing waiting lists.

Maintaining the supportive housing we have now

Since 1998, Ontario's supportive housing budgets have fallen 14% behind inflation. To make ends meet, supportive housing has had to trim day-to-day maintenance and patch roofs and walls that really should be replaced.

This is no way to protect our buildings – the homes of some of Ontario's most vulnerable citizens. It is no way to protect a public asset – obtained through tax dollars, with the Province itself guaranteeing the mortgages. In a very real sense, the Ontario Government is putting its own investments at risk!

We call for both the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Community, Family and Children's Services to live up to their agreements.

In 1998, these Ministries promised to keep supportive housing budgets in line with inflation, following the "cost factors" published by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. They need to retroactively increase supportive housing budgets by 14%. And then they need to build in cost factors that reflect the cost of inflation every year.



Questions for Candidates about Supportive Housing

1. Almost 3,000 people with serious mental illness have found a home through the Ministry of Health's Mental Health Homelessness Initiative. But we know Ontario needs 11,000 additional supportive housing units to meet the overall need. Do you support the extension of this successful program?

2. The Province now spends \$38/day for every person in a shelter -- and that doesn't cover the full cost. Would you spend that same amount of money to create a permanent address for that same person, giving them their own kitchen and bathroom, plus support services, in non-profit housing?

3. Most people would rather own than rent. But so far, the Ministry of Health's Mental Health Homelessness Initiative has focused on "head leases," and conversions of existing buildings rather than new housing. But head leases are always temporary, and conversions just recycle existing housing. Would you increase opportunities for non-profit housing organizations to build new housing for mentally ill people – and create some new housing that can stay affordable forever?

4. When the Province devolved social housing to the municipal level, municipalities agreed to increase housing budgets to keep up with inflation. Municipalities have kept that agreement.

The Ministry of Health made a similar agreement when it took over non-profit housing administration in 2000. But it has not kept its agreement – and our budgets have eroded by 14% over the last two and half years.

We don't want to see our well-maintained buildings deteriorate. I'm sure, given the Province guarantees our mortgage, that you don't want to see routine maintenance ignored until it turns into a building catastrophe. Would you require the Ministry of Health to uphold its agreement, and match the cost of inflation as set out by the Province's own Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing?



Supportive Housing Sample Letter to MPP from staff/board

From:		Date:	
То:			
Dear			
	for/am a Board Member for		
-	ation is home to		
are buil	t into the housing we provide, ou	ir tenants receive the help they	need to stay
housed	, and realize the benefits of living	in a caring community.	
(Add yo	ur own comments if desired)		

I would now like to know your plans to create more success stories such as ours. The Ministry of Health's Mental Health Homelessness Initiative has made a great start, providing homes for 3,000 people with serious mental illness.

Here is what Ontario still needs:

- 1. 11,000 more permanent homes to meet the current supportive housing crisis
- 2. Funding to provide the medical and daily living supports needed by tenants who are coming off the streets, to keep them permanently off the streets
- 3. An expansion of the program to include not only those struggling with mental health and addiction, but also to the individuals and families that are homeless, living in shelters or threatened with homelessness, who need support to keep themselves permanently housed
- 4. Restored support funding for transitional housing for the real protection of women and children who are escaping from violence
- 5. The Government of Ontario to live up to its agreement to keep budgets in line with inflation, so that we can properly maintain and keep safe the buildings that house some of our most vulnerable citizens

I have attached some additional information about supportive housing. I hope you will read it over, and let me know your plans to build on the supportive housing success story.



Supportive Housing Sample Letter to MPP from staff/board

Sincerely,

Enclosed: Issue Sheet on Supportive Housing



Supportive Housing

Sample Letter to MPP from tenant

From:	 Date:
To:	
Dear	 :

I live in supportive housing and it has made a real difference in my life. I can afford the rent and living here gives me the security I need to be a valued member of our community.

(Add your own comments if desired)

The government has created some housing, but I know that the waiting lists are long and many people are living on the streets or in shelters. More housing is needed.

Here is what Ontario still needs:

- 1. 11,000 more homes for people who are homeless, living in shelters, or about to become homeless
- 2. More money for non-profit housing organizations so that tenants have the support they need to keep their homes and stay as healthy as they can be
- 3. More money for transitional homes for the real protection of women and children who are escaping from violence
- 4. More money so that the buildings can be properly repaired and will be safe for the people living in them.

I have attached some more information about supportive housing. I hope you will read it over, and then let me know your plans to build on the supportive housing success story.

Sincerely,

Enclosed: Issue Sheet on Supportive Housing



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