



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**AUGUST 24, 2015**

**SOCIAL SERVICES DELIVERERS ACROSS THE NORTH SEEK FEDERAL HELP IN ELECTION IN ADDRESSING SOCIAL HOUSING NEEDS IN NORTHERN ONTARIO**

Northern Ontario's most vulnerable residents are facing increasing difficulty due to shortages in affordable housing. Declining federal funding, and funding allocation models that are inappropriate for the realities of the North all contribute to this trend and all require Federal Government involvement and funding.

The Northern Ontario Service Deliverers Association (NOSDA) is concerned that Federal funding for social and affordable housing is declining and that they are exiting from previous long-term commitments to social housing across the country and that is why NOSDA - which represents all of the municipal social housing providers across the north - want it to be an election issue.

NOSDA is encouraging all of its member organizations' Boards of Directors to write to each candidate in their area to not only ask them to make social housing a priority in this election but to ask them what their party's specific platform is regarding social housing. NOSDA is also encouraging their members to attend All Candidates Meetings and ask questions about social housing.

"There are few opportunities where NOSDA and its members have an opportunity to make their case before those who are seeking to be our Members of Parliament and it is important that we make sure they understand the importance of social housing today and well into the future" said Iain Angus, NOSDA's Chair and member of the Thunder Bay District Social Services Administration Board.

"The key message that NOSDA will bring to the campaign is the need for the Federal Government to return to the social housing field as a full partner" observed Janet Gawne, NOSDA's Vice-Chair, and Chair of the Sault Ste. Marie District Social Services Administration Board. "Currently, as mortgages on existing buildings expire so does the subsidy from the Federal Government. Those significant Federal funds are required to bring those same buildings up to today's standards – which now will leave Municipalities having to fund 100% of the upgrades" she said.

"NOSDA also wants to determine if the candidates and their parties are willing to commit to the development of a Northern Ontario -specific component of their housing strategy that deals with the unique aspects of building and maintaining social housing in our area" said Barry Baltessen, NOSDA's other Vice-Chair, from Kenora and Chair of the Kenora District Social Services Administration Board. "Fewer contractors, greater distances between communities, higher construction costs, the high cost of heating in many communities are just a few of the obstacles

that NOSDA members face right across the North. Funding programs must address these issues in a concrete way if the North is to have the same level of service as those in the urban settings do” he said.

“NOSDA has always been willing to work with both Provincial and Federal Governments to develop a long-term plan that addresses the needs for social and affordable housing across the country and particularly in Northern Ontario.” said Iain Angus, NOSDA’s Chair “this election provides an opportunity for the candidates and their parties to step up to the plate and convince us that their approach is the best for Northern Ontario.

The NOSDA Executive urges the Federal government to return to the table and collaborate with NOSDA, the Provincial/Territorial governments and other key stakeholders to address the need for social and affordable housing across the country and specifically in the North.

Contact: Chris Stewart 705 368-2114

## **BACKGROUNDER – NORTHERN ONTARIO SERVICE DELIVERERS ASSOCIATION HOUSING ISSUES**

### **NOSDA BACKGROUND**

The Northern Ontario Service Deliverers Association (NOSDA) is an incorporated body that brings together Service Managers in Northern Ontario who are responsible for the local planning, coordination and delivery of a range of community health and social services. These services represent a significant portion of the social and community service infrastructure in all Northern Ontario communities, and account for a large share of the property taxes that municipalities dedicate to these services. A key service is the provision of social housing in communities both large and small.

NOSDA is composed of ten District Social Services Administration Boards (DSSABs), a form of governmental board unique to Northern Ontario, and one municipal Service Manager (City of Greater Sudbury) that cover the entire geography of Northern Ontario (with the exception of First Nations) from the Manitoba border to the Quebec border.

### **Need for Federal Funding for Social and Affordable Housing in Canada**

**Background:** There is an urgent need for the Federal Government to return to the table as a partner with the Provinces and Territories to fund long-term social and affordable housing for our most vulnerable residents. NOSDA is very concerned that federal funding for social and affordable housing is declining and that the Federal Government appears to be exiting its previous long-term commitment to addressing the social housing needs of the country. NOSDA communicated this to the Minister of Employment and Social Development in 2014, stressing the need for a national housing strategy and requested that the Federal Government returns to the table and collaborate with Provincial/Territorial Housing Ministers to develop a long-term plan that addresses the need for social and affordable housing across the country and specifically in Northern Ontario.

### **BACKGROUNDER: END OF OPERATING AGREEMENTS**

“Municipalities in Ontario, as Service Managers (SMs) for social housing, are bound by legislation to fund and deliver social housing programs in their various communities across the province. These obligations will however change over time and as social housing end dates are encountered, the roles, responsibilities and strategies that SMs employ regarding social housing stock in their jurisdiction will present both challenges and opportunities. For ease of use, the term “social housing end dates” (End of Operating Agreements) is employed here to refer to both the expiry of federally-signed operating agreements as well as the expiry of mortgages and capital financing obligations in housing in Ontario under the *Housing Services Act*. In the case of the latter, substantial changes in subsidy transfers affecting housing providers and Service Managers are triggered by this milestone.

For Service Managers, the prospect of EOA creates considerable uncertainty about the future, namely:

- apprehension regarding the costs of sustaining housing and provider relationships in the face of eroding asset conditions and the loss of federal funding which steps down in concert with EOA
- anxiety about possible losses to the finite affordable housing stock currently 'on the ground' despite sustained community need, and whether a continuing relationship with housing providers can be enforced, either practically or legally
- uncertainty about SM rules/obligations beyond end dates which arise from the *Housing Services Act* and which relate to issues such as mandated service levels, absence of end dates for SM obligations and potential liability for future insured mortgages
- concern about the uneven impacts of EOA by program and the lack of a coordinated, long term policy framework in which to adequately address project viability and program sustainability issues

Service Managers also have a vested interest in EOA as they (or their municipalities) are owners of substantial social housing stock and as such, have a direct stake in sustaining this important community resource. This direct link means that despite uncertainties, there is a clear motivation for SMs to address challenges and seek opportunities that can sustain or leverage housing stock while offsetting financial pressures. Likewise, SMs are generally confident that housing providers will remain committed to social housing values, despite the lure of operating autonomously outside of program obligations. It is further anticipated that most housing providers will at some point request financial help from SMs in order to remain sustainable, and this will offer the best opportunity for formal negotiation of on-going participation.

Service Managers remain hopeful that future capital funding from senior governments will lessen maintenance liabilities associated with projected deficiencies in social housing stock. There is also recognition that opportunities may exist post of EOA to mitigate financial impacts by realizing larger operational surpluses, accessing accumulated equity, and generating administrative savings. It may also be possible to consider project re-financing, site re-development and intensification opportunities as additional opportunities to offset impacts arising from EOA. However, a more flexible legislative framework is required in order to pursue these avenues”.

From: **Social Housing End Dates in Ontario: Assessing Impacts and Promoting Good Practices**, Re/Fact Consulting for Housing Services Corporation and the Ontario Municipal Knowledge Network, October 2012 Pgs. 18-19

## **BACKGROUNDER: NORTHERN COSTS**

From its 2011 Brief to Cabinet Ministers, NOSDA articulated that higher costs and effects of cyclical economic downturns affect the resource-based local economies of many Northern Ontario municipalities. Service administrators need access to predictable, adequate, and sustained sources of revenue, which are not tied to the local property tax base.

The most common problems faced by our members in the course of their work include:

- Large land area
- Lack of public transportation
- Lower than average median household incomes
- Higher than average unemployment rates and high seasonal unemployment
- Low housing vacancy rates
- a shortage of affordable and rent-geared-to-income housing(for example, there is a shortfall of nearly 2,000 affordable housing units in Greater Sudbury alone)
- A variety of distinct urban aboriginal issues
- Lack of funding of emergency shelters in rural areas
- Lack of awareness of government programs in Northern communities
- vulnerability of households on fixed incomes, especially among seniors-led households faced with high and rising energy costs and increasing property taxes

Service administrators must have access to predictable, adequate, and sustained sources of revenue, which are not tied to the local property tax base. The administratively confusing, ongoing rebalancing of uploading and downloading of programs demands a great deal of attention from our administrators to keep up with decisions made in Toronto. We need clearer, more frequent, open and transparent consultation with Queen's Park and flexibility in the implementation of changes in legislation and regulations before they are imposed on the property tax bases of Northern Ontarians. Northern Ontario conditions are sometimes overlooked by legislators and planners (e.g. higher cost per unit of service due to low and few areas of population concentration; higher building costs; large distances between clients, etc.)

We seek recognition of our concerns from Ontario's political parties to help mitigate the costs and effects of cyclical economic downturns that affect the resource-based local economies of many Northern Ontario municipalities. This should be done for the sake of equity and the welfare of Northern Ontarians. We recommend that the Province of Ontario consult more extensively and openly with Northern communities about legislation that affects them.

## **DRAFT LETTER TO FEDERAL CANDIDATES**

**Dear Federal Candidate:**

The Northern Ontario Service Deliverers Association (NOSDA) is an incorporated body that brings together Service Managers in Northern Ontario who are responsible for the local planning, coordination and delivery of a range of community health and social services. These services represent a significant portion of the social and community service infrastructure in all Northern Ontario communities, and account for a large share of the property taxes that municipalities dedicate to these services. A key service is the provision of social housing in communities both large and small.

Our District Services Administration Board is a member of NOSDA. To us, Social Housing is a vital service across all communities in Northern Ontario. We need Federal partnership to maintain and develop affordable housing. This letter is to ask you your thoughts on social housing and what you will do to work with us if you're elected.

We look forward to hearing your thoughts on this important concern in our area.

Sincerely,

Board Chair

## CANDIDATE LIST

Following is the list of candidates for the up and coming federal election including contact information when available. Please advise if you would like any changes made to the list.

### 2015 Federal Election Candidates (as at August 11, 2015)

		Party	Electoral District	Telephone	email
Andre	Robichaud	Conservative	Algoma-Manitoulin-Kapuskasing	705-335-7157	<a href="mailto:contact@andrerobichaud.ca">contact@andrerobichaud.ca</a>
*Greg	Rickford	Conservative	Kenora	613-996-1161	<a href="mailto:greg.rickford@parl.gc.ca">greg.rickford@parl.gc.ca</a>
		Conservative	Nickel Belt		
*Jay	Aspin	Conservative	Nipissing-Timiskaming	613-995-6255	<a href="mailto:Jay.Aspin@parl.gc.ca">Jay.Aspin@parl.gc.ca</a>
*Tony	Clement	Conservative	Parry Sound-Muskoka	613-944-7740	<a href="mailto:tony.clement@parl.gc.ca">tony.clement@parl.gc.ca</a>
*Bryan	Hayes	Conservative	Sault Ste. Marie	613-992-9723	<a href="mailto:Bryan.Hayes@parl.gc.ca">Bryan.Hayes@parl.gc.ca</a>
Fred	Slade	Conservative	Sudbury	1-866-808-8407	<a href="mailto:info@conservative.ca">info@conservative.ca</a>
Maureen	Comuzzi-Stehmann	Conservative	Thunder Bay-Rainy River	1-866-808-8407	<a href="mailto:info@conservative.ca">info@conservative.ca</a>
Richard	Harvey	Conservative	Thunder Bay-Superior North	1-866-808-8407	<a href="mailto:info@conservative.ca">info@conservative.ca</a>
		Conservative	Timmins-James Bay		
		Green	Algoma-Manitoulin-Kapuskasing		
Ember	McKillop	Green	Kenora		<a href="mailto:ember.mckillop@greenparty.ca">ember.mckillop@greenparty.ca</a>
Stuart	McCall	Green	Nickel Belt		
		Green	Nipissing-Timiskaming		
Glen	Hodgson	Green	Parry Sound-Muskoka	705-378-4065	<a href="mailto:contact@glennhodgson.ca">contact@glennhodgson.ca</a>
		Green	Sault Ste. Marie		
David	Robinson	Green	Sudbury	705-675-6666	<a href="mailto:david.robinson@greenparty.ca">david.robinson@greenparty.ca</a>
Christy	Radbourne	Green	Thunder Bay-Rainy River	807-344-3222	<a href="mailto:christy.radbourne@greenparty.ca">christy.radbourne@greenparty.ca</a>
*Bruce	Hyer	Green	Thunder Bay-Superior North	613-996-4792	<a href="mailto:bruce.hyer@parl.gc.ca">bruce.hyer@parl.gc.ca</a>
Max	Kennedy	Green	Timmins-James Bay		<a href="mailto:max.kennedy@greenparty.ca">max.kennedy@greenparty.ca</a>
Heather	Wilson	Liberal	Algoma-Manitoulin-Kapuskasing		<a href="mailto:heather@heathergwilford.ca">heather@heathergwilford.ca</a>
Bob	Nault	Liberal	Kenora	807-647-8465	<a href="mailto:info@bobnault.ca">info@bobnault.ca</a>
Marc	Serre	Liberal	Nickel Belt	705-588-8683	<a href="mailto:info@marcserre.ca">info@marcserre.ca</a>
Anthony	Rota	Liberal	Nipissing-Timiskaming	705-494-7682	<a href="mailto:Anthony@AnthonyRota.ca">Anthony@AnthonyRota.ca</a>
Trisha	Cowie	Liberal	Parry Sound-Muskoka	705-641-8855	<a href="mailto:trisha@trishacowie.ca">trisha@trishacowie.ca</a>
Terry	Sheehan	Liberal	Sault Ste. Marie	705-987-1051	<a href="mailto:Terry@TerrySheehan.ca">Terry@TerrySheehan.ca</a>
Paul	Lefebvre	Liberal	Sudbury	705-586-8683	<a href="mailto:paul@paullefebvre.ca">paul@paullefebvre.ca</a>
Don	Rusnak	Liberal	Thunder Bay-Rainy River		
Patty	Hajdu	Liberal	Thunder Bay-Superior North		<a href="mailto:patty@pattyhajdu.ca">patty@pattyhajdu.ca</a>
Todd	Lever	Liberal	Timmins-James Bay	705-363-0019	<a href="mailto:Todd2015@toddlever.ca">Todd2015@toddlever.ca</a>

*Carol	Hughes	NDP	Algoma-Manitoulin-Kapuskasing	613-996-5376	<a href="mailto:carol.hughes@parl.gc.ca">carol.hughes@parl.gc.ca</a>
Howard	Hampton	NDP	Kenora		
*Claude	Gravelle	NDP	Nickel Belt	613-995-9107	<a href="mailto:claudio.gravelle@parl.gc.ca">claudio.gravelle@parl.gc.ca</a>
Kathleen	Jodouin	NDP	Nipissing-Timiskaming	705-995-3484	<a href="mailto:katjodouinndp@gmail.com">katjodouinndp@gmail.com</a>
Matt	McCarthy	NDP	Parry Sound-Muskoka		
Skip	Morrison	NDP	Sault Ste. Marie	705-943-8776	
Paul	Loewenberg	NDP	Sudbury	705-618-0630	
*John	Rafferty	NDP	Thunder Bay-Rainy River	613-992-3061	<a href="mailto:john.rafferty@parl.gc.ca">john.rafferty@parl.gc.ca</a>
Andrew	Foulds	NDP	Thunder Bay-Superior North	807-344-0707	
*Charlie	Angus	NDP	Timmins-James Bay	613-992-2919	<a href="mailto:charlie.angus@parl.gc.ca">charlie.angus@parl.gc.ca</a>
Derek	Elliott	Libertarian	Nipissing-Timiskaming		<a href="mailto:Derek.Elliott@Libertarian.ca">Derek.Elliott@Libertarian.ca</a>
Tony	Gallo	Libertarian	Thunder Bay-Superior North		

\* current MP

**We need a copy of the sample letter that we are asking each DSSAB to send to their candidates written and attached.**