



December 29, 2015

Hon. Michael Gravelle  
Minister of Northern Development and Mines  
179 Algoma St. South  
Thunder Bay, Ontario  
P7B3C1

**RE: Building Social Capacity in the North**

Dear Minister Gravelle:

We are writing to thank you and to follow up our discussions held between yourself and our delegation on December 15 in Thunder Bay. Specifically, this letter relates to the need for additional capacity in the North to deal with the complex nature of the delivery of social services and the ongoing evolution of how Ontario provides assistance to the more vulnerable portion of its population.

We thought it would be helpful at the outset to outline the role of NOSDA and our members in the fabric of Northern Ontario's social service delivery system.

The Northern Ontario Service Deliverers Association (NOSDA) is an incorporated body that brings together Northern Ontario's 11 Municipal Service Managers. It is comprised of ten District Social Services Administration Boards (DSSABs) that are unique to Northern Ontario; and one Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM) – the City of Greater Sudbury.

NOSDA members:

- serve the needs of nearly a million people spread over 800,000 square kilometers
- respond to over 82,000 EMS calls per year
- subsidize over 17,000 spaces in the Early Learning System
- operate about 12,000 social housing units representing over a billion dollars in housing assets

- address the needs of 16,000 most vulnerable citizens through Ontario Works each year.
- provide discretionary assistance to the ODSP caseload of over 30,000
- operate with approximately 1,200 full-time staff
- NOSDA members collectively have an annual operating budget of nearly half a billion dollars.

There are two components to our request of the Ontario Government.

The first relates to a key weakness identified in a recent benchmarking exercise among NOSDA members. This is the lack of capacity to forward plan. Provincial and municipal funding for DSSABs is for mandated service delivery so the capacity for any change management required or planning for non-mandated but necessary provincial government-required reporting is limited and often problematic. For example, Ten Year Housing and Homelessness Plans and work-arounds for the Social Assistance Management System (SAMS) required by policy decisions by provincial Ministries should be one hundred percent funded by the Provincial Government. These planning and implementation projects have been necessitated by the Provincial Government with the expectation that the NOSDA members are in a position to seamlessly implement with existing human resources. Provincial allocation of financial resources to DSSABs to give them capacity to address these types of issues would ensure that the required analysis and program implementation are accomplished in the North without negatively impacting the delivery of mandated services.

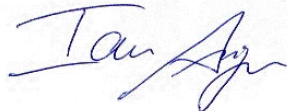
Therefore, our request is that DSSABs should be provincially funded to build local planning capacity to deal with provincial government reporting requirements. We would be more than pleased to meet with the appropriate representatives of your Government to work out how best to accomplish this increase in targeted funding.

The second issue we wish to raise deals with NOSDA itself. NOSDA is continually being called on to have its members participate in key provincial planning tables with much of the cost absorbed by either the individual DSSABs or NOSDA. In addition, in the last few years, NOSDA has matured as an organization and has become the primary advocate for social services in Northern Ontario. Much in the same way that the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association and the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities represents the interests of the municipal sector, we represent the interests of social housing, Ontario Works, Children's Services and EMS.

We therefore ask for the same consideration currently received by NOMA and FONOM with some level of annual grant allocated to us to ensure we can fully participate in the decisions affecting our operations and the services we provide. We would like to suggest an annual allocation of \$25,000 a year to participate at Provincial planning and policy development tables. This would go a long way to help NOSDA's members participate and have influence on provincial policy and program development and to ultimately identify ways to help save taxpayers' dollars.

We would be pleased to work with you and your staff to address this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Iain Angus". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Iain" being more prominent than the last name "Angus".

Iain Angus,  
NOSDA Chair