

c/o Income Security Advocacy Centre
425 Adelaide Street West - 5th Floor
Toronto, ON M5V 3C1

The Hon. Kathleen Wynne, MPP
Premier of Ontario
By email to: kwynne.mpp@liberal.ola.org

26 November 2013

The Hon. Linda Jeffrey, MPP
Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
By email to: ljeffrey.mpp@liberal.ola.org

The Hon. Teresa Piruzza, MPP
Minister Responsible for Poverty Reduction
By email to: tpiruzza.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org

The Hon. Ted McMeekin, MPP
Minister of Community and Social Services
By email to: tmcmeekin.mpp@liberal.ola.org

Dear Premier Wynne, Minister Jeffrey, Minister Piruzza, and Minister McMeekin,

We are writing as a coalition of concerned organizations to urge you to respond without delay to the growing crisis in housing and homelessness across Ontario.

While there are many housing needs across the province, we need your government to commit – as quickly as possible and before the new year – to make permanent \$42 million in “transition funding” for critically important housing and homelessness funds administered by municipalities under the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI).

Municipalities across Ontario are in the midst of planning their budgets for the coming year. Decisions about housing and homelessness funding will be made very soon. Municipalities – and the low income Ontarians who live in them – need your guarantee that you are on their side.

Municipalities have been given the responsibility and flexibility to respond to their communities’ housing and homelessness issues through CHPI. But they can’t adequately respond to the need in their communities if the funds are not there to do the job.

When the Community Start-Up and Maintenance Benefit (CSUMB) was eliminated from social assistance beginning in January 2013, only half of previously designated funds (\$67 million in 2013-14) were transferred to CMSMs and DSSABs, using a formula that didn’t respond to real time housing needs.

Some municipalities responded to the loss of CSUMB by creating their own, similar funds to provide direct funding for first and last month’s rent, rental and utilities arrears, and other costs that ensure people are able to become housed or stay in their homes. Eligibility criteria and funded costs vary across the province, as do amounts of funding provided. Some municipalities did not create their own locally administered funds, so low income Ontarians in those communities have no source of direct support.

In December 2012, government responded to community concern by instituting a one-time \$42 million “transition fund” to help municipalities deal with the loss of CSUMB and the move to community-based homelessness prevention. Those funds run out in March 2014.

In some areas of the province, designated funds for this purpose may have been underspent. This does not indicate a lack of need in communities, but rather the reality that the roll-out of the transition to CHPI funding was plagued with difficulties, resulting in many low income people either not attempting to access or being denied direct funding for their housing and homelessness-related needs. The transition to CHPI funding was also complicated by the new cap put on discretionary benefits. More funding is required for municipalities to find the right balance to provide for the need in their communities, and for low income Ontarians to become aware of funds that might be available.

While the \$42 million will not replace CSUMB, it will go some way to ensuring that low income people in communities across Ontario will have the funds they need to secure housing and to prevent losing their housing, due directly to lack of income.

The ripple effects of the devastating loss of CSUMB continue to be felt across the province. Low income Ontarians need your government’s guarantee that funds they need to get housing or stay housed will be there when they need them. The least they deserve is to have the additional \$42 million in transition funding made permanently available to municipalities.

Sincerely,



Mary E. Marrone
Director, Advocacy & Legal Services
Income Security Advocacy Centre (ISAC)



Greg DeGroot-Maggetti
Co-Chair
25in5 Network for Poverty Reduction



Kenn Hale
Director of Legal Services
Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario
(ACTO)



Trudy Beaulne
Poverty Free Waterloo Region



Bob Gardner
Director of Policy
Wellesley Institute



Tom Cooper
Director
Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty
Reduction



Rosana Pellizzari, MD, MSc, CCFP,
FRCPC
Medical Officer of Health
Peterborough County-City Health Unit



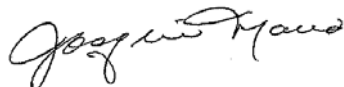
Anita Khanna
Coordinator
Ontario Campaign 2000



Kapri Rabin
Executive Director
Street Health



Adam Vasey
Director
Pathway to Potential



Jacquie Maund
Policy and Government Relations Lead
Association of Ontario Health Centres
(AOHC)



Mike Creek
Director, Strategic Initiatives
Working for Change / Voices From the
Street



Steve Kylie
President
Peterborough Poverty Reduction Network



Edna Toth
Chair
Peel Poverty Action Group



Leena Sharma
Manager of Community Development
Halton Poverty Reduction Network



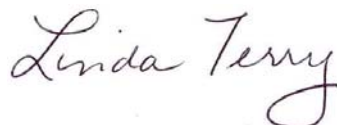
Elisabeth Zimmermann
Chair
Niagara Poverty Reduction Network



Peter Clutterbuck
Coordinator
Poverty Free Ontario



Linda Lalonde
Co-Chair
Ottawa Poverty Reduction Network



Linda Terry
Social Planning Network of Ontario and
Social Planning Council of Cambridge and
North Dumfries



Susan Eagle
Chair
Interfaith Social Assistance Reform
Coalition (ISARC)

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Joanne Vassell-Pittman & Marie Gailing
Co-Chairs
Voices for Change Halton



Doris Grinspun
Chief Executive Officer
Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario



Marie Klassen
Director of Services
Lakehead Social Planning Council



Terri-Lynne Carter
Chair, Poverty Free Thunder Bay

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Andrea Hatala
Put Food in the Budget



Janet Gasparini
Executive Director
Sudbury Social Planning Council

Tara Kainer

Tara Kainer
Kingston Social Issues Networking Group
(SING)

CC: Tim Hudak, MPP, Leader of the Official Opposition
Andrea Horwath, MPP, Leader of the NDP
Jim McDonnell, MPP, PC Critic, MMAH
Cindy Forster, MPP, NDP Critic, MMAH
Bill Walker, MPP, PC Critic, MCYS
Monique Taylor, MPP, NDP Critic, MCYS
Rod Jackson, MPP, PC Critic, MCSS
Cheri diNovo, MPP, NDP Critic, MCSS