



January 30, 2020

Minister Steve Clark  
Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing  
17<sup>th</sup> Floor, 777 Bay St.  
Toronto ON  
M5G 2E5

SENT VIA E-MAIL: [steve.clark@pc.ola.org](mailto:steve.clark@pc.ola.org)

Dear Minister:

It was great to meet with you at the ROMA Conference to discuss our concerns with you. We really appreciate the opportunity to communicate our ideas directly with and your senior staff.

### **Canada-Ontario Portable Housing Benefit**

Minister, the Manitoulin-Sudbury District Services Board (DSB) created the Direct Shelter Subsidy (DSS) to help low-income families and clients on social assistance who are on the Housing waitlist access a variety of housing options. This program gives priority to applicants living in areas of our DSB where no publicly funded housing is available. The program is also available to seniors age 65 and over, who own their own homes and who meet the eligibility guidelines for Community Housing. The DSS program considers all aspects of shelter costs, including heat, hydro and all utilities, in determining the benefits payable to eligible clients.

The current DSS program is funded through a mix of municipal dollars as well as provincial dollars. The breakdown is as follows:

<b>2020 DSS Program</b>	<b>Amount</b>
<b>100% Municipal Funding</b>	<b>\$ 418,395</b>
Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative	\$ 295,268
Investment in Affordable Housing Fund	\$ 128,733
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 842,396</b>

The benefit is also portable, within the DSB catchment area, to allow greater flexibility and responsiveness to their changing needs and the choice of location, school districts and employment opportunities, without being tied to a specific unit within the DSB catchment area.

A review of the DSS program in the Manitoulin-Sudbury DSB was conducted with data collected between 2013 and 2018. A review of this data showed there has been an increase in the total number of DSS clients from 78 (2013) to 280 (2018); this increase can be attributed to an increase in DSS program funding. Further, the number of new clients has increased within the same time period, from 78 in 2013 to 112 in 2018. This means that in 2018, 40% of DSS clients were new to the program while the remaining 60% had previously accessed the program.

While the number of clients on DSS has increased, the number of clients that have left the program has fluctuated. In 2013, of the 78 clients accessing DSS, approximately 58% left the program. In 2016, where there were 132 clients accessing DSS, the number of clients that left the program dropped to almost 26%. As of 2018, the number of clients that left the DSS program had started to increase, where almost 34% of DSS clients left the program by the end of the year.

- The majority of clients **39.6% stay on DSS for 1 to 6 months.**
- only **6.4% of clients on DSS remain on for 31 months or longer.**
- Only **3% of clients were on DSS for longer than 49 months**
- On average clients **stayed in Community Housing buildings for almost 75 months, or over 6 years.**
- **On average 58.4% of DSS clients had left the program by the end of 2018.**
- Of these clients, **13.3% did not access social assistance after leaving DSS**
- Of the clients that did access social assistance after leaving DSS, **38.7% were no longer accessing social assistance by the end of 2018.**

**In total, 120 clients (or 46.9%) that left the DSS program were not accessing social assistance by the end of 2018.**

A single person on Ontario Works receives \$733/month, \$8,796 annualized. If you multiply that amount by the 120 people who left the DSS program and no longer accessing social assistance, this **saves the province \$ 1,055,520 annually.** With this analysis, one can see that the DSS program has significant long-term savings.

- If we apply the province's Canada-Ontario Portable Housing Benefit calculation to those currently receiving Direct Shelter Subsidy, **70% of the Manitoulin-Sudbury DSB's clients would not qualify.**

**We understand the Portable Housing Benefit may work in other parts of Ontario, specifically large urban centres but what we are looking for is local flexibility to deliver the program in a way that makes sense for the communities we serve**

## Our Requests:

- Allow local flexibility in order to allow the Manitoulin-Sudbury District Services Board to keep the current Direct Shelter Subsidy Program. A one size does not fit all, and we have proven that our local Direct Shelter Subsidy program works in getting clients off social assistance, creates financial independence and saves all tax payors money.

We understand the Portable Housing Benefit may work in other parts of Ontario, specifically large urban centres but what we are looking for is local flexibility to deliver the program in a way that makes sense for the communities we serve.

## Capital Funding

In 2019, The Canada-Ontario Community Housing Initiative (COCHI) provided federal funding under this program of \$33.2 million in the current year, \$81.0 million in 2020-21 and \$112.1 million in 2021-22. As allowed under the bilateral agreement, current municipal spending on Community Housing will be used to count as the cost-matching required under this program.

The Ontario Priorities Housing Initiative (OPHI) was also launched in 2019-20, providing flexible funding to all 47 Service Managers to address local priorities in the areas of housing supply and affordability, including new affordable rental construction, community housing repair, rental assistance, tenant supports and affordable homeownership. Our government is committed to fully cost match this program. Total federal and provincial funding of \$123.3 million in 2019-20, \$65 million in 2020-21 and \$99.9 million in 2021-22 will be available to allocate under the program. Provincial spending of \$34.7 million from existing programs across 2018-19 and 2019-20 will be counted towards the cost-matching requirement.

The Manitoulin-Sudbury DSB's allocation is as follows

Program	2019-20 Confirmed Allocation	2020-21 Planning Allocation	2021-22 Planning Allocation
Investment in Affordable Housing for Ontario (2014 Extension)	\$186,000	N/A	N/A
Canada-Ontario Community Housing Initiative	\$31,587	\$75,240	\$203,673
Ontario Priorities Housing Initiative	\$282,500	\$146,400	\$227,800

At the cost of \$150,000 to \$200,000 per unit, the annual allocations would not be enough to build even 2 units, the allocation has never been enough to accomplish any new builds.

Through our Housing and Homeless Plan, it was identified that affordable housing was needed in 3 communities (Espanola, French River and Chapleau), more specifically family housing according to our waitlist. There has been some private development in some of our communities however it's difficult to attract developers in our small communities.

We have 18 municipalities within the Manitoulin-Sudbury DSB and our largest community is Espanola with a population of 4,996 and our smallest is Burpee Mills with a population of 330. Of the 18 municipalities, 10 have populations under 1,000 people. As you can well imagine the property base for these communities cannot financially support additional costs.

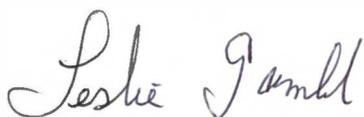
We are asking that the Ministry change its funding formula to allow each CMSM and DSSAB to have at least one build per year at minimum. This will ensure that every corner of the province has new affordable housing, not only the large urban centres whose property tax base can accommodate additional municipal debt and operating costs.

**Our Request:**

- Provide the Manitoulin-Sudbury DSB with enough funding to build new affordable housing in the communities that have been identified. We have not built anything in the Manitoulin-Sudbury DSB in 20 years as the funding has not been sufficient.

Again, it was great to meet with you and we look forward to working with you and your Ministry staff.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Leslie Gamble".

Leslie Gamble  
Chair, Manitoulin-Sudbury DSB