

Service Manager Forum on Social Housing and Homelessness

I recently had an opportunity to attend the Forum on Social Housing & Homelessness with our two Housing Managers, an annual event which brings the 47 Service Managers together to share information and ideas, and discuss issues.

This year the opening plenary session speaker was John Ralston Saul, the award-winning essayist and novelist who is known for his commentaries on the public good, leadership and culture. (He is the husband of former Governor General, Adrienne Clarkson.)

He spoke of providing “housing with dignity” which fits into our new RRDSSAB housing vision which focuses on the best interests of our tenants: “Beyond Bricks & Mortar.” He suggested that we get the tenants “involved in the building” which, again, mirrors what we are working towards to develop a sense of ownership and responsibility with our tenants.

Saul spoke of the homelessness crisis throughout Ontario and the impact of the closure of various institutions in the 1980’s which many communities were ill prepared for. He asked us all “are you solving the problem or managing the problem?”, as he suggested we tolerate homelessness, rather than aim to eradicate it. “We simply step over them on the streets.”

Lastly, he told us to “name names” – to challenge those in positions of power to provide housing for people in need and eliminate homelessness.

We attended various training sessions including Accessibility, the Duty to Accommodate, Integration of Services, Developing a Vision for Social Housing, and Aging at Home. We felt very proud that, in many respects, we are “ahead of the game” in our housing department.

There are currently 124,000 households in Ontario on Wait Lists for housing – 72% with incomes under \$20,000! We are very fortunate in our District in that we maintain a minimal

wait list, if any, for individuals and families who are waiting for units to be readied for occupancy; in fact, our challenge is a consistent vacancy rate, not wait lists.

Human Resources

The following Human Resource activity has taken place since last reported:

Name	Title	Status	Start Date
Arnold Johnson	Maintenance	3 month Contract	July 21, 2008
Brad Lowes	Maintenance	3 month Contract	July 28, 2008
Heidi Parr	Customer Service Representative	Replacement, PFT	August 18, 2008
Wanda Norton	Customer Service Representative	Casual Call-in	July 28, 2008
Kim Gardiman	Children's Services Manager	Resignation	N/A

We are currently interviewing to replace the Children's Services Manager position.

Respectfully Submitted,

/d Dittaro