



## Social Housing

Given the many changes we are undergoing in our Social Housing Department, I thought it may be interesting to provide some data regarding the services as a 'refresher' and also to provide an update as to how we are moving forward with our new "tenant-focused" philosophy.

## Background

The Rainy River District Social Services Administration Board (RRDSSAB) received the transfer of the public housing portfolio in January, 2001. The public housing stock, which we refer to as *RRDSSAB Housing*, is owned and managed by the RRDSSAB. It consists of 299 units scattered across the District of Rainy River including the following:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Heritage House, Rainy River	41 units
<input type="checkbox"/>	Riverview Manor, Rainy River	15
<input type="checkbox"/>	Queen St Manor, Emo	20
<input type="checkbox"/>	6 <sup>th</sup> & Webster, FF	26
<input type="checkbox"/>	Armit Avenue, FF	10
<input type="checkbox"/>	Rose Manor, FF	35
<input type="checkbox"/>	Green Manor, FF	39
<input type="checkbox"/>	4 <sup>th</sup> Street East, FF	14
<input type="checkbox"/>	Lady Frances, FF	10
<input type="checkbox"/>	Elizabeth Manor, FF	30
<input type="checkbox"/>	Atikokan Family, Atikokan	24
<input type="checkbox"/>	Fotheringham Court, Atikokan	35

In January, 2002, the Non-Profit Housing portfolio was devolved from the Province to the RRDSSAB, consisting of the following:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Flinders Place, FF	40 units
<input type="checkbox"/>	Golden Age Manor, Emo	40
<input type="checkbox"/>	Columbus Place, FF	30
<input type="checkbox"/>	Faith Non-Profit, FF	24
<input type="checkbox"/>	FF Municipal (Victoria Av)	10
<input type="checkbox"/>	Atikokan Crisis Centre	10
<input type="checkbox"/>	Atikokan Municipal	12
<input type="checkbox"/>	Morley Meadows Manor	10
<input type="checkbox"/>	FF Native Urban	36 homes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Atikokan Native	17 homes

The Non-Profit Provider Corporations own their own stock and are governed under separate boards of directors. Currently, the RRDSSAB is contracted to provide management and/or maintenance services for Faith, Columbus Place, FF Municipal and Atikokan Native Housing, under formal *Service Agreements*. These particular providers benefit from the experiences and expertise of the RRDSSAB staff, in order to meet provincial legislation and local policy.

In addition to the above, the RRDSSAB is responsible for *Rent Supplement Agreements* with several private landlords (the RRDSSAB pays the difference between the tenant's ability to pay rent and the actual market rent charged by the landlord). At present, we maintain Rent Supplement Agreements for 15 units or homes.

RRDSSAB Housing staff also administer short-term provincial initiatives - some big, some small - on an ongoing basis. At this time, we are administering the *Provincial Rent Bank Program* and an *Affordable Housing: Homeowner Repair Program* which is funded at \$600,000.

### **Staffing**

The Social Housing Program is staffed with both permanent and contract staff. In 2008, the Board moved toward the hire of internal contractors versus external contractors as a way to reduce costs and maintain consistency in the maintenance system for services such as painting, carpentry etc.

The management of social housing has been divided between the two housing portfolios: RRDSSAB Housing and Non-Profit Housing.

As we move toward a more 'tenant-focused' service, we prioritize the filling of "service" staff positions. As of this date, the staff consist of:

- 1.0 RRDSSAB Housing Manager
- 1.0 Non-Profit Housing Manager
- 1.0 Housing Clerk
- 1.0 Eligibility Review Officer/Family Support Worker
- 1.0 Tenant Liaison Officer (one TLO position to be filled)
- 3.0 Maintenance Workers (contracts): specialized services such as painting, carpentry, flooring etc
- 4.0 Maintenance Custodians
- 1.0 Custodian

### **Building Condition Audits**

In 2005, building condition audits were completed on the Non-Profit Housing sites which assisted us in identifying our long-term capital and reserve fund needs for that particular portfolio.

We are presently tendering for firms to complete a building condition audit on our RRDSSAB Housing sites. The contract is to be awarded on 27 May, 2008 and the project will commence on 23 June, 2008; we expect a final report by 21 October, 2008. A formal audit is essential to the completion of a long-term capital plan. Our staff will be utilized, as needed, to assist in the process.

### ***Fire Safety & Evacuation Plans***

We are in the process of developing new *Fire Safety & Evacuation Plans* for all of our RRDSSAB Housing sites. Once drafted, they will be forwarded to the respective Fire Department for formal review and approval. We are pleased to be able to utilize materials prepared by the Social Housing Services Corporation. Unfortunately, much of their material is drawn from the experiences of a housing provider in North Eastern Ontario who experienced a tragic fire several years ago.

### ***Policies & Procedures***

Several new policies are being developed to ensure consistency in practice across the housing system. Along with policies & procedures, comes new forms and protocols which we will need to introduce to the staff through formal training, where necessary. All policies are being reviewed for revisions which coincide with any changes to provincial legislation or local policy. All staff are being asked to familiarize themselves with and ensure uniform application of our procurement policies.

## **Tenant Surveys**

We were very fortunate over this past several months to have Heidi Parr, a Confederation College student, assist us in completing two surveys with our tenants. The first focused on the need/desire for activities for seniors, families and children at our various sites. This assisted us in determining the need and design for a community outreach program proposed by the Town of Fort Frances Children's Complex. The second, and more lengthy analysis concentrated on maintenance needs & concerns across the district. This latter survey was distributed to every tenant in RRDSSAB Housing - the response has been overwhelming and the results are currently being compiled into a workable document for planning purposes.

## **Outreach Programs**

We are very pleased to be working with the Town of Fort Frances Children's Complex who approached us several months ago to provide space at 6<sup>th</sup> & Webster to provide outreach services for families and children residing in our housing units. The project has expanded to include several community partners who are excited to deliver services for families this summer! A similar program was offered at 6<sup>th</sup> & Webster several years ago, under the auspices of the old Local Housing Authority and we are anxious to reprise the concept.

As a result of our activities survey, we have partnered with the Northwestern Health Unit and Senior's Coalition to provide outreach in several of our senior's manors. Blood pressure clinics, and monthly presentations on health & safety matters and services are being held in the common rooms of several housing sites.

Our goal is to expand these types of outreach programs right across the District!

## **Handicapped Accessible Unit at Lady Frances**

Working with Northern Independent Living Services (NILS) and with funding provided by the Ministry of Health & Long Term Care, we have completely renovated a unit to make it handicapped accessible for a specific tenant. The tenant has recently moved in.

A NILS worker is on site 8 hours per day to provide services to those tenants requiring additional supports to live independently. The renovation included common areas as well, such as the laundry room, public washroom, NILS office and common room.

## Capital Funding

Each year, the Social Housing department determines its capital needs and plans accordingly. Any unspent funds have been transferred to reserve. The following represents what is available for capital work, per this date:

Fund	31 Dec/08 balance	2008 budget	Present Net Value	Fund Details
Soc Hsg Contingency	182,201.52		182,201.52	Contributions from RRDSAB accumulated surplus & budgeted contributions. For all Soc Hsg needs.
RRDSAB Hsg Res Fund	425,627.51	204,957.00	220,670.51	Comprised of RRDSAB Hsg unexpended capital \$ plus interest. For RRDSAB Hsg only.
Housing Fed Res Fund	308,394.30		308,394.30	One-time funds from MMAH at transfer. For federal hsg only, therefore limited to four projects: FF & Atikokan Native Corps, and Golden Age East & Flinders (OCHAP). Interest earned on this account was used for building condition audits (2005) on all properties except RRDSAB Hsg.
Housing Provider Reserve	84,428.78		84,428.78	One-time provincial funds for capital needs, excluding RRDSAB Housing. Has not been accessed to date for NP providers.
Housing Non Profit Reserve	79,797.80		79,797.80	One-time provincial funds for all NP providers and excludes RRDSAB housing. Has not been accessed to date for providers.
Housing Severance Reserve	29,353.68		29,353.68	RRDSAB Hsg for transfer of former LHA staff. Utilized on one occasion (2003) for former Soc Hsg Mgr.
Strong Communities Rent Supp Reserve	3,012.48		3,012.48	3 year rolling average MMAH reconciliation of SCRS program for retainable revenues.
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,112,816.07</b>		<b>907,859.07</b>	

### 2008 Capital Plans

Unfortunately, much of our existing capital needs result from incomplete projects of previous years. Given that, we find that we must concentrate on tenant "move-outs" - in other words, as a tenant vacates a unit, our staff are now focusing on construction/repairs to upgrade our units one at a time. This includes flooring, painting, kitchen & bathroom upgrades, etc which takes more time and effort, but results in a fresh, upgraded unit for our tenants!

Unfortunately, many of our units have never been upgraded so this will be a

lengthy project. At some point, our goal is to focus on preventive maintenance, including regularly scheduled upgrades. Our new unit inspection policies will ensure regularly scheduled assessments of all units, including those already occupied.

### **RRDSSAB Housing Projects for 2008**

1. Elizabeth Manor Upgrade common areas and balconies, including hallways, stair wells, laundry rooms, and common/kitchen areas. This includes repairs, painting, flooring, upholstery, ceiling tiles, cupboards, window treatments, etc. Clean up/repair of grounds.
2. Lady Frances Completion of unfinished three-season room for the tenants which includes insulation, drywall, flooring, painting and furnishing, and refurbishing the common room. Clean up/repair of grounds & storage areas.
3. Rose Manor New bathroom vanities.  
Elevator upgrades.
4. 6<sup>th</sup> & Webster Exterior upgrades including staining the siding and patio fences, new mailboxes, exterior light fixtures etc.
5. Green Manor Privacy fences & extension of patio blocks.  
Elevator Upgrades.
6. Armit Avenue Replace windows.
7. RRDSSAB Housing Flooring at move-out.  
Electrical upgrades at move-out.  
New vacuum cleaners.  
Vanities, as scheduled or move-out.  
New tubs & surrounds at move out.

### **Non-Profits Managed by RRDSSAB:**

1. Faith Replace scheduled windows & furnaces, on a "per section" basis.  
Replace flooring & counter-tops in two units.
2. FF Municipal Replace flooring in two units at move-out.
3. Atikokan Native Sheds. Repair decks at five units, replace interior doors at two units & flooring in one unit, and screens & counter tops in designated units.

4. Columbus Place

Key Entry System, sidewalks and lighting upgrades, counter-tops at move-out, appliances as needed and minimal elevator upgrade - all pending board approval.

### **Future Needs**

Housing staff will be reviewing the results of the RRDSSAB Housing building condition audit and results of the tenant surveys to determine future capital needs. We also hope to gather input from the communities regarding their perceived needs, for example, the RRDSSAB Housing Manager hopes to host a community meeting in the Town of Rainy River to discuss future housing needs, given the high vacancy rate in that area.

Staff, including the CAO, will be traveling throughout the District this spring/summer to personally view each housing site.

### **Transitional Housing**

Jane Gillon, Ministry of Northern Development & Mines reports that our Proposal for a Transitional Housing Study, submitted 17 November, 2007, is still under review by Ministry personnel. If approved, Social Housing staff will partner with various others to complete a needs analysis and design for transitional housing, that is, housing required prior to long term care.

### **Thanks**

In a few short months and with several new staff members, we have been able to make tremendous progress in our Social Housing department. I am very proud of and wish to personally thank the members of the Housing Team for having the courage and the fortitude to overcome many obstacles and move forward in a positive, steadfast manner. Thank you also to members of the Social Housing Committee who have been so open to change and supportive of the staff and I throughout the process.

## Human Resources

Since the last board meeting, we have seen the following HR activity:

NAME	TITLE	STATUS	EFFECTIVE DATE
Jody Hamilton	Primary Care Paramedic (PCP)	Casual	14 April, 2008
Dan Lachapelle	PCP	Casual	14 April, 2008
Trevis Penney	Maintenance Custodian	1 year contract	28 April, 2008
Teresa Redford	Maintenance Custodian	Replacement part-time	1 May, 2008
Anne Barnard	Custodian	Replacement	1 May, 2008
Heidi Parr	Receptionist	Replacement contract (~2 mos)	5 May, 2008
Melissa Hughes	Maintenance/Painter	1 year contract	12 May, 2008
Nina Sawchuk	PCP	Internal Replacement. 3 mos (parental leave)	19 May, 2008
Karen Wirtz	PCP	Internal Replacement. 1 year (parental leave)	19 May, 2008

Respectfully Submitted,  
d Dittaro