



NIAGARA
REGIONAL
HOUSING



SHIN Newsletter

Social Housing In Niagara

March 2004 Issue

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Questions? Comments? Contact Mira Fearnside, Editor for SHIN at 905-682-9201 ext. 326. www.nrh.ca

Niagara Gets \$4M to Develop 150 Units

On February 26, 2004, Niagara Regional Housing and the Regional Municipality of Niagara received a commitment from both the Government of Canada and the Government of Ontario to allocate more than \$4M to help develop up to 150 units of affordable housing in the Region of Niagara. This is great news for Niagara. A program is being designed in an effort to meet local needs.



For more information on this initiative, please visit our website at www.nrh.ca.

People Needing Housing – A Strategy for the Niagara Community

There are more than 450 people in Niagara that are homeless. An additional 8,000 individuals are in need of affordable housing with a wait that could be one of several months or even years. The need for affordable housing in Niagara has never been greater.

Niagara Regional Housing (NRH) as Service Manager is developing a comprehensive housing strategy for Niagara, "*People Needing Housing: A Strategy for the Niagara Community*". The strategy will identify current key housing issues facing Niagara region and make recommendations for change. There will be two key components to the strategy:

1. Action Plan

Based on the recommendations, the Strategy will map out a 3 – 5 year action plan for resolutions of issues. Timing, costs and implications (risks) will be included.

2. Framework for Action

The Strategy will describe a framework within which government, housing providers, community agencies and the private market can work towards common goals. Roles and responsibilities are to be clearly defined within this framework.

The community is being consulted this spring and the Housing Strategy is targeted to be completed this summer.

Internal Reviews

In accordance with O. Reg. 298/01 Part VIII, providers are required to establish an internal review policy and procedures for tenant/member appeals. Tenants/members have a right to appeal any adverse decisions regarding ineligibility of RGI, type of accommodation or RGI calculations. The appeal is normally heard by the Board (or a committee of the Board).

NRH has established an internal appeals committee to hear appeals from applicants on the centralized waiting list as well as from tenants of NRH's owned units.

Housing providers who do not wish to establish an internal review committee to hear appeals may use NRH's appeals committee. All decisions made by NRH's appeals committee, however, are binding on housing providers. For those providers who wish to utilize NRH's appeal committee, an amendment to the existing Service Agreement must be signed by the provider.

A copy of the *Service Agreement Amendment* is available on our website at www.nrh.ca. Housing providers who wish to utilize NRH's appeal committee are requested to sign and forward the *Service Agreement Amendment* to their Housing Administrator.



Looking to conserve resources, save money and ultimately operate better buildings? Visit CMHC's website for information related to highrise operation, maintenance and repair and water conservation initiatives. Visit their website at www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/hoinpr/pr/index.cfm

Local Provider Advisory Group “Wants YOU!”

NRH's Provider Advisory Group “PAG” will be holding its next meeting in June 2004 (date/location to be determined).

PAG meets 4 to 6 times per year and examines opportunities for housing providers to give input into NRH policies, strategies and issues affecting the administration of social housing. In reviewing the terms of reference for this advisory group, it was suggested that a Supportive Housing and Urban Native provider be encouraged to join PAG.

Anyone who provides housing and receives funding from NRH or who has an interest in housing within the Region of Niagara is invited to attend these meetings. ONPHA and CHF will be providing representation at these meetings to give a more macro approach to local issues.

For further information or to confirm your attendance at the June meeting, please contact Sarah Phillips, Housing Administrator, Niagara Regional Housing at 905-682-9201, ext. 331, or sarah.phillips@regional.niagara.on.ca.

NRH Notices Update

The following NRH Notices have been issued since the last edition of the *SHIN* Newsletter:

- 03-16 Financial Year-End Requirements
- 03-17 2004 Rent Control Guideline, Inflation Factor and Cost Factors
- 03-18 Pooling of Capital Reserves
- 03-19 Imputed Rate of Return for Non-Income Producing Assets
- 03-20 Age Requirement for Senior Mandated Housing
- 03-21 2004 Unit Rent Factors
- 03-22 Pooling of Capital Reserves - Extension
- 04-01 Financial Year-End Requirements – Revised Annual Information Return
- 04-02 Financial Year-End Requirements – Capital vs. Operating Expenses

These NRH Notices are also available on our website at www.nrh.ca.

Operational Reviews – Update

One of NRH's objectives was to complete full operational reviews on all housing providers in Niagara by March 31, 2004. We are pleased to report that we have met this objective. The results and findings from our reviews will help us identify potential training requirements for providers. We will keep you advised of training sessions being organized for 2004.

NRH is now entering the next phase of the operational review cycle. Over the next two years, all providers will

have an interim review completed. The date of these interim reviews will be scheduled as close as possible to the 2 year anniversary date of the provider's previous full operational review. For more information on interim reviews, please contact your Housing Administrator.

Service Manager Annual Information Return – Year End December 31, 2003

The 2003 Provider Annual Information Returns (PAIRs) were recently submitted by all providers. Thanks to all of you for your assistance in providing additional information and clarification to enable us to meet our deadline for submission to the Province. We are planning to change the process for next year to make it more streamlined and less work for you.

NRH Customer Satisfaction Survey

At Niagara Regional Housing, one of our goals is to uphold quality customer service standards.

To that end, a customer satisfaction survey was sent to all housing providers, rent supplement landlords, community partners and tenants residing in NRH communities, asking for your comments on our services.

Of the 68 surveys issued to providers, 32% of you responded. Of those who responded, 82% think that NRH is providing good to excellent service to housing providers in communicating our services, conducting operational reviews, and responding to local provider issues and concerns.

One of the suggestions made was for NRH to hold annual meetings with all providers to discuss common issues of concern and to provide a forum for discussion and networking. We are receptive to this suggestion and would like your input on the type of information and training you would like to see happen. Please discuss your ideas with your Housing Administrator.

We appreciate your response to our survey. Your input will allow us to continue to improve our customer service to you.



Doug MacGowan Celebrates 100TH Birthday at Niagara Ina Grafton Gage Village

Doug MacGowan is one of the elite few who can call themselves a “centenarian” as he turned 100 on December 24, 2003. Management, Board members, staff, residents, family, and friends were on hand to celebrate Doug’s amazing accomplishment on December 16, 2003 at Niagara Ina Grafton Gage Village, St. Catharines. It was a great celebration for a great man!

Doug was born and raised in St. John’s, New Brunswick. He was employed by the Price Pulp & Paper Company in Quebec in accounting for 42 years. Upon retiring, he moved to St. Catharines and in 1994 came to the Village, where he lived in an apartment until just recently. Doug now resides in a long-term care suite in the Village.

Doug loves curling and participated in the sport for 35 years. His other big passion is World War I history. After his retirement, he spent 20 years doing research and co-authored the book “New Brunswick’s Fighting 26th”. Doug is very proud of his accomplishment. Doug doesn’t know to what he owes his long life, but he does know that he was “very fortunate in his life and work”.

Congratulations Doug!



Seated; Doug MacGowan
From left - Patrick O'Neill (CEO), Dawn Dodge (Councillor, Grantham Ward), Barbara & Doug MacGowan, Mike Haines (Constituency Assistant for Walt Lastewka), & Jean Armitage (Board Chairperson)

United Mennonite Home in Vineland Breaks Ground

On October 17th, 2003, United Mennonite Home held a groundbreaking ceremony to celebrate the building of a 48 bed addition to the existing home in Vineland, and to mark 50 years of service to the community. Art Seib, the Administrator for the Home, described it as “a milestone for the history of the home”. He also states that the group relied on the principles of volunteerism, fundraising, and partnership to complete the task. He also acknowledges that prayer and faith added to those principles.

The sod turning ceremony for the original Vineland United Mennonite Home was held on the same date 49 years ago to the date. Approximately 250 people attended the groundbreaking ceremony. Included in the celebration were Lincoln Mayor Ray Konkle, Regional Councillor Jill Hildreth, Frank DeBartolo from MP John Maloney’s office and other notables from the area.

This expansion of the home has been in the works for several years. Nick Pankratz, Board Chair, says that they are “extremely proud of it” and it had been a long awaited event for all of them. They claim that help from the Town of Lincoln, the Region of Niagara and the Ministry of Health made work on the expansion run smoothly.

With the completion of the addition, United Mennonite Home will house 128 beds. Construction is well underway and is scheduled to be completed in September 2004.

Mr. Seib says of the new facility that it is a milestone event and is symbolic of the next 50 years in the life of the new Home where the elderly, the most frail can find refuge in their remaining days, where they are cared for with dignity and respect, where the principles of community, partnership, volunteerism and biblical truths are valued.



Congratulations to United Mennonite Home!

Profile – Skyline Co-operative Homes



Skyline Co-op was built in 1992 under the provincially funded Homes Now program and is located in west Niagara Falls about ten minutes away from one of the seven wonders of the world – Niagara Falls.

It was the first housing development in the area of Montrose and Preakness Streets and since then more than 500 single dwelling homes have been built around it.



Skyline Co-op is a family oriented community with fifty-eight 2 and 3 bedroom townhouses as well as two accessible units.



The social committee is geared towards activities for the children. A car wash and BBQ were held last year to raise money for playground equipment. The *Neighborhood Watch* committee is proud of the fact that their community provides a safe environment for children.



The co-op's maintenance committee and maintenance man work hard to keep the property, grounds and units in good condition to attract and keep members who adopt the co-operative spirit and values.

Jeff MacKay who has lived here since 1994 with his wife and two daughters is the president of the 9 member Board of Directors that meet on a monthly basis. Jeff says that "Skyline Co-op provides a safe and healthy environment for my wife and I to raise our children. Serving on the board is just my way of showing my appreciation and giving back to this community."



New Electricity Prices – April 1, 2004

The Ontario government has established a two-tier pricing structure for electricity effective April 1, 2004.

If your account with St. Catharines Hydro relates to:

- a residential complex as defined in the Tenant Protection Act 1997; or,
- a property that is owned or leased by a co-operative as defined in the Co-operative Corporations Act,

the conservation threshold is determined based on the number of units within the property or complex. In order to determine the appropriate conservation threshold, housing providers must provide a signed declaration attesting to the number of units to which an account relates.

A Declaration Form will be inserted with your next electricity bill and can also be obtained on their website at www.schydro.com.

For more information, please call the St. Catharines Hydro Customer Care Department at (905) 984-8961.

Upcoming Workshops

The Social Housing Services Corporation (SHSC) has been working with ONPHA and CHF Canada to develop a comprehensive education program on capital reserves, cash management and investing.

The following training sessions have been set for Niagara providers:

- May 11 – Creating your own capital reserve plan
- May 27 – Using your capital reserve plan
- June 29 – Cash management/investing.

The SHSC will be sending out brochures and registration information on these upcoming workshops to all providers in early April. We encourage all providers to attend these worthwhile workshops!

If you have any upcoming celebrations or anniversaries in your organization and would like to publish it in SHIN, please send (or email) your articles and pictures to SHIN, c/o mira.fearnside@regional.niagara.on.ca



Reminder! Please let us know of any changes to Board members and/or staff contact information, to ensure that our records are kept up-to-date.