



NRH

# SHIN



Social Housing in Niagara

Issue 6

Winter 2005/06

## Inside this Issue:

Provider Forum—March 2006

Benchmarks

Affordable Housing Program

SHRA Regulation Changes

NRH Staff Changes

Reserve Fund Studies

NRH Notices Update

211

NRH Website

RRAP Disabled

Brock University Internship

Dog Owner's Act—Pit Bulls

Tenant Appreciation Letter

Energy Conservation

2006 Housing Awards

Profile—Woodrose Co-op

## Housing Provider Forum—March 2006

Mark your calendar for **March 9, 2006** and plan to come to Club Roma in St. Catharines for this year's Housing Provider Forum. Board of Directors and staff are invited to attend.



Topics will include an update on current NRH initiatives, everything you wanted to know (*but have been afraid to ask*) about Housing Access, and the Transitional and Housing Support Program, funded by the Ministry of Community and Social Services. This program is intended to assist victims of domestic abuse and their children to find and maintain housing.

Come hear our keynote speaker **Dave Franklin**, a retired RCMP hostage negotiator, who utilizes his experience and training to challenge listeners to gain a deeper understanding of violent and abusive relationships, referred to as Relationship Terrorism.

**Dave Franklin's** presentation has been described as powerful, thought-provoking, stimulating, entertaining, dynamic and most importantly, insightful and educational. Audiences have given rave reviews on the speaker and the subject matter. Don't miss it!

Further details on the Forum will be sent to you in February 2006.



## Benchmarks

2006 marks the beginning of the implementation phase of benchmarks. Housing providers with a January—December fiscal year have already received their 2006 operating budgets according to their approved benchmarks.



As a reminder, NRH continues to require providers to submit operating budgets to ensure that items such as taxes and rent-geared-to-income units and rents/housing charges are funded appropriately.

Housing Providers will notice a change in the budget format which has been revised to accommodate the benchmark funding formula.

NRH will monitor the effectiveness of benchmarks, in the first year, through the submission of providers' mid-year financial reports.

For further information or if you have any questions regarding benchmarks, please contact your Housing Administrator.

## Opening Doors Together - Affordable Housing Program

Two of the eight approved projects have signed agreements with the Province and are well underway in the construction phase. Meie Management, 11-19 King Street in St.Catharines is anticipating occupancy of their 19 unit senior apartment building in May 2006. Keefer Developments is also developing apartments for seniors at their Front Street location in Thorold. Occupancy of their 18 affordable and 2 market units is anticipated for November 2006. Three non-profits organizations - Gateway, Goodwill and Bethlehem Projects of Niagara - have also signed agreements with the Province and hope to start construction in March/April 2006. Three other private sector projects are working on fulfilling their conditions before construction can begin. All are working toward meeting the Province's March 31, 2006 deadline.



In October 2005 the government announced the *Canada-Ontario Affordable Housing Program* that provided for a capital allocation of grants to Niagara for the creation of 105 units of affordable housing. 170 units were also allocated under the Housing Allowance/Rent Supplement Program.

Final program details have yet to be released, at which time, Niagara Regional Housing will determine its participation in this new program. Details will follow at that time.

If your non-profit or co-operative is considering expansion, please monitor our website [www.nrh.ca](http://www.nrh.ca) for further program details.

## Social Housing Reform Act 2000 (SHRA) Regulation Changes



New regulations amending Ontario Regulations 298/01, 339/01, 368/01, 642/00 and 644/00 were filed on November 4, 2005.

Consultation with service managers and other stakeholder organizations led to a number of proposed changes that had widespread support across stakeholder groups. These changes are intended to give more local discretion, provide greater clarity and consistency in the regulations and ease administrative requirements.

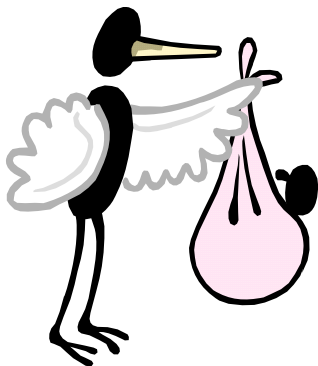
NRH is reviewing the changes to household selection and time frame flexibility, among others, and will issue *NRH Notices* where local policies and rules are affected by these changes. If you have any questions regarding the new regulations, please contact your Housing Administrator.



The changes became effective upon filing.

The updated regulations are available on e-laws ([www.e-laws.gov.on.ca](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca)).

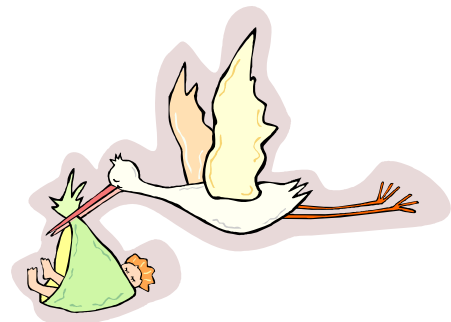
## NRH Staffing Changes



Sarah Phillips, Housing Administrator will be going on maternity leave in mid-March 2006.

Deborah Firmin, Housing Administrator will become the contact for Sarah's housing providers until her return in 2007.

Best wishes to Sarah for a safe delivery and health and happiness for her and her new bundle of joy!



## Reserve Fund Studies

Due to a terrific response from providers, NRH is moving ahead with the joint Request for Proposal (RFP) to have building condition assessments and reserve fund studies completed for housing providers who have expressed an interest and who do not have a current study. The cost of the study will be the responsibility of the housing provider, however, we anticipate that the cost to individual providers will be less if there are a number of providers participating. NRH will manage the RFP process, ensuring that participating providers receive training and a software program that they can continue to update each year.



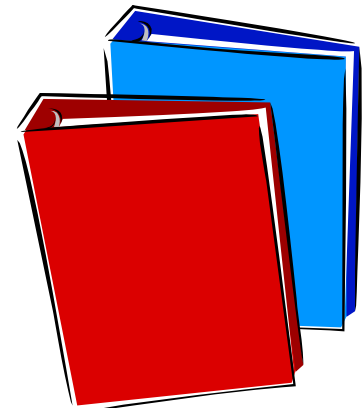
### What you can expect:

- The RFP will go out in mid-March 2006 requesting consultants to quote;
- By mid-April housing providers will know the cost and enter into an agreement with the consultant;
- From May to August the consultant will arrange and complete the on-site visits with housing providers and will meet with boards/staff to present the study results.

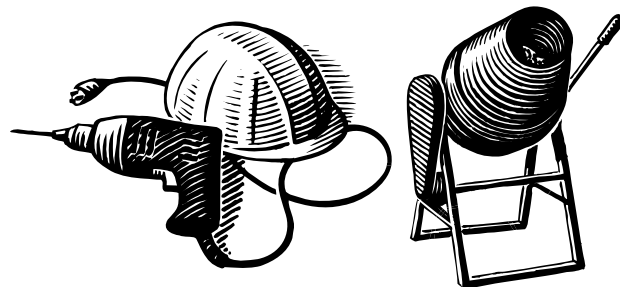
In September, providers will be offered training in the SHSC Capital Forecasting Software. All housing providers will receive a copy of the software populated with the data from their study. A training manual will accompany the software. The training sessions will show providers how to keep their plan up-to-date.

### **Already have a study?**

If you have a reserve fund study that is more than two years old, you may wish to have it updated. NRH can include the update as part of the request for proposal. The cost of the update will also be the responsibility of the housing provider. The update would ensure that the base costs are current, life expectancies of building components are in line with the ones used by NRH, and that any repairs or deferrals are recorded. NRH will enter all studies into the SHSC Capital Forecasting Software.



The final touches are being put on the RFP. If you would like more information or wish to be involved and haven't told us, please call Deborah Firmin at 905-682-9201 extension 318.



## NRH Notices Update

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

05-05	2005 Ingoing Tenant Income Limits
05-06	Market to Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI) Policy (Revised)
05-07	Non-Profit & Co-operative Housing Providers AIR—Accountant's Report
05-08	2006 Rent Control Guideline/Inflation Factor
05-09	Overhoused Households—Changes to Regulations
05-10	PIPEDA
06-01	Board of Director President's Contact Information

The Notices are also available on our website at [www.nrh.ca](http://www.nrh.ca).

## 211 Has Arrived

211 is an easy-to-remember three digit phone number providing Niagara residents with free, confidential access to information about the full range of community, social, health and government services.

Call 211 to reach Information Niagara's trained and certified information and referral specialists. 211 is available at this time to Niagara residents with the exception of Wainfleet, West Lincoln and a few exchanges in Grimsby.



Residents of these areas can still reach Information Niagara at 905-682-9911 or 1-800-263-3695.

## NRH Website

NRH is seeking feedback on our website [www.nrh.ca](http://www.nrh.ca).

Is the website user-friendly? Do you use the website? Is the information on the website useful to providers? Is there any other information you would like to see on the website?



If you have any comments or suggestions for improving the website or making it more user-friendly, please contact Denise Papaiz at (905) 682-9201 ext. 337 or email [denise.papaiz@regional.niagara.on.ca](mailto:denise.papaiz@regional.niagara.on.ca).



## Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program for Persons With Disabilities (RRAP—Disabled)

Canada Mortgage & Housing Corporation (CMHC) offers financial assistance under the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program for Persons with Disabilities (RRAP—Disabled) to housing providers to undertake accessibility work to modify dwellings occupied or intended for occupancy by low income persons with disabilities.

### Who is eligible?

Housing Providers may apply to CMHC for modifications to units if:

1. The rents are at or below CMHC established levels, and
2. The units are occupied by tenants with incomes at or below the income ceilings.

### What assistance is available?

For housing providers, 100 percent forgiveness is available for accessibility modifications up to the maximum loan on eligible units.

Housing providers must agree that:

1. The units will continue to be affordable to tenants, and
2. In the case of rental units, new occupancy be limited to households with incomes at or below established income ceilings.

The maximum loan for rental units is \$24,000.

For more information and to determine eligibility, please contact CMHC at 1-800-704-6488 or email [rrap\\_ontario@cmhc-schl.gc.ca](mailto:rrap_ontario@cmhc-schl.gc.ca).



## Brock University—Internship Awards

Brock Faculty of Business wishes to support area non-profits by providing \$3000 stipends that will make non-profit sector summer jobs more competitively compensated. This will improve the non-profit sector's access to business skills (marketing, human resources, accounting, business development and finance) while promoting the practical application and further development of such skills for Brock Business students.

Three Stipends will be awarded to three Niagara Region non-profit organizations with the best summer jobs hiring current Brock Business graduate or undergraduate level students or Spring 2006 graduates. The stipend of \$3000 is to be used as a top up to a minimum wage summer position.

For more information, contact Gillian Kemp, Brock University Faculty of Business at (905) 401-0903 or email her at: [gk02rn@brocku.ca](mailto:gk02rn@brocku.ca).

## Dog Owners Liability Act—Pit Bull Controls

The legislation restraining pit bulls was passed by the provincial government and became law in August 2005.

The legislation impacts tenants/members in the following ways:

- 1) Tenants/members who currently own a pit bull are required to provide written documentation that the pit bull has been sterilized by a veterinarian on, or before 60 days, following the date the legislation became law. The 60 day period expired October 28, 2005. If you are asked for this documentation and cannot produce it immediately you will not be given an extension of time to have the sterilization procedure completed.
- 2) Where a dog, that is a pit bull by definition of the legislation, bites, attacks a person, attacks an animal or behaves in a menacing manner, an order for the dog's removal can be applied for through the courts. The owner may be prohibited from owning another dog.
- 3) All pit bulls must be muzzled and on a leash not exceeding 1.8 metres when it is outside an enclosure occupied by the owner.
- 4) The dog collar and leash must be of sufficient strength to be able to prevent the pit bull from breaking it. The pit bull shall be controlled by a person by means of a leash.
- 5) If an animal is alleged to be a pit bull, the onus of proving the dog is not a pit bull lies with the owner. The owner will be required to prove to a court or tribunal that the dog is not a pit bull if the provider makes the determination that the dog is a pit bull. All costs will be the responsibility of the dog owner. The presiding judge or adjudicator will make the determination as to what evidence will be required. The provider will not be required to offer proof that the dog is a pit bull.
- 6) A person who owned a pit bull on the date the legislation took effect shall not acquire another pit bull that would cause the number of pit bulls owned to be more than the number owned on the date the legislation came into effect.

Providers and tenants/members wishing more information can access the Government of Ontario website at: [www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/DBLaws/Source/Statues/English](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/DBLaws/Source/Statues/English).

## Tenant Appreciation Letter

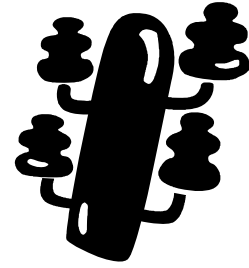
We would like to share an excerpt from a letter written by a tenant of one of our housing providers in Niagara to highlight the continuing need for affordable housing and spotlight the positive results of providing rent-geared-to-income assistance to residents:



“I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for having the opportunity of living in the McLeod Road complex for the past eleven years. My children and I have thoroughly enjoyed living here. Having had the geared-to-income when it was needed gave me the opportunity as a single parent to educate and better my family and myself by becoming independent and self-supporting. It has been a pleasure dealing with you, your caring and understanding is very much appreciated.”

This tenant was moving because they had recently purchased a home.

## Energy Conservation Programs



Rising energy costs are a growing concern to all housing providers in Ontario and make up a volatile portion of provider's operating budget.

The Social Housing Services Corporation's (SHSC) energy management program offers the benefits of a co-ordinated program—bulk purchasing and resources such as standardized templates and resident training kits.



The SHSC launched the pilot version of their program in early 2005. The program included energy audits and data collection for 5,000 housing units spread across Ontario. The SHSC worked with energy audit firms to identify energy conservation measures for these buildings and tapped into various grants for retrofits. Due to its success, the SHSC is considering extending the pilot program to another 2,000 housing units.

In December 2005, the SHSC met with Natural Resources Canada (NRCan), Canada Mortgage & Housing Corporation (CMHC) and the Ontario Power Authority to determine how social housing providers could be eligible for various federal energy programs (Energuide for Houses; Energuide for Low Income; Energuide for retrofits) as well as a variety of incentives and programs offered by local distribution companies, gas companies and Hydro One. An agreement was reached to harmonize and simplify the application process for housing providers. A draft application package is anticipated early in 2006.

To obtain more information on SHSC's energy management programs, please visit [www.shscorp.ca](http://www.shscorp.ca) or contact them directly at 1-866-268-4451.

## 2006 Housing Awards



In 2006, Canada Mortgage & Housing (CMHC) will present up to 16 awards to honour the nation's Best Practices in Affordable Housing. CMHC established the Housing Awards Program in 1988 to recognize significant contributions to the advancement of Canadian housing. The Housing Awards are presented every second year.

If you have created a unique solution to enhance housing affordability, it's time you received the national recognition you deserve.

Awards are given in the following categories—Buildings; Housing Finance; Neighbourhoods; Housing with Resident Services; and Aboriginal Housing.

### **How to Enter**

Download or request the Guidelines and Application form by visiting the CMHC website at [www.cmhc.ca](http://www.cmhc.ca) and using the search keyword: housing awards, or emailing your request to CMHC at [callcent@cmhc.ca](mailto:callcent@cmhc.ca), or call 1-800-668-2642. Applications must be postmarked by midnight April 5, 2006.

## Profile—Woodrose Co-operative Homes

In this edition of SHIN, we spotlight Woodrose Co-operative Homes Inc.

Woodrose Co-op is located in Welland and consists of 3 separate apartment buildings totalling 60 units. The complex consists of 1, 2 and 3 bedroom units for families. The complex is next to a mall and easy access to grocery and drug stores.



There is a mix of households in Woodrose Co-op, but the majority of households are families. The membership consists of households with diverse cultural backgrounds and many new Canadians. “The best aspect of this co-op” says Carol Koch, Co-ordinator, “is how new Canadians are welcomed into the co-op by the membership”. “Within a very short time, new members feel right at home and become an integral part of the community, due to the positive attitudes and friendliness of the members”. This is evidenced by the low turnover rate and long waiting list for the co-op. “Once households move in, they rarely move out”, says Carol Koch.

The Board of Woodrose Co-op is a long-standing and stable board. The success of the co-op can be attributed to the leadership of the President, Janice Cartmell, and the dedication of the members of the board.



Woodrose Co-op has numerous active committees, ranging from member selection to housekeeping, with participation from both the membership as well as the board. At each Annual General Meeting, membership participation is recognized on an individual basis.

The Co-op is approaching its 20th anniversary next year.

After 15 years as Co-ordinator, Carol Koch will be retiring later this year to spend more time with her family and new grandson. “I am looking forward to a long vacation visiting my family in England and South Africa”, Carol said. The Board will be seeking a new co-ordinator later this year.



Good Luck to Carol in her retirement! And congratulations to Woodrose Co-op on its success!

