

BEYOND THESE WALLS

Statement of Purpose: ENFHS Semi-Annual Newsletter is the outreach publication of Entre Nous Femmes Housing Society. Its purpose is to further ENFHS's goal (ENDS) of ensuring that economically disadvantaged families in the greatest number possible within the Metro Vancouver (GVRD) area have the opportunity for their lives to be enhanced by secure, safe, affordable, and appropriate homes to an extent that justifies the use of all available resources.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A SOCIAL HOUSING PROPERTY MANAGER

7:00 a.m. Jump out of bed and wonder what good things can be accomplished at ENF today! Get dressed, make lunches, take kids to school and drive to work.

8:30 a.m. Stop at Tim Horton's for that delicious first coffee of the day.

9:00 a.m. Get to office, open blinds, sip coffee, just sit down when the first tenant of the day comes in to discuss the overflowing garbage bins. Tenant leaves; prepare memo reminding everyone to please pick up after themselves and to remind their children to do so, too, and to please take pride in their home and community by helping to keep it clean.

9:30 a.m. Take another sip of my now cold coffee and then interview prospective tenants for a 3 bedroom unit. They are a newly arrived immigrant family from Turkey. Because of language difficulties he is having trouble finding steady work and they do not qualify for assistance. Currently they are in a one bedroom basement suite paying \$750/mth. The suite is dark and depressing and there is no where for their little boy to play. The wife is also expecting another child. They are thrilled to find out they will be able to move into a light and airy 3 bedroom townhouse at Jessica Place next month. It will be great for them to bring their new baby back to such a nice home.

10:00 a.m. Tenant calls to complain about raccoons (or something!) in attic of townhouse. Go to investigate and can see where critters are getting in the attic

through soffits. Call pest control who provide quote. Oh, no! No operating funds for *that* amount, so call Property Portfolio Manager at BCHMC who says to fax him a copy of the quote and he will try to get us approval to cover this cost as an Extraordinary Expense but reminds me that funds are getting very, very tight at BCHMC.

10:30 a.m. Go outside to do a quick property inspection and run into a couple who moved in a few months ago. Just prior to moving in they had both been to rehab for drug addiction and had made a commitment to live a better life for their 16 month old son. Today they are taking him to the park as the husband has a day off—a far cry from the meth addicts they used to be! They thanked ENF again for giving them the opportunity to safely house their son and start afresh.

11:00 a.m. Call the Executive Director to confirm the date of the United Way Day of Caring.

Thank goodness that a group of volunteers from United Way help each year to give one of the properties a thorough weeding and trimming which the Society cannot otherwise afford to do within its operating budget.

11:30 a.m. An older tenant comes in just to talk as she has recently found
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out she has terminal cancer. Put phone on 'Do Not Disturb' and spend an hour talking and finding out what she needs, as she has no family to help her. Call a local hospice to find out how to get her into one. They will get back to me later today.

12:00 p.m. Single mom comes to discuss the Notice to Vacate that had been issued because she had not paid rent. She said her ex-husband has not been paying her support payments as he agreed to. Referred her to the Family Maintenance program. Work on a repayment plan that she can live with for outstanding rent payment.

1:00 p.m. Pull out sandwich to eat lunch but receive a call about a burst hose bib, so call the plumber which leads to working on other maintenance concerns, like arranging for the yearly fire system inspection, an electrician to come in and check on the exterior lights that mysteriously stopped working and coordinating the cleaners and painters for month end.

2:00 p.m. Take bite of sandwich...plumber comes in to advise that it looks like the hose bib was vandalized...heavy sigh...plumber gives an estimate of the repair cost which is going to take a huge bite out of the operating budget...but then what doesn't???

2:30 p.m. Take another bite but have lost appetite. Get call back from hospice. Miraculously, they have been able to find a hospice bed for ENF tenant at another facility if she can come immediately. Call tenant and then start working on finding a tenant for her suite which will now become available for month end which is in 10 days.

3:00 p.m. Sandwich now looks old and tired so throw it out. Tenant moving into new suite at month end calls and sadly says she has no furniture to move in so it will not take her long. Tell her to hang tough while I make call on other line to Homestart. They agree to furnish her apartment at no cost to her. Thank goodness that ENF put together the Tenant Support Services Guide so this information is always handy and ready to use for just such situations! New tenant is absolutely gob-smacked at such wonderful news!

3:30 p.m. Get a call from the other property I manage in regard to the leaky suite that is part of an overall building envelope failure. The tenant is understandably upset about paying lower end of market rent yet not being able to use the balcony. Call the Executive Director and discuss progress on repair options that are being consid-

ered and the timeline for resolution to the problem. Also discuss the potential for having to start closing down some of the leaky suites. It's agreed that if we do this, it will definitely cause cash flow issues.

4:00 p.m. Three tenants come into office, each complaining about the others' behaviour. Try to sort out the issues but cannot get the tenants to calm down and be reasonable so suggest that ENF coordinate bringing in a mediator. They go off to think about it and will let me know by end of the week.

4:30 p.m. Applicant calls to advise she cannot take the suite she agreed to take at month end due to a family emergency requiring her to move back to Ontario. Hmmmm, have to go back to Waiting List to scramble for a new tenant. Ask ED to fax over Waiting List. Spend next hour making phone calls to applicants.

5:30 p.m. Feeling kind of hungry and realize it's past time to go home and have forgotten to pick up the kids from soccer practice—again!

9:30 p.m. Kids are doing homework, husband working on his project car so I'm just relaxing watching TV when I get emergency page advising the fire alarms are going off at one of the buildings. Call the tenant who cleans the building and find out that someone had left a pot on the stove unattended and the fire started there. Jump in car and drive across the Lower Mainland to the building, find water so deep from sprinklers going off in common hallways that kids are practically swimming down them! Tenants have followed fire alarm procedure and gathered at the appointed spot (those fire drills DO pay off!). Fire department looks after fire, tenants go back to suites, I call out the restoration company and then call ED to advise her there's going to be an insurance claim tomorrow.

Midnight Go to bed and reflect on day—not too bad, all in all; helped a family in need find appropriate affordable housing; helped a sick tenant find hospice care; helped another tenant file with Family Maintenance; found furniture for another person...hey, just try finding *that* kind of job satisfaction and sense of fulfillment as a property manager in the market place!



THE BENEFITS OF THE CHRA

The Canadian Housing and Renewal Association (CHRA) is a national organization whose purpose is to advocate for and represent the interests of those engaged in the provision, supply, operation, and maintenance of social and affordable housing in this country. We have been active in this role since incorporating 41 years ago. Our members include not-for-profit housing providers, provincial and territorial governments, municipalities and affordable housing supporters.

CHRA is your national voice for affordable housing. We are headquartered in Ottawa and have a direct working relationship with CMHC at the most senior level. We have strategic associations with other major players in the national affordable housing sector, such as the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada (CHF Canada), the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), the Canadian Homebuilders Association, Conference Board of Canada, Campaign 2000, and the three Provincial Housing Associations. We work closely with other national agencies in efforts to ensure that all Canadians have safe, decent, affordable housing, liveable wages, and healthy families.

Our proximity to Parliament Hill provides CHRA access to the corridors of power on a national level. We lobby federal politicians and bureaucrats on all issues concerning affordable housing nationwide. An example of our effectiveness in lobbying with our partners were the announcements last fall by the federal government to continue the Homeless Partnering Initiative (HPI), Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP) and the Affordable Housing Initiative (AHI).

We are well known for our networking and communication, through our Annual Congress, the Housing Symposium that we hold in various regions of the country, our website (in excess of 250,000 hits annually), and the papers and reports we produce on all aspects of affordable housing. However, we recognize that there are some organizations who are not familiar with us and how we could serve them. Consequently, CHRA is committed to improving our outreach and to better serving

the needs of our members.

In the past year, CHRA has attempted to focus on providing value to our members and better connecting that value to the cost of membership. We recognize the importance of regional organizations, such as Entre Nous Femmes Housing Society, and the benefit you bring to your communities. Our aim is to support you from a national perspective with the resources you need to continue the high level of service that you provide to your constituents. We will not duplicate services available through your provincial housing association, BCNPHA, or infringe in any way on matters that are in their jurisdiction. A particular example that exemplifies this strategy is the recent paper we commissioned on a National Housing Strategy and the complimentary "open space" event that we convened at our annual congress in Toronto this April. The feedback we received from many non-profit-housing providers from all areas of the country was that this was a high merit experience that highlighted the value that CHRA can offer.

In British Columbia CHRA is positioned to provide its constituents with a high level of service and attention as our province is well represented with three members at the Board of Directors level. They are Patrick Stewart, President, National Aboriginal Housing Association, Shayne Ramsey, CEO, BC Housing, and myself, David Eddy, Executive Director, Vancouver Native Housing Society. The BC Board members are dedicated to ensuring that British Columbia members in particular are well served by the Association. CHRA welcomes input and feedback as to how we may better serve you on a national level. If you have any questions or concerns about CHRA please do not hesitate to contact Acting Executive Director, Geoff Gillard at: ggillard@CHRA-ACHRU.CA or me at: deddy@vchs.ca

KEEP CHECKING THE CHRA WEBSITE FOR INFORMATION ON THE 2010 CONGRESS!

LIBBY DAVIES & A NATIONAL HOUSING STRATEGY

Libby Davies introduced Bill C-304 'Bill for a National Housing Strategy' into Parliament and in April 2009 the first two rounds of debate on this Bill took place in the House of Commons. Sometime in the late spring, or early in the fall of 2009, this Bill is scheduled to come up for a vote on whether or not it will go to committee for further debate.

However, support is still needed to move this Bill forward.

These are some of Ms. Davies comments made during her speech in the House of Commons:

"I want to begin my comments about my bill by pointing out that Canada used to have a sterling record when it came to the provision of affordable housing. We had many good federal programs....There were great programs through CMHC during the 1970's and the 1980's, even going back to the end of the second world war when the vets' housing was building in cities across the country. The federal government always had an incredibly strong presence in the provision of housing. It was seen as a responsible mandate of the federal government."

Ms. Davies went on to point out that Canada is the only major country in the industrialized world without a national housing strategy. She also reports that Canada has one of the smallest housing sectors among developed countries.

The UN Special Rapporteur on adequate housing in fact called on the Canadian government to take responsibility for housing. His report actually condemned Canada for not providing leadership in this area.

"I think this is very alarming because we think of Canada as a wealthy country where these basic provisions of human needs can be met, and yet we have seen not only a growing gap between wealth and poverty but we have seen an abandonment of this most fundamental measure by the federal government."

Ms. Davies also commented that municipalities have shown some incredible leadership by using zoning, municipal land and incentives to develop social housing but they need the federal and provincial governments to partner with them in their efforts.

"There was a time when housing wasn't on the national agenda. It is now. We are making this a political priority. We are saying front and centre that Canada's record on housing is now abysmal. It is something that is an embarrassment in the international community as evidenced by the report from the United Nations."

If you want to support the development of a National Housing Strategy for Canada, please sign the petition found at <http://tinyurl.com/dmzosk>

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**If you are interested in becoming a member of ENF, please submit a letter of interest to:
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