

# 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.

## UPDATE FROM THE ENF BOARD

In February 2007, the Board of Directors adopted a set of 'Strategic Ends' for ENF. These Ends were developed after several planning meetings and lengthy discussions by all Directors.

These new Ends indicate a desire to actively support opportunities for the lives of families to be enhanced while making the best use of all available resources. We realize

that we can best do this by working in partnership with other community groups and agencies, and by sharing our skills and capacities with other non-profit housing groups.

These new 'Strategic Ends' are:

1) Entre Nous Femmes Housing Society will have a development plan in place for increasing community-based opportunities for life enhancement for tenants

through use of Entre Nous Femmes Housing Society properties by October 31, 2007.

2) The Entre Nous Femmes Housing Society portfolio of available housing units will be increased by a minimum of 60 units, with a minimum of 20 new affordable housing units by October 31, 2010.

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## THE NEED FOR MORE AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN THE GVRD

Affordable housing is particularly important in the GVRD area and even more so in the City of Vancouver, where rental accommodation vacancy rates are almost zero and rents are at over \$ 2 per square foot (a small apartment of 500 sq.foot can cost \$1000 a month).

The City of Vancouver has launched a new approach to achieving a green, livable and affordable city under the banner of 'EcoDensity'. This could translate to more affordable housing but most likely only for those able

to buy it. The affordability of rental housing requires a much more complex approach since it is at present not economical for developers to build rental accommodations, and without subsidies they would not be affordable for thousands of residents.

A recent EcoDensity Fair in Vancouver focused on densification of neighborhoods and making Vancouver more 'green'. However, participants pointed directly to the lack of affordable rental housing and need for better public transportation, seeing these as

necessary preconditions. Higher density equals a 'greener' city only if more people on less land do not need more cars to get around, because they are able to walk, bike or take public transit to work, school, shopping and recreation instead. It is a planning issue.

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**ENFHS is a registered charity & gladly accepts donations to help offset operational costs. If you would like to donate, please forward a cheque to ENF's head office. A charity tax receipt will be issued. Thank you.**

**The Need for More Affordable Housing in the GVRD continued from Page 1...**

Affordable Housing Network housing advocates, municipal politicians, and developers are engaged in identifying new ways to achieve affordability of rental housing. Promotion of alternative housing designs and relaxation of parking requirements are both examples of activities that could cut the cost of construction of rental housing.

Still the issue of affordable rents will require the consideration of new and creative solutions. An entrepreneurial approach may be essential in an environment of extinct and expiring funding programs. It is unlikely that any new programs will become available at any time soon from either the current provincial or

federal levels of government. However, 'Ecodenisty' may indicate that the City of Vancouver would now be supportive of higher densities on properties redeveloped by charitable organizations or built by non-profit housing societies.

ENF has a vital interest in seeing that the Metro Vancouver area has an increase in affordable rental housing for families. We would like to provide housing for more families in need. It is essential that we all make an effort to make decision-makers aware of the importance of affordable accommodation and relevant services for the well being of our communities. But it is equally essential that we stay open minded about new and creative housing solutions.

—by Eva Wadolna, ENF Director.



**Speaking of creative housing solutions, ENF's building, Constance Court, was built in partnership with Vancity in 1992.**

**Vancity occupies the main floor while the apartments occupy the upper floors. There are two floors of family housing and one floor of seniors housing, for a total of 34 affordable rental homes.**

**ONE OF THE MANY ORGANIZATIONS THAT HELP WOMEN IN OUR COMMUNITY...**

**Women Elders in Action (WE\*ACT)**

WE\*ACT grew out of the 1999 BC Seniors Summit which saw hundreds of seniors congregate in Vancouver to discuss their unique needs.

Women in the Income and Poverty working group wrote the Vancouver Declaration of Older Women's Rights, which was presented at the 2000 World March of Women Tribunal, giving visibility to the concerns of older women.

This group's focus is to raise awareness and to act on the most pressing social and economic issues facing older women today.

WE\*ACT's intent that the plight of senior women shall no longer be ignored has been entrenched in their work to develop and promote a

Position Paper on Pension Reform.

WE\*ACT's accumulated networking and promotional efforts have resulted in the community 'discovering senior women's issues'. WE\*ACT has become a substantive contributor to the ongoing analytical work of various social action stakeholders responding to policy and program changes introduced by all levels of government.

They have currently embarked on a Three Year Project, 'Exploring Economic Security for Senior Women' to promote understanding of the need for pension reform.

—from the WE\*ACT website at: [Wwww.vcn.bc.ca/411/contentpages/we\\_act.htm](http://www.vcn.bc.ca/411/contentpages/we_act.htm)

**LIBBY DAVIES PRESENTATION TO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS ON MARCH 22**

Mr. Speaker, the number of homeless in Vancouver has doubled since 2002, yet shelters like the Downtown Eastside Women's Centre are being forced to close their doors because they can't get funding.

The 2007 federal budget completely ignores the homelessness and housing crisis facing Vancouver. Not a dime was dedicated for desperately needed housing.

Nothing in the budget closes the growing gap between wealth and poverty...

When will this government get it? Workers want a decent wage, families want secure affordable housing, and we all benefit from fair labour practices.

— excerpt from Libby Davies newsletter

## BOARD NOTES

- ⇒ It was with great regret that we accepted the resignation of Regina Michaelis, a long servicing Director. Regina joined the Board in November 2001 and provided the conscience of the Board for many years. She kept us on track with our stated Ends and ensured that we operated ethically. Regina left the Board in March 2007 to manage her many other commitments.
- ⇒ Shannon Hallett, a Director since January 2005, is leaving to investigate pursuing a sustainable artistic lifestyle in France. Shannon orchestrated our very successful participation in the 2006 World Urban Forum and was an outspoken advocate for affordable housing during her time on the Board.
- ⇒ Lise Alain, a Director with us for only a short time, resigned in September this year. Lise left to have the time to pursue further academic studies.
- ⇒ Alice Sundberg, a former Director of ENF and the recently retired Executive Director of the BC Non-Profit Housing Association, receive the Graham Ernsie Award for Creating Homes and Communities at the 2007 CHRA Congress in Calgary.
- ⇒ In October 2007 Loraine Lundquist joined the Board. Loraine was recently the Manager, Housing Integration Division, for the City of Calgary. We welcome her experience and expertise!
- ⇒ The Board is also delighted to welcome Jason Tong as a new Director who joined the Board in October, as well. Jason came to ENF through Boardmatch.
- ⇒ We are also seeking residents of ENF housing communities who are interested in joining the Board of Directors. We currently have two vacancies and would truly like to have the experience of tenants represented at the Board table. Please contact Tracy McCullough, the Executive Director, at [enf@telus.net](mailto:enf@telus.net) or (604) 451-4412 for a list of Director obligations.

## CHRA

Annual funding for affordable housing has declined by \$700 million according to a new report released today by representatives of Canada's major community-based non-profit housing organizations. The housing experts are asking the federal government to use the coming Throne Speech to commit to maintain the current investment in community housing.

"In this Speech from the Throne, the federal government must, as a first step, keep its current funding for affordable housing to help the 1.5 million Canadians in desperate housing need," says Karen Charlton, President of Canadian Housing Renewal Association (CHRA) and manager of Social Development for the City of Medicine Hat, Alberta.

"Where's the Money Gone? An Analysis of Declining Government Housing Expenditures" by housing analyst Steve Pomeroy, shows annual spending on affordable housing has been in a sharp and steady decline since the early 1990's, falling from the peak in 1993 to a low in 2002. "This report substantiates what we have been saying for years," says Sharon Chisholm, Executive Director of CHRA. "It's crucial for government to commit to keeping current funding levels in place. There's much more to

be done, but this first step will keep Canada's existing community housing affordable and in good shape—and start new housing for those in core need."

"The good news for government is that they can begin helping the millions of Canadians who need housing—working poor, families, seniors, new Canadians, Aboriginal peoples—just by continuing current spending," says Derek Ballantyne, CEO of Toronto Community Housing Corporation, Canada's largest owner of social housing.

"If this government takes leadership to stop the hemorrhage in housing budgets, we will not only be able to preserve existing affordable housing, but it also will result in \$1.6 billion annually at the federal level alone to create more community based non-profit housing," says Sharad Kerur, Executive Director of the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association.

Investing in community housing will help the government's goal of making Canada competitive, according to Nick Sidor, Director of Corporate Affairs for Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada. "If the federal government fails to maintain current funding levels, our cities will struggle to remain competitive and to support economic expansion. We must

catch up with other western countries that are now well ahead of us."

Savings from expiring community housing agreements must be reinvested in housing, say housing experts. "The provisions of both the 1993 and 1996 budgets required that savings be reinvested in social or affordable housing," says Karen Stone, Executive Director of the British Columbia Non-Profit Housing Association. "There have already been substantial savings—mostly from declining mortgage interest rates—but they have not been re-invested as required by Parliament."

Representatives from community-based non-profit housing organizations across Canada will be meeting with politicians and the government in the coming weeks to ask for a Throne Speech commitment to maintain the current investment in affordable housing.

*This article is taken from SCOOP, CHF BC's quarterly member magazine. The full report is available at [www.chra-achru.ca](http://www.chra-achru.ca)*

**Update from Board continued from P. 1**

3) Entre Nous Femmes Housing Society will generate net sustainable revenue of \$30,000 annually from activities that support the success of other non-profit housing organizations by sharing Society expertise, systems and tools by December 31, 2010.

We will regularly review our progress to achieving these Ends. We also look forward to receiving your feedback. Are we on the right track? Do you know of opportunities that we can pursue? In what ways can *your* expertise be used to further these Ends? Would you like to join us in achieving these Ends? Let us know your thoughts by contacting us through Tracy McCullough, the Executive Director, at enf@telus.net or (604) 451-4412.

**THUMBS DOWN:**

Vancouver Foundation recently released the results of its Metro Vancouver Vital Signs, which is a multi-faceted snapshot of our region's wellness and livability. It uses a Citizen Grading Panel to access various categories. The Grade for Housing was D. The panel looked at factors such as density and cost of housing, housing affordability, levels of homelessness, rental vacancies and rates, subsidized housing and housing in relative to work.

The number of housing starts in our region doubled between 2000 and 2005. Meanwhile, homelessness—particularly the number of street homeless—more than tripled!

**THUMBS UP:**

Hmmmm...

**A SPECIAL THANKS TO SOME VERY SPECIAL VOLUNTEERS!**

ENF applied for **United Way's Day of Caring** this year to complete a project that we would not necessarily have been able to do without volunteer help. On July 14, 2007, several corporate volunteers from **Accenture Business Services for Utilities** helped ENF Staff and several tenant and Board member volunteers complete a very large landscaping project at Margaret Heights in North Vancouver. The weather was great, energy was high and a lot of good work was accomplished and the property looks fabulous! Thank you very much for your help, folks!

On September 7, 2007, corporate volunteers from **Deloitte Touche** also volunteered for their annual **Impact Day** to help ENF staff complete another landscaping project, this time at Natalia Terrace. Again, the weather was on our side and another big project was completed in record time and this property also now looks greatly improved. Thanks to these lovely folks, as well!

**2006/07 ENF BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

APRIL ENGLISH	EVA WADOLNA
DAN McFAULL	WENDY MOORE
SHAWN PREUSS	LORAIN LUNDQUIST
JASON TONG	

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

ENF Board of Directors  
#21, 3550 S.E. Marine Drive  
Vancouver, B.C. V5S 4R3