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ARTNERSHIP

COURIER

Special Edition

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Putting **Surplus Property** to Work To Help Fight **HOMELESSNESS**

Surplus federal properties across Canada are available to help combat homelessness under the Surplus Federal Real Property for Homelessness Initiative (SFRPHI).

SFRPHI is a component of the Government of Canada's National Homelessness Initiative launched in 1999, to provide solutions to homelessness throughout Canada. The program compensates federal departments and agencies at market value for surplus properties and transfers them at a nominal cost to community organizations, the not-for-profit sector and other orders of government for projects to help alleviate and prevent homelessness.

As of 2003, 50 properties worth over \$9 million were approved for transfer, to help with projects addressing homelessness. Between 2003 and 2006, the SFRPHI will help other governments and community organizations transform an additional \$9 million worth of surplus federal property into facilities that serve homeless people or those at risk of homelessness.

In addition to contributions of real property through the SFRPHI, additional



funding for construction and renovation costs may also be available for eligible projects through related federal programs such as the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (SCPI) and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP). SCPI funds may also be able to assist with service and program costs.

Eligibility

Proposals for using surplus federal properties may range from residential or non-residential emergency services to

permanent affordable housing. Applicant organizations should be able to demonstrate that their proposals under the SFRPHI will address community needs related to homelessness, are financially viable and are sustainable. Proposals should demonstrate the capacity of the sponsoring organizations to carry out the proposed project and satisfy all relevant planning and environmental requirements.

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Canada

CMHC SCHL
HOME TO CANADIANS

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Federal Involvement

Three Government of Canada organizations—Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC), the National Secretariat on Homelessness/Human Resources Skills Development Canada (NSH/HRSDC), and CMHC—act as partners at the

national and regional levels in implementing the SFRPHI. To access a list of surplus federal properties available for sale to the public:

- call 1 888-govland (468-5263) or
- visit the PWGSC website at: <http://pwgsc.gc.ca/govland/>

For further information on the surplus lands program and on the availability of other surplus federal properties, contact the local or regional offices of HRSDC, or PWGSC. For further information on the Government of Canada's National Homelessness Initiative visit: www.homelessness.gc.ca For further information on CMHC programs visit: www.cmhc.ca

Former P.E.I. RCMP Barracks Converted to GROUP HOME

The former RCMP barracks in Souris, near the eastern tip of Prince Edward Island, once reassured townsfolk they were under her Majesty's protection. Now it provides peace of mind to people like the parents of Ron, a mentally disabled man in his early fifties.

Ron spent most of his life doing chores on his parents' farm but as they grew older, his mom and dad could see the day coming when they would no longer be there to care for him. This thought torments other parents caring for children like Ron. They don't want their sons or daughters institutionalized yet they fear they might experience difficulties if left to their own devices.

Luckily for Ron's parents and for others who share their situation in this rural part of P.E.I., there is MacIntyre House, run by the Souris Group Home Association. The association is a non-profit corporation providing a community-based living option to adults with a wide range of developmental disabilities and support needs. In operation since 1980, MacIntyre House is home to six mentally disabled men

whose families are either deceased or can no longer care for them. The house also has a respite care room that offers short term stays.

While MacIntyre House was a warm, friendly place where Ron and his mates felt right at home, the building itself was old and high maintenance. It was also located in an area that is not easily accessible.

Priest Quit Smoking

When the local RCMP barracks became surplus to federal government needs, the Souris Group Home Association acquired the building (valued at \$91,000) at no cost under the Surplus Federal Real Property for Homelessness Initiative (SFRPHI). Through CMHC, it received \$138,800 in renovation funds from the RRAP Program and an interest-free Proposal Development Fund of \$8,200, and a \$30,000 job creation grant from Human Resources Skills and Development Canada. The association transformed the barracks to accommodate a new and improved MacIntyre House.

As the association upgraded and retrofitted the building, the people of Souris rallied around the project. The parish priest quit smoking, took up running and ran a marathon, raising \$28,000. A potato farmer gave the project a cheque for \$5,000 and service clubs staged fundraising events.

The new MacIntyre House offers everything the old facility had plus accessible accommodation for a physically disabled resident. It is modern and requires much less upkeep. Best of all, it is within walking distance of the Harbour View Training Centre where most of the residents work. The facility receives operational support from the Eastern Kings Health Region.

Ron's story provided to CMHC courtesy of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada.

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From Barracks to Group Home

This former RCMP Barracks in Souris, P.E.I., is now a group home for adults with a wide range of developmental disabilities and support needs. The building was transferred to the Souris Group Home Association at no cost under the Surplus Federal Real Property for Homelessness Initiative.

EX-MILITARY HOMES

Just Right For Stella Burry

“We do not have the numbers of people living homeless on the streets of St. John’s as we see in other parts of Canada, but we do have homeless people and a higher number of people who are at risk of becoming homeless—and that is the issue we are trying to address with the acquisition of these six houses.”

With those words Karen Noel, of Stella Burry Community Services, summed up the reason why the non-profit social service agency took possession of six surplus military homes, with a combined value of \$425,000, in St. John’s, Newfoundland, in October 2003.

Stella Burry is a non-profit agency which operates Emmanuel House, a residential treatment facility for men and women; Naomi Centre, an emergency shelter for homeless young women; New Beginnings, an employment readiness training program; Carew Lodge, a long-term supportive housing program; a Community Support Program that provides home care to individuals living in the community; and, an Education and Employment Program that helps people get into educational and employment opportunities.

When the six houses became available under the Surplus Federal Real Property for Homelessness Initiative (SFRPHI), the agency jumped at the chance to acquire them.

“We have approximately 100 people on the waiting list for the Carew Lodge, (the supportive living residence) which only has 14 units and there are approximately up to 100 more people

who are looking for safe and affordable housing. We get calls daily from people who are seeking help with housing” said Ms. Noel.

Large Units, In Good Shape

The former military houses are just right for Stella Burry. They are large units, each containing three to four bedrooms; they have decent size yards and have been well maintained. Stella Burry Community Services obtained funding through the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program, a repair program cost-shared by the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation and CMHC. The money was used to upgrade and outfit the houses to comply with local code requirements for rental properties.

Four of the houses are now rented to families with children and single adults occupy the other two units.

“Some of our families were paying high rent for substandard housing and utilities were not included in the rent.

Of course, if they were paying too much for rent, it was taking away from their grocery allowance and anything they needed for the children,” said Ms. Noel.

The families are paying \$500 per month (including heat and electricity) for houses that would normally rent for \$800 to \$1,100 a month on the open market.

The single people who are living in the houses just couldn’t find a decent and affordable place to live. St. John’s is going through a real housing crisis and affordable housing is almost non-existent in this city. With a rental vacancy rate of less than two per cent, affordable housing is hard to find in St. John’s.

“Normally low-income and income-support recipients would be living in the downtown area where housing prices tended to be lower. Now, the housing is being bought up so quickly and the prices are skyrocketing, that many people can’t afford to live there anymore. If they do manage to find something, often times, it is very substandard,” she said.

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AFFORDABLE **Rental** **Units** Go Up On “FREE” TORONTO SITE

rental units for families and seniors

Wigwamen Incorporated, a well-established non-profit housing provider, is building 92 units of transitional and affordable rental housing in Toronto on land the federal government turned over the City at no cost under the Surplus Federal Real Property for Homelessness Initiative (SFRPHI).

This project, partially financed with a CMHC-insured mortgage loan, also qualified for a reduced mortgage insurance premium under CMHC's more flexible approach to underwriting the financing of projects designed to deliver affordable housing.

CMHC once owned a 75 per cent share of the land on Sewell's Road where the project is being built, with the other 25 per cent owned by the Province of Ontario. Under the SFRPHI program, the federal government bought CMHC's share for \$506,250 and gave it to the City of Toronto. The province also transferred its share, valued at \$168,750, to the City to complete the transaction.

In turn, the City is leasing the land to Wigwamen for 50 years at a cost of \$1 under its "Let's Build" affordable housing program. City officials picked Wigwamen, Ontario's oldest urban aboriginal non-profit housing provider with more than 30 years experience, through a request for proposals process.

Addresses Affordability Needs

Wigwamen is putting up a four-storey building suitable for families, seniors and people with disabilities with apartments that will range from bachelors to four-bedroom units. About 35 units will be transitional units, for previously homeless individuals and families, and the remaining 57 units will address the affordability needs of households seeking permanent housing in a stable neighbourhood. It is expected that many of the residents will be women with children. An array of services will be available, including health, employment and social supports.

Tenants will be selected from the City's waiting lists for affordable housing.

Rents in the \$14 million project, scheduled for completion in 2005, will be subsidized by the Province for the first five years with an option to renew for further periods. Under this arrangement, tenants will pay 30 per cent of their incomes as rent with the Province picking up the balance to the market rent level.

Since the proposed rents are affordable in that market, CMHC reduced the insurance premium on Wigwamen's \$9-million Bank of Montreal construction loan from the normal 5 per cent charge to 4.6 per cent, a saving of approximately \$36,000.

Partnerships

In addition to the federal, provincial and municipal involvement in supplying the land, this project demonstrates additional partnership aspects:

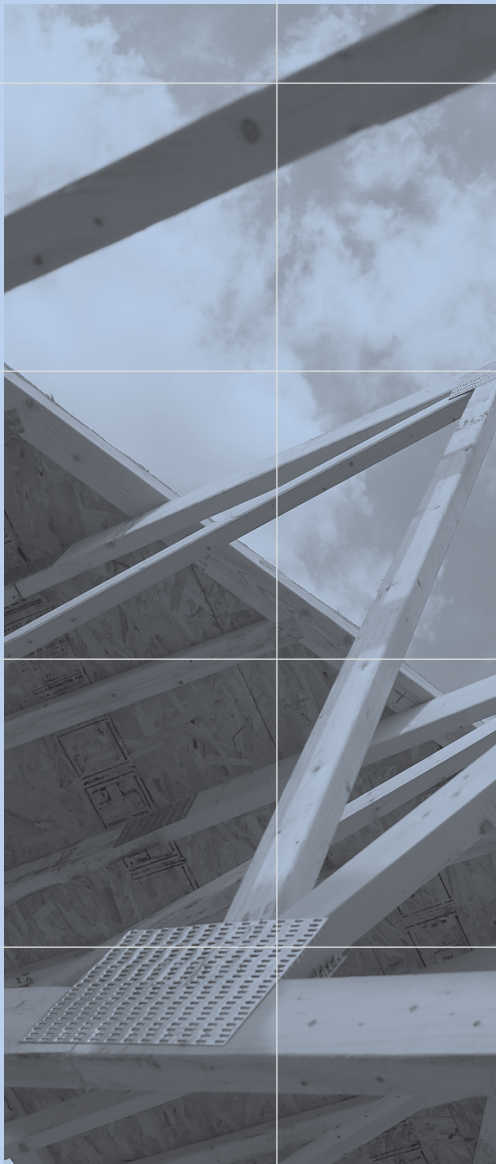
- the federal Supporting Community Partnerships Initiative (SCPI) is providing a \$2,000,000 grant for the transitional housing component of the project,
- Toronto Let's Build program is providing a capital fund forgivable loan of \$1 million plus a capital fund grant of \$1 million,
- CMHC provided Wigwamen with an interest-free \$75,000 Proposal Development Fund loan, and
- Wigwamen is putting in a further \$750,000 of its own equity.

"The 20 Sewell's Road transitional and affordable housing project is going to make a profound difference in the lives of 92 families, many of which have never had decent, affordable housing. Quite frankly, without the Federal Government's contributions, and without CMHC's mortgage insurance program, I doubt that we'd have been able to make this project work," said Angus Palmer, General Manager, Wigwamen Incorporated.

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Everyone on PINS and NEEDLES at Wigwamen bid opening



By Angus Palmer, General Manager,
Wigwamen Incorporated

On October 7, 2003, 19 months after Wigwamen Incorporated first submitted its proposal to the City of Toronto for the development of 20 Sewell's Road, eight members of the Design and Development Committee gathered at Wigwamen's Boardroom to open tenders for the construction of our proposed 92-unit project.

Tension was high as Architect Charles Rosenberg opened the tender packages, with each one of us knowing that, if the bids were too high, it could mean the end of our dream.

We had budgeted \$10,685,000 for the cost of construction, but we knew that over the six weeks since our last estimate had been received, the cost of building materials had climbed inexorably, threatening to price our project out of existence.

Methodically, each tender package was opened and examined by Charles, and the amount read out. Tenders from four pre-qualified contractors were received, ranging from a whopping \$14,000,000 on

the high end, to \$11,585,000 on the low end, still a full \$900,000 more than we had budgeted. There's no doubt that \$900,000 is a lot of money, but to have dreamt so much, to have worked so hard, to have come so close . . . none of us were going to let it go.

Thus resolved, the Committee, our Architect, and our Development Consultant entered discussions with the low bidder, Harbridge and Cross, with a view to fine-tuning their costs; Wigwamen committed to increasing the size of its mortgage; and, perhaps most importantly, to raising and contributing over half a million dollars more.

On November 6, 2003, a full 547 days from when we first submitted our proposal to the City, we issued a letter of intent to Harbridge and Cross stating in part that ". . . Wigwamen Incorporated has accepted your bid and has authorized you to proceed with the work immediately . . ."

We are now well into construction and in early 2005, 92 families will be moving into brand new, affordable homes.

Surplus FEDERAL TORONTO

LAND Site of BIGGEST Ever

Habitat Build

Habitat for Humanity’s largest ever build in Canada is underway on a Toronto site donated to them by the federal government. Habitat is a worldwide organization that builds and sells homes to families who would otherwise not be able to purchase their own homes.

The project, built by Habitat for Humanity Toronto (HFHT), will see 40 condominium units completed on a 2.1 acres parcel of land by the spring of 2005. Some units may be ready for occupancy by the end of this year.

The site, valued at \$2.3 million was donated to HFHT under the Surplus Federal Real Property for Homelessness Initiative (SRFPHI). Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC), in conjunction with the National Homelessness Secretariat, jointly manages SFRPHI with Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC), with advice and technical support from CMHC. Through SFRPHI, the parcel was bought from the owner, Canada Lands Company, and turned over to Habitat for Humanity for the token sum of \$2.00.

The Habitat site was the last parcel of real estate sold by Canada Lands in a 41-acre subdivision in north-east Toronto known as McLevin Woods. The development will eventually have 600 residential units, including those built by HFHT. Canada Lands Company is a federal Crown corporation reactivated in 1995 to market properties no longer required by the federal government.

Nineteen Sponsor Groups

Neil Hetherington, Chief Executive Officer of Habitat for Humanity Toronto said, “community volunteers will help build the houses with many supplies donated by corporations. In all Habitat has 19 sponsors, ranging from a waste management company to a church, lined up for the McLevin build.”

CMHC, through its Ontario Business Centre, is an “Adopt-A-House Sponsor” for this project. The Corporation has provided a donation and pledged the labour of up to 15 volunteers a day to build one of the homes. In addition, CMHC has donated a copy of CMHC’s Homeowners’ Manual, a home operating and maintenance guide, to each Habitat partner family, a practice the Corporation follows right across Canada whenever a family moves into a Habitat home. CMHC has also donated a library of technical publications to Habitat Toronto and will stage a free presentation of its “Buying and Owning a Home” seminar that is tailored for Habitat families.

homeownership

“CMHC is committed to housing quality, affordability and choice for Canadians,” said Peter Friedmann, General Manager for CMHC Ontario Business Centre. “So it gives us a great deal of satisfaction to be an Adopt-a-House sponsor and partner with Habitat for Humanity Toronto.”

Since August 2003, hundreds of volunteers have been busy building components of the homes at Habitat Toronto’s “Home Building Factory”. When the ground-breaking for the project took place in mid-May, Mr. Hetherington said “the plan was to pour the foundations and then gather volunteers to erect the pre-assembled framing components in an old-fashioned “barn-raising”.

The families who will live in the homes will each volunteer 500 hours of “sweat equity” work to the construction of their homes or to other Habitat work. They must have a wage-earner who has been working consistently in Canada for at least three years, and must be able to afford a HFHT mortgage.

Habitat charges only the construction costs and offers interest-free mortgages with payments that average about \$400 a month, making ownership housing affordable to families with low incomes. Habitat puts mortgage payments from current homeowners into a revolving fund that is used to make loans to future homeowners.

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Sweat Equity Break

Mohamud Jama, 50, takes a break from work on what will become the first home he and his family have owned in Canada. Mr. Jama said he has been renting since he arrived from Somalia in 1989, but has always dreamed of owning his own home. "For us, there is pride in owning your own home. My kids can't wait to move in. They will have the sense of belonging—to their home, to their neighbourhood. It will change all of our lives," he said. Mr. Jama's new home is one of 40 being built in Toronto by Habitat for Humanity Canada on surplus federal land. It is Habitat's largest Canadian build to date. About 300 volunteers helped with the on-site work.

Rocky Mountain House Converts Old Post Office to

AFFORDABLE HOUSING



In the Town of Rocky Mountain House, about 80 km west of Red Deer, Alberta, a project is underway to convert the old post office to affordable rental housing. The building was declared surplus about four years ago when the government built a new post office for the town of 6,200.

In 2004, the federal government transferred the property to Town ownership under its Surplus Federal Real Property for Homelessness Initiative (SFRPHI) at no cost to the municipality. Under the provision of the program, Canada Post received \$195,000 for the property.

Architect George Berry, whose Red Deer-based firm, Berry Architecture and Associates, is overseeing the conversion, said the building is ideal for residential conversion.

“Like most government buildings, it is a very sound construction and in good shape. It’s a building we can do a lot with. There are only eight columns on the main floor to work around so we have lots of open space. Our design is for seven offices on the main floor to be used by non-profit organizations as well as a women’s emergency shelter. On the second floor there will be seven residential suites ranging in size from 200 sq. ft to 500 sq. ft.”

Partnership Effort

The Town is the sponsor of the conversion project with Mayor Lou Soppit leading the way.

“We have a non-profit housing group here in town that meets with me periodically to talk about housing issues and it struck us that the old post office was sitting empty.”

Ideal for Conversion

Like most government buildings, the old post office in Rocky Mountain House was built to last. This made it an ideal candidate for conversion to residential housing. When completed, the building will contain ground floor offices, an emergency women’s shelter and seven small residential suites.

“I’m very excited about it. This is going to fill a need here in town. We do have some residents who are not really what you would call homeless but they don’t have affordable places to stay, either. This will give them an opportunity to get into a suite.”

The conversion is very much a partnership effort with government and community organizations pitching in to help meet the total cost of about \$687,000.

The initial federal purchase of the property has been augmented by \$350,000 under the Canada Alberta Affordable Housing Program, with \$175,000 from each government. Through CMHC, the federal government has approved \$168,000 in Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP) Conversion funds and an additional \$96,000 under the RRAP Disabled Program to make four of the suites accessible to persons living with disabilities. Canada Post also deserves recognition for their support and understanding of the time required to put all the funding pieces in place before the property could be officially transferred.

Community Support

Even with all this backing, the project is still short of some needed resources.

“We have a lot of the community behind us and we’re still going to have to go out and look for donations because we don’t yet have any way to pay for the washers and dryers we want to put in the women’s shelter and for the stoves and fridges that will go in the suites. So we have a long way to go,” said Mayor Soppit.

Community spirit will not be an obstacle as the Town goes about this task. Local logging, wood and oil companies have already pledged support and Mr. Berry’s architectural firm reduced its fee by 66 per cent. Other local businesses are expected to come on board as well.

When construction is complete in early 2005, the building will have five bachelor units renting at about \$250 a month and a pair of two-bedroom suites renting at about \$525 a month. The building will be managed by a board consisting of a Town official, a representative from the County of Clearwater and members from the community.

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affordable housing