

November 26, 2009

Manitoulin-Sudbury District Social Services Administration Board

**Response to
Housing Needs, Demand, and Affordability Study
- SHS Consulting September 2009**

The Manitoulin-Sudbury District Social Services Administration Board commissioned SHS Consulting to provide a study with the following goals and objectives

Study Goals and Objectives

The DSSAB has identified a range of objectives for the study:

- To review and identify the affordable housing needs/gaps with respect to the low income working poor, seniors and singles*

- To review the current capacity of existing public and private housing supply/stock and the secondary rental market (social housing, private households, single-detached, multi-residential)*

- To identify current public/private housing development alignments and affordability rates within the Districts of Manitoulin and Sudbury*

- To review the Official Plans of the municipalities to determine if they will accommodate the development of future affordable housing as may be determined by this study.*

The study is to analyze a range of housing market and socio-economic data to help identify housing issues and trends across the area. Best practices successful in addressing such issues elsewhere are also to be researched. In addition, the study is to identify DSSAB residential assets that may be modified with a view to providing support care units to meet the greater need for accommodation within various communities where the accommodations/service does not already exist for the elderly. A strong emphasis throughout the study is also to be placed on community consultation to ensure all stakeholders are provided with ample opportunity for input. The outcome is to be a final report quantifying and fully describing by municipality and/or region the affordable housing needs, gaps and long-term municipal planning requirements in the Manitoulin-Sudbury Districts.

This contract resulted in the following reports and summaries:

Phase One Report: Identification of Housing Needs

and Issues can be seen at :

<http://www.msdsb.net/ADMIN/docs/ProgramIssues/Manitoulin-Sudbury-DSSAB-Phase-One-Report---Revised-Sept-23-2009.pdf>

The above lengthy (154 page) report provides a comprehensive background which lead to the final recommendations.

An **Executive Summary of this Phase One Report** can be seen at:

<http://www.msdsb.net/ADMIN/Correspondence/SH-Housing-Needs-Study-Phase-1-Execuctive-Summary.pdf>

The **Final Report and Recommendations** received by the Board on September 24, 2009 can be seen at:

<http://www.msdsb.net/ADMIN/docs/ProgramIssues/Manitoulin-Final-Report-Revised-Sept--21-2009.pdf>

An **Executive Summary - Final Report** can be seen at:

<http://www.msdsb.net/ADMIN/docs/ProgramIssues/Manitoulin-Sudbury-Final-Report-Executive-Summary-Revised-Sept--21-2009.pdf>

This Response Report is from DSSAB staff to the Board regarding what action has or should be taken related to each of the seventeen (17) recommendations contained in the report. Following are the recommendations from the report shown in *italics*. The staff response in regular text follows each recommendation. Specific recommendations from staff for action have been shown in **bold**.

1. Through the distribution of this report the DSSAB should encourage expansion of seniors housing options, primarily in the form of increasing the supply of affordable supportive housing units and encouraging private investors to increase the supply of private retirement housing.

Given the projected proportion of seniors population in 2031 by area, the recommended long term (25 year) targets for expanding the supply of affordable supportive housing units for seniors are as follows:

Manitoulin Island 39.9% of 200 = 80 units

LaCloche 26.4% of 200 = 53 units

Sudbury East 20.7% of 200 = 41 units

Sudbury North 13.0% of 200 = 26 units

Staff response:

The entire report and summaries have been added to the publically accessible portion of the Board website. In addition, the report was distributed by an email to member municipalities following the September Board meeting. As we receive enquiries from interested parties, we have and will continue to refer them to these web documents.

2. The DSSAB should work with area housing providers and support agencies to ensure these units are added to the housing supply in each area over the next 25 years. It is emphasized that these are long term targets. From review of current waiting lists and discussions with staff, the priorities at present should be LaCloche and Manitoulin, with modest additions of 20-25 affordable supportive seniors units.

Staff response:

The waiting lists for single units as of October 31, 2009 area is 292. The only program which could fund the creation of new rental accommodation is the temporary AHP Extension (2009) - New Rental Housing.

See:

http://www.msdsb.net/ADMIN/Correspondence/AHP_Detailed_Guidelines_SHR RP.pdf

This economic stimulus program ends March 31, 2011. Province wide 307.8 million has been allocated for seniors and 57.7million for the disabled. There is no allocation by jurisdiction so there is no specific amount available for this DSSAB. The first round of proposals has been chosen and no further proposal approvals will occur until early 2011. Projects must begin by preset timeframes which means that significant planning must already have occurred to enter the stiff competition for these limited funds. The average cost per unit is limited to \$120,000 which makes building in remote areas within these limits unlikely.

Staff has been contacted by three individuals who have expressed varying degrees of interest in developing housing under the new rental construction program. The Province has for the time being indicated no new submissions are being entertained due to the significant numbers previously received prior to November 2, 2009. The Province has advised that if there is second round for submissions the due date will be February 1, 2010.

This Board has received no specific proposals from community groups. Realistically, it is may be too late to develop fully costed and planned proposals by the timeframes set by the province. It is important to understand that this program does not cover any build costs beyond the \$120,000 average per unit. In addition, there is presently no cost sharing to cover the significant operating costs associated with any units which are built.

The present Social Housing Reform Act also makes it unfeasible to create social housing for disabled persons in receipt of the Ontario Disability Support Program due to the ridiculously low rents which ODSP will pay on behalf of their clients residing in Social Housing units governed by the SHRA. These low rents would create a huge operating deficit.

See: <http://www.msdsb.net/OW/reports/Impact-of-RGI-Sept-2007.pdf>

Staff Recommendation:

Board staff work with any community groups who express an interest in developing proposals for seniors so that fully planned and costed proposals are ready should the AHP -New Rental Housing component extend beyond March 31, 2011 or should future build programs be made available. Any such proposals would be subject to Board approval prior to submission if there is the need to fund costs beyond the unit build maximums and the ongoing operating costs.

3. The DSSAB should continue to work closely with the NE LHIN to access ongoing support funding to assist local agencies in providing the support services required to meet the targets for expanding the supply of affordable supportive housing for seniors.

Staff response:

The provision of direct support services is presently not within the DSSAB's mandate. However, staffs are working with the Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) in two ways.

The CAO sits on the LHIN CAO Roundtable at which support services to seniors are discussed. The CAO uses this forum to advocate for support services to allow seniors and the disabled to continue to reside in their own homes or to allow them to remain in DSSAB units as they age.

In addition, the Director of Social Services sits on a LHIN Transportation Working Group which is undertaking a study of the transportation needs of isolated seniors. The provision of transportation services is key to keep seniors in their own homes in rural areas.

4. The recommended targets for private sector investment in retirement housing are as follows:

Manitoulin Island 39.9% of 250 = 100 units

LaCloche 26.4% of 250 = 65 units

Sudbury East 20.7% of 250 = 52 units

Sudbury North 13.0% of 250 = 33 units

Staff response:

Staff will support the private sector by sharing the information in this report, available demographic data and general information regarding waiting lists as requested.

5. The DSSAB should help local seniors/disabled individuals to access available housing renovation programs in order to help adapt existing housing stock to meet their changing needs in order to allow them remain in their own homes.

Staff response:

There is no ongoing program to meet this ongoing need. There is presently an economic stimulus program which ends March 31, 2011 called the AHP Extension (2009) - Northern Component

See:

http://www.msdsb.net/ADMIN/Correspondence/AHP_Detailed_Guidelines_SHR_RP.pdf

This is an excellent program which also occurred between April 2007 and March 31, 2008. Staff applied for an allocation of \$1.2 million when the extension of this program component was announced. Subsequent to that request, there was an allocation by Northern jurisdictions so there is a specific amount available for this DSSAB. In September 2009 an allocation of \$400,000 was granted for April 1, 2009 - March 31, 2010 and \$800,000 for the period April 1, 2010 to March 31, 2011 which equates to the full amount of the request.

See:

<http://www.msdsb.net/ADMIN/Correspondence/Affordable-Housing-Program-Extension--Allocations-to-March-2011.pdf>

Social Housing staffs are working diligently with an external service provider to complete individual eligibility assessments and to endeavor to get the work done within the provincially set timeframes. Subject to the availability of local contractors we are hopeful the work can be commenced and completed in the timeframes established by the province.

Rationalizing the Social Housing Stock

6. The DSSAB should review the use of all of its housing stock on Manitoulin Island with a view to ensuring that the best and most appropriate use of each site is being achieved and, where it may be deemed appropriate, to consider the divestment of any property that is not seen as meeting the current or long term needs of the DSSAB. The sale of any property would be subject to Ministerial Consent, successful voluntary relocation of existing tenants and creation of offsetting Rent Geared to Income units elsewhere in the DSSAB jurisdiction.

Staff response:

The staff continuously considers whether social housing properties are being used to the maximum benefit of the population. Any rationalizing would be a major undertaking. There would be the need to analyze community housing demands and develop with communities alternate uses of existing facilities. Presently, there is no major issue related to unit vacancy on Manitoulin Island.

There is no external funding to support either the planning activity or the costs in any rationalization process. The need to create replacement Rent Gear to Income (RGI) units to replace any units lost through rationalization also would add to the costs of this activity. Given the lack of specific community based proposals and no significant vacancy issue, no action should occur on this recommendation at this time.

7. The DSSAB should add 4-5 units of affordable family housing in suitable locations on Manitoulin Island, utilizing funding through the Canada-Ontario Affordable Housing Program. Priority should be placed on acquisition and conversion/renovation of existing buildings where possible, providing a Provincial policy change occurs permitting such initiatives.

Staff response:

As previously noted in Recommendation #2 above, the Canada-Ontario Affordable Housing Program (AHP Extension (2009) - New Rental Housing) is a time limited program, with specific funding parameters and timeframes with no local allocation. The Social Housing Manager - Peter Bradley did, on numerous occasions, request a provincial policy change which would allow for the renovation of existing housing into new rental housing following required renovations. This suggestion made sense given the availability of properties which could be bought and renovated at reasonable cost in the communities mentioned. The province rejected making any policy change given the economic stimulus nature of the AHP program. Although the province indicated they were prepared to look at site specific proposals, it was deemed impossible to hold up property purchases to wait for a provincial approval for a site specific exception to the AHP guidelines.

Staff Recommendation:

Board staff develop proposals for Rent Geared to Income family housing during 2011 so that fully planned and costed proposals are ready should the senior levels of government come forward with new programs which would allow for the purchase and renovation of existing properties to be converted into subsidized rental accommodation or which would allow for new construction. Any such proposals would be subject to Board approval prior to submission given the need to fund the ongoing operating costs.

8. The DSSAB should add 5-7 units of affordable family housing in suitable locations in Sudbury East, utilizing funding through the Canada-Ontario Affordable Housing Program. Priority should be placed on acquisition and conversion/renovation of existing buildings where possible, providing a Provincial policy change occurs permitting such initiatives. At least 3 units should be acquired or built in Markstay-Warren, with another 2-4 potentially added in French River.

Staff response:

See response to #7 above - same recommendation.

9. The DSSAB should convert 2-4 existing family social housing units in Chapleau to one bedroom units for seniors or singles, subject to a cost benefit analysis. The NE LHIN should also be approached to increase the availability of supports in order to expand the supply of supportive housing in the area.

Staff response:

As of November 2009 there is only one temporarily vacant family unit in the Chapleau Family Units at 80 Pine Street. As these units become available, they are regularly filled by sole support families which have no other subsidized housing options in the Sudbury North area. None of these multi-bedroom units remain empty for an extended period of time.

There are 13 single bedroom units in the Chapleau apartments at 78 Pine Street of which all are occupied. In addition, the Cedar Grove Apartments provide another 19 units for singles in that community.

The true need in Chapleau and many other parts of the District is not for one bedroom units but for two bedroom units. The existing 3-4 bedroom family units are not amenable to conversion into two bedroom units given their layout and the entrances available.

See: <http://www.msdsb.net/SH/ChapleauFamilyUnits.php>

10. The DSSAB should use rent supplements and direct shelter subsidies in order to enable unorganized districts to offer some form of affordable rental housing to local seniors and enable them to remain within these communities.

Staff response:

The Board has no rental supplement program directly with landlords. At the time of the transfer of the program to this DSSAB there were no such agreements in place. Presently, the Board has a limited allocation which it has converted into a minor direct shelter subsidy program. These are available to residents in the unincorporated areas.

Upgrading Existing Housing Stock

11. The DSSAB should continue to seek funding to undertake a process of defining, formulating, and implementing a work plan for improving accessibility of its existing social housing portfolio. This will allow them to strategically plan out the changes required so that funding and other resources may be pulled together appropriately on an ongoing basis. It can then be ensured that the portfolio will be updated in accordance with new accessibility regulations by the year 2025. Of particular importance are enabling barrier-free access to all units and providing elevators in two storey buildings wherever possible. The DSSAB project in Espanola represents a particularly important location for considering installation of an elevator in view of the need to expand the supply of housing accessible to seniors/disabled individuals in that community.

Staff response:

Over the last 3 years the limited annual capital repair and renovation budget has been used to increase accessibility in all seniors' apartment buildings through the removal of barriers whenever possible. The need for improved access for seniors and the disabled to second floor units is evident. Improving access may in some cases be resolved by moving clients with access problems to ground floors.

Staff Recommendation:

- 1. A report to be completed by Board staff related to the demonstrated need of existing tenants to have improved access to their units. The report is to contain options for meeting these proven needs including both relocation and the installation of elevators or other devices.**
- 2. As part of the development of the multi-year Social Housing Capital Repair and Renovation plan for the 2011 budget, the cost of elevators for identified buildings in which there is a clear need will be estimated.**

12. The DSSAB should continue its ongoing program of upgrading energy efficiency across its portfolio. This should start with energy audits of each of its buildings, followed by a planned program of energy efficiency upgrades on an annual basis. Programs such as SHRRP and the Northern component of the Canada-Ontario Affordable Housing Program are offered at various levels of government to assist in such efforts. Staff should be encouraged to identify and utilize all available energy assistance programs to develop a program in order to help achieve this objective.

Staff response:

Social Housing staff has been focusing on energy efficiency in the annual capital repair and renovation budgets. In the preceding three years, approximately 15% these budgets was spent on energy efficiency related activities. In the current year \$35,500 or 11.8% of \$299,700 was spent on energy conservation activities.

The Social Housing Renovation and Retrofit Program (SHRRP) like all components of the Affordable Housing Program is time limited and the program expires on March 31, 2011.

See:

http://www.msdsb.net/ADMIN/Correspondence/AHP_Detailed_Guidelines_SHRRP.pdf

There is a specific allocation to this DSSAB

See:

<http://www.msdsb.net/ADMIN/Correspondence/SH--Social-Housing-Renovation-and-Retrofit-Notional-Allocation-and-Northern-Component-Plans.pdf>

SHRRP funded capital plans for the \$377,341 for 2009/10 and the \$464,834 for 2010/11 have been finalized as of the October 22, 2009 Board meeting.

Of the \$337,341 for 2009/10 the amount of \$320,000 or 85% is being spent on energy efficiency related items.

Of the \$464,834 for 2010/11 the amount of \$232.335 or 49.9 % is being spent on energy efficiency.

The Northern Component (see recommendation #5 earlier in this report) of the Affordable Housing Program only applies to private properties and not to buildings in this Board's portfolio.

The Social Housing Manager monitors any potential revenue sources related to energy conservation through the Social Housing Services Corporation (SHSC) website.

13. The DSSAB should continue to lobby for extension of the temporary Northern Repair Program to assist local homeowners in bringing their homes up to acceptable standard through providing assistance with home repair. The goal for the Program should be \$1,000,000 in repairs, similar to the previous successful DSSAB initiative.

Staff response:

See recommendation #5 above. In fact \$1,200,000 worth of repairs will be completed under the Northern component before the program terminates.

The Board through its participation in the Northern Ontario Service Delivers Association (NOSDA) has asked for continuation of the Northern repair program. The Social Housing Manager also lobbies for this program as the opportunity arises and does so in a variety of forums.

Collaboration and Communication

14. DSSAB housing staff should maintain close communication with housing stakeholders across the DSSAB jurisdiction and consult with them on key local housing issues that arise over time. Specific task groups should be set up as the need arises to address housing-related issues.

Staff response:

This is an existing and ongoing activity.

15. The DSSAB should continue to play a strong advocacy role in addressing housing issues and concerns with senior levels of government. In particular, it should strongly advocate for increased support funding from the NE LHIN for the expansion of affordable supportive housing for seniors/disabled. This advocacy should be through Northern and province wide associations.

Staff response:

DSSAB staff did attend the formal consultation on Social Housing recently conducted by the Ministry. Once the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing has responded to the consultation there will likely be a Board response. The involvement of Board staff with the LHIN is covered under recommendation # 3 above.

16. The DSSAB should place a strong emphasis on collaboration with community agencies in order to help residents overcome barriers in the delivery of services.

Staff response:

The process of internal integration of the delivery of Board services is underway and a high level list of deliverables has been agreed to for 2010. Considerable work has already gone into establishing positive working relationships with the LHIN as previously outlined.

External collaboration has begun by reaching out to the Sudbury District Health Unit to get health related support information into the social housing building housing seniors during 2010. Staff will continue to look for opportunities for collaboration with other community agencies.

17. The Board should continue to push for provincial funding of administrative costs of managing social housing in order to establish a regular monitoring system to evaluate the effectiveness of housing initiatives and report progress to the Board on a regular basis. This monitoring system should include identifying housing-related funding programs and sharing information with the Board and community stakeholders on how to access available funding assistance

Staff response:

It should be noted that there were considerable efforts by the municipal sector to obtain provincial cost sharing for administrative costs of Social Housing as part of the Provincial Municipal Fiscal Service Delivery Review (PMFSDR). The province would not enter into these discussions sighting the need to hear the results of the Social Housing Consultation which is underway in the fall of 2009.

The existing system is already being regularly monitored.

Statistical reports on housing issues are placed on the publically accessible website monthly.

See:

<http://www.msdsb.net/SH/reports/Stats.php>

Activity reports are provided.

See:

<http://www.msdsb.net/SH/reports/reports.php>

Social Housing reports related to province wide concerns are posted on the Board website

See:

http://www.msdsb.net/ADMIN/Issue_Reports.php

Social Housing reports related to local issues are posted on the Board website

See:

http://www.msdsb.net/ADMIN/General_Reports.php

Information on all housing initiatives are posted in the Correspondence sections of the Board website as received.

See:

<http://www.msdsb.net/ADMIN/Correspondence.php>

Detailed program guidelines are provided as they are received.

See:

http://www.msdsb.net/ADMIN/Correspondence/AHP_Detailed_Guidelines_SHR RP.pdf