

Gore Bay's Woods Lane Apartments need upgrading, may be sold by DSB

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Woods Lane Apartments in Gore Bay.

ESPANOLA—The Manitoulin-Sudbury District Services Board (DSB) is currently studying its 17 social housing properties to determine which of them have become too expensive to run in their current state and should be sold. The 50-year-old Woods Lane Apartments in Gore Bay were cited as representative of this situation.

At the September 26 monthly meeting of the board, Connie Morphet, director of finance for the DSB, explained that the operating costs for social housing buildings continue to rise due to many factors including utilities and aging infrastructure.

“Due to these concerns and the changing demand for social housing units, it is important to review the portfolio to ensure that supply meets demand and that the supply is financially affordable to operate,” Ms. Morphet said. “The infrastructure costs were considered by assessing the five-year capital plan for the properties based on the current building assessments.”

The Manitoulin properties have some of the highest average costs per square foot. Meadowview Apartments in Mindemoya (24 one-bedroom units) had a 2017 cost per square foot of \$1.01. That figure is projected to jump to \$7.23 between 2019 and 2023. For Manitowaning's Bayview Apartments (16 one-bedroom apartments), the 2017 cost was \$8.35/sq. ft. with an expected rise to \$13.56. Channel View Apartments in Little Current (20 one-bedroom apartments) had a 2017 cost per square foot of \$1.23 but is expected to rise to \$15.64. In Gore Bay, the Bayside Apartments (22 one-bedroom units) had the lowest cost per square foot of all the DSB units at \$0.24 in 2017 but will rise to \$10.76 while the Woods Lane Apartments (six bachelor, four one-bedroom) units cost \$1.15 per square foot in 2017 but are anticipated to rise to a whopping \$42.39. The Woods Lane Apartments (named after former Gore Bay mayors Marv Woods and John Lane) are Manitoulin Island's original social housing units and were opened as a Gore Bay Centennial project in 1967. They front on both the main downtown street (Meredith Street) and run through to Water Street.

DSB CAO Fern Dominelli explained to the board that once all of the buildings are reviewed, those that will cost too much to operate will be sold with the money reinvested in new housing units.

Espanola Mayor Ron Piche inquired after the Woods Lane Apartments. Mr. Dominelli admitted that it's a building with "real challenges."

Ms. Morphet noted that the balconies on the lakeside of the building are not engineered properly and "aren't as safe as they could be." She told the board that the DSB has stopped investing money in the building until the study has been completed and a decision has been made on how to proceed with the building.