

Manitoulin-Sudbury District Social Services
Administration Board

*Manitoulin-Sudbury Housing Needs, Supply, and
Affordability Study*

Final Report and Recommendations

Executive Summary

September 2009



Executive Summary

Introduction

The Phase One report, Identification of Housing Needs and Issues, identified the range of housing needs and issues facing the communities comprising the Manitoulin-Sudbury Districts. Following consultation sessions throughout these communities to review the findings of the report and obtain input on potential recommendations for addressing identified needs, we have gone on to prepare this Final Report and Recommendations. This Report has been developed to recommend strategies to the DSSAB and other entities to address identified housing needs, gaps and requirements in the Districts.

Context

In formulating the recommended housing strategies, it is important to understand the context within which the DSSAB operates. The Manitoulin-Sudbury DSSAB has responsibilities related to social housing and affordable housing. While this report is primarily focused on issues related to these responsibilities, it also contains advice related to private sector housing issues which may be of interest to private developers, economic development agencies or individual municipalities. The DSSAB has no mandate in private sector housing, but it is hoped that the findings of this report will be of interest to the private sector as well as public and non-profit organizations.

In the social housing area, the DSSAB is responsible for the transferred Ontario Housing Corporation (public housing) portfolio under the Social Housing Reform Act. Staff at the DSSAB have indicated that the DSSAB has never received adequate funding from upper levels of government to adequately fund capital repairs for that transferred public housing portfolio. The DSSAB was allocated \$800 per unit to a total of \$225,000 per year. As a result, the DSSAB had to supplement this inadequate allocation by \$75,000 per year for a grand total of \$300,000 per year.

Over time, the DSSAB has been active in accessing various federal and provincial funding programs to maintain and improve the social housing stock transferred from the Provincial government. Under the Social Housing Repair and Renovation Program (SHRRP), for example, the DSSAB applied for \$2.3 million in total and received \$842,175, which were provided as \$377,341 in year 1 and \$464,834 in year 2. The SHRRP is directed solely to existing social housing units and is not ongoing. This one-time program ends on March 31, 2011, thereby limiting the ability of the DSSAB to continue this important improvement initiative without further funding commitments from the Province.

It is also important to note that there is no upper level government funding of ongoing operating costs for the DSSAB's social housing portfolio and there is no funding for project development. Accordingly, the DSSAB also must rely heavily on senior governments for funding assistance where necessary to help meet social housing operating costs and to expand the supply of affordable housing. The Canada-Ontario

Affordable Housing Program is an example of a federal/provincial supply program currently available for this purpose, but with a limited time horizon and limited funding allocations.

Subsequent to the social housing transfer, the Province has given responsibility for some aspects of affordable housing to the DSSAB. Staff have pointed out that there is limited but inadequate funding for these transferred responsibilities, especially given the lengthy period that the program components must be monitored.

The funding which is now available under the different components of the Affordable Housing Program (AHP) 2009 Extension does not provide annual allocations. These programs completely end on March 31, 2011. There is no funding for any operating costs for any project developed under AHP. There is no allowance for future capital requirements for any new housing created under the AHP. Accordingly, the DSSAB must exercise great caution when utilizing such programs to ensure any additions to supply are financially self-sustaining.

AHP funding allocations are unilaterally set by the Province. The current allocation for all components of the AHP (new rental housing, homeownership assistance, and money set aside for Northern Ontario) over the course of 2009-2011 is \$540 million.

In order to access this funding, the DSSAB must submit funding applications to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and then work with whatever funding is provided by the Ministry from its overall allocation.

The population living within the DSSAB jurisdiction includes a large number of off-reserve Aboriginal households. We received a variety of input during our consultation process about the housing needs of these Aboriginal households. It is important to note that the DSSAB is not responsible, nor is it funded, to address off-reserve Aboriginal housing. For that reason, all of the input received related to Aboriginal housing during the consultations for this report has been placed in an appendix to this report so that it may be forwarded to those parties who are funded and have the responsibility for such housing.

The DSSAB does have a mandate and a need to continue to address energy use in the housing for which it has responsibility. It also addresses energy conservation in the repairs completed under the Northern Component of the Affordable Housing Program (AHP). The DSSAB does not have a mandate on energy issues beyond these. The DSSAB cannot unilaterally expand its mandate beyond transferred programs and Ministry initiatives devolved to DSSABs.

Findings and Conclusions

In light of the above context, this report outlines a number of targets and initiatives aimed at meeting the need for affordable housing within the DSSAB jurisdiction. Of particular importance is the growing need for housing options for senior citizens¹ and disabled individuals, primarily focusing on expanding the supply of supportive housing for seniors and helping adapt the existing housing stock to enable individuals to remain within their own homes longer, thereby avoiding costly institutionalization. It also encourages an expansion of the supply of affordable housing for persons with disabilities. The report also points out areas where the DSSAB needs to expand the supply of social housing units for families.

The report also encourages the continuation of an active program of repair and renovation of both the DSSAB social housing portfolio (aimed primarily at continuing to improve accessibility and energy efficiency) and housing within the communities across the DSSAB. It sets out potential approaches for rationalizing the social housing stock where appropriate, including the potential sale of one building and the conversion of some large family units to smaller one bedroom units in Sudbury North (Chapleau). It encourages the DSSAB, subject to Ministry approval of use of AHP funding, to pursue a strategy of acquisition and renovation/conversion of existing buildings wherever possible in expanding the affordable housing supply.

The report suggests that the DSSAB continue to play a strong role in ongoing advocacy for changes to senior government policies and programs to better meet affordable and social housing needs. It recommends a program of monitoring the availability of funding programs and of monitoring the results of the recommended strategy in order to determine the effectiveness of the DSSAB's housing initiatives. It also identifies sources of funds that can be accessed to put in place many of the recommended initiatives.

¹ For the purposes of this report, a senior citizen is defined as an individual age 60 or over.

Recommendations

Below we summarize the initiatives and strategies being recommended to address the current and future housing needs of the Manitoulin-Sudbury Districts.

Expanding Housing Options for Seniors and Persons with Disabilities

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

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.
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.
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

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.

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.
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.
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.
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.
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.

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.

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.
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.

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.
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.
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.
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.