

Supporting successful tenancies – Where do you fit?



LANDLORD ENGAGEMENT FORUM

Proceedings Report

November 22, 2016, St. John's City Hall

ST. JOHN'S



Mayor's Foreword



*The City of St. John's believes affordable housing is a foundation for a safe, prosperous and healthy community. The City's Affordable Housing Business Plan aims to create 500 homes with our partners by 2017, including 200 affordable rental homes. The specific implementation strategy listed in the Plan is to **cultivate a base of landlords willing to rent to those seeking affordable housing (including those who may require supports)**.*

*The Rental Team (sub-committee of the Affordable Housing Working Group) has been working on this issue. The goal being to engage landlords in the promotion of **successful tenancies** which benefit people who need rental housing and those who provide that important service. This Forum comes on the heels of our online Landlord Survey.*

We recognize that our City cannot make advancements in housing alone. We must develop partnerships - governments, social organizations, builders, landlords – we all have a role to play. We have work to do and we can do great things together. I invite you to read what people had to say at our recent Landlord Engagement Forum.

Acknowledgements

The City of St. John's gratefully acknowledges the contributions of the following: the Forum Planning Committee and Rental Team for their efforts in helping us bring this event together. Special thanks to Hungry Heart Catering, City Staff and Committees, our Presenters as well as our Key Note Speaker, Wally Czech with the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness (CAEH).

And a big thank you to our varied and engaged forum participants, especially the Landlords and Property Managers in attendance, for your valuable contributions to the event and the discussions on affordable rental housing for our residents.



If you have any questions, comments or concerns about the Forum, or any ideas about follow up action, please get in touch with:

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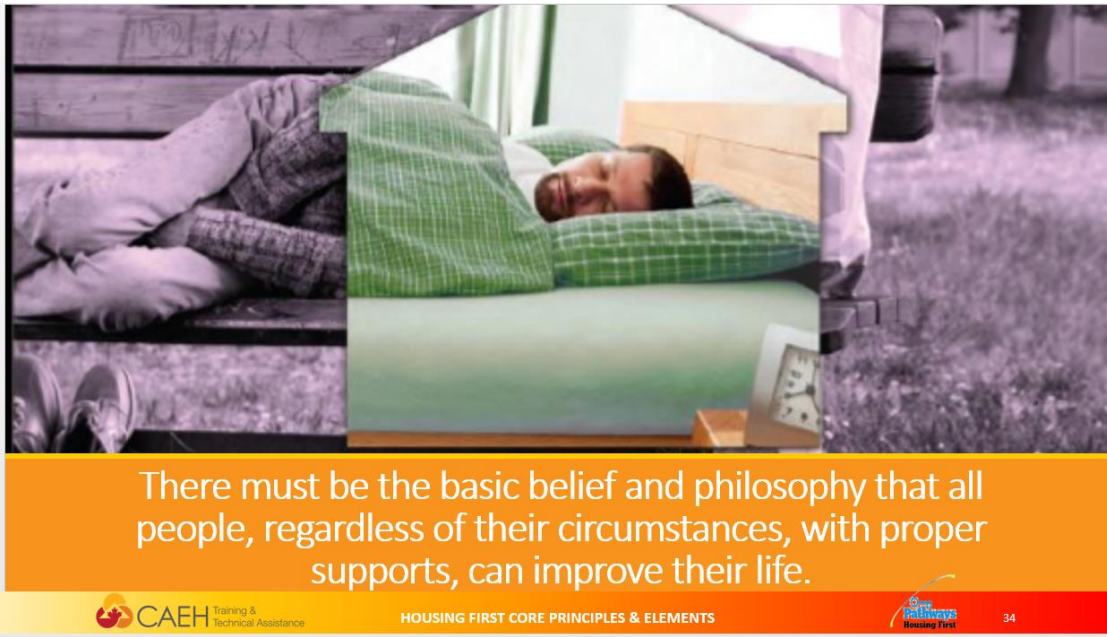
Event Summary

On November 22, 2016 over 80 people (service providers, government representatives, landlords, realtors, property managers, etc.) attended this Landlord Forum. Networking was encouraged and Wally Czech with the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness delivered a presentation to the group on Housing First 101 and Landlord Engagement. There was a great energy in the room and participants in attendance were encouraged by this initiative and wanted to know more about the role they could play in ending homelessness in St. John's. This Proceedings Report will be shared with attendees, participants that have signed up on New Lease (our electronic newsletter) as well as on the City of St. John's website.

Next steps in our Landlord Engagement

- ❖ The results of the Landlord Survey (Fall 2016) will be used by the Rental Team to frame our Landlord Engagement plans moving forward as well as identify strengths, challenges and opportunities.
- ❖ We have applied to the federal Innovative Solutions to Homelessness (ISH funding) for a pilot Landlord Engagement Coordinator/Landlord Mitigation Fund.
- ❖ We will start to plan Landlord Information/Education Sessions for 2017.
- ❖ The Landlord Newsletter will continue as a point of contact and we will work to recruit more landlords.





Welcome/Greetings

Minister Sherry Gambin-Walsh

Affordability and availability of housing continue to be major issues in our province. Everyone has the right to access safe and affordable housing. We recognize the role of private housing providers.

- ❖ We will continue to work to ensure the system works well for landlords and tenants.
- ❖ The Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation (NLHC) is providing \$10 million to support over 1,700 rent supplement units throughout the province.
- ❖ BY participating in this conference, you can help us adapt to changing housing needs.
- ❖ We're currently reviewing the NLHC, informed by input from employees, partners and people with lived experience. We will be taking a partnership approach.
- ❖ Work is underway to address homelessness. Four priority areas have been identified: 1) prevention and early intervention, 2) affordable and inclusive housing options, 3) coordinated systems, and 4) information management and sharing.

Jill Snow, CMHC

Improving access to affordable housing is a priority for the Government of Canada.:

- ❖ There have been \$2.3 billion in new, targeted investments to address the most immediate and pressing problems.
- ❖ Funding has doubled under the Investment in Affordable Housing. Budget 2016 has funding for seniors housing, retrofits of existing housing, funding for housing in northern communities and for victims of violence.
- ❖ There is a five-year, \$208 million affordable housing rental innovation fund. This will support the development of up to 4,000 units over five years.
- ❖ Work is continuing on the development of an affordable housing development fund.
- ❖ The CMHC led consultations on a National Housing Strategy.
- ❖ We are working closely with Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada.

- ❖ The provincial and national housing strategies will complement each other.

I would like to commend the work of community partners in addressing the availability of affordable housing options.

Deputy Mayor Ron Ellsworth, City of St. John's

Affordable housing is a key priority for this council. Supporting successful tenancies is the theme of today. Everyone has a right to housing. Every agency is an equal partner in this work.

- ❖ Local landlords play an important role on this issue. About 300 participants involved in the Landlord Survey.
- ❖ The City has been doing work on the slum landlord issue. We initiated a task force on sub-standard properties. We have made headway. Almost \$20,000 in penalties have been collected for deficiencies in properties.
- ❖ If you're a landlord or tenant with an issue, we will work with you. There are landlords that are not protecting the tenants. We're looking at increasing the fines right now.
- ❖ We will be launching a social media campaign focused on NIMBY (Not-In-My-Backyard) syndrome.
- ❖ We are working with the Harris Centre on affordable housing research needs.
- ❖ We have launched a Housing Catalyst Fund.
- ❖ Through the land inventory, we are identifying the land the city owns, with the idea that we will look at partnerships for affordable housing development.
- ❖ We are very fortunate we have federal and provincial governments who are at the table.

Each and every one of us owns the Affordable Housing Business Plan [emphasis on working in partnerships]. We want to work collectively with the landlords in our community.

This is about problem solving.
We are here to work with you.

- ❖ Today Minister Duclos is releasing the report from the consultations, which will be available online.

CMHC will continue to support the development and implementation of a National Housing Strategy.

Looking forward to the release of the strategy next year.

Shawn Skinner, End Homelessness St. John's (EHSJ) Chair

Thanks to our federal, provincial and municipal partners – we could not do it without the support of all levels of government. End Homelessness St. John's is a collective impact group. We come together and talk to people in our community. We all address the issues we identify.

So far it has been working. We have been able to do great things and work with partners across the country.

Today is about building on the partnerships we have. We need to engage with landlords and we are doing that.

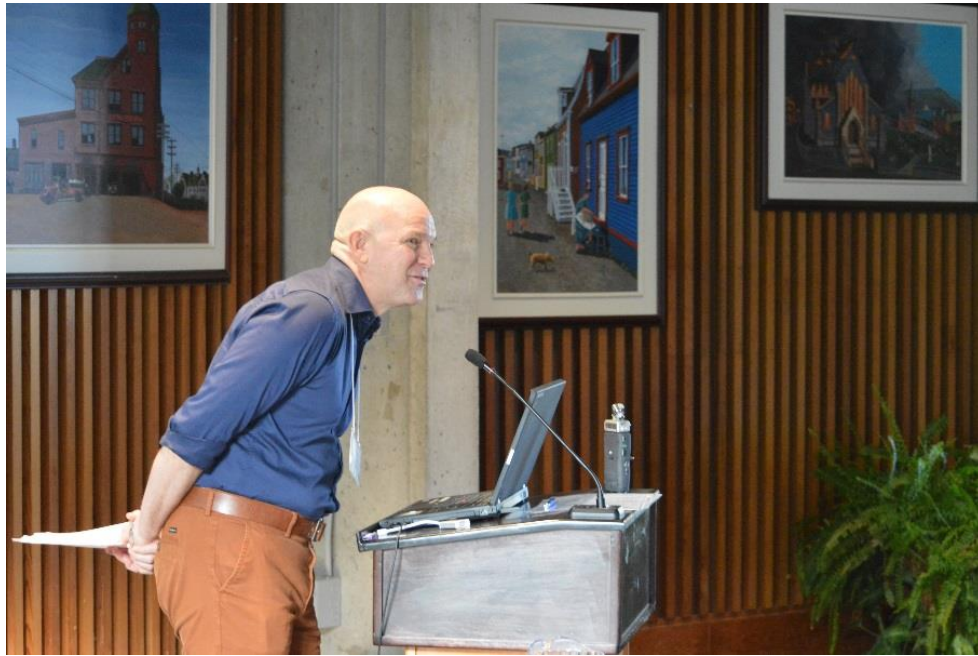
We hope to have successful partnerships with landlords. Looking forward to positive discussions, and continuing our work on homelessness and our work to become the first community in Atlantic Canada to end homelessness.

Bruce Pearce, EHSJ Community Development

Today is about neighbors helping neighbors. We need to bottle this and grow it.

New Front Step (Housing First) Program has been implemented:

- ❖ Over the last 10 months, 39 people have been housed, 16 past the six-month mark.
- ❖ We're about to roll out a Prevention and Rapid Rehousing program.
- ❖ The majority of funding is going directly to tenants and landlords.
- ❖ A system coordination framework and coordinated access model are being developed. Following lessons learned here and in other jurisdictions (e.g. Medicine Hat, Lethbridge).



Bruce Pearce, End Homelessness St. John's

Maria Callahan, City of St. John's spoke briefly about the online Landlord Survey:

- The City of St. John's coordinated an online Landlord Survey in collaboration with the Rental Team (of the Affordable Housing Working Group).
- The survey ran from mid-September to mid-October 2016.
- We found Landlord Surveys from across North America and used these as a basis to create our local, anonymous Landlord Survey that was launched online.
- The support of the Rental Team was paramount in getting the survey link to local landlords and encouraging them to complete it.
- Over 300 respondents completed the survey!
- A full report will follow in early 2017.
- The City's Communication/ Engagement Departments and our partners worked together to create 4 videos to promote the Landlord Survey:
 1. Deputy Mayor promotional video: <https://youtu.be/sWPSN3C-fyk>
 2. Landlord Perspective: <https://youtu.be/ReiFyqA0JV4>
 3. Prospective Tenants: <https://youtu.be/0ADj31ctZo0>
 4. Current Tenant: <https://youtu.be/ZleY6aum9eE>



Housing First 101/Landlord Engagement


Keynote Speaker: Wally Czech with the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness (CAEH)



We have to be accepting and compassionate.

- There shouldn't be any sub-standard living anywhere for anyone, but there's always a risk when taking on a tenant. When you are taking a risk to give a hand up to marginalized groups, maybe we should look at how we repay landlords that are doing a great job. They are doing a good service for society. Sometimes there are costs and sometimes there are savings with working with "these individuals."
- We have a disparity between what the need is and what the costs are, which is challenging for people in low income. Renters are paying far more than 30% of their income on housing. 1 in 5 households experience affordability problems.
- Traditional staircase system (homelessness to shelter to transitional housing to permanent housing) has created an institutional circuit because we have placed difficult conditions upon people to meet. We can change the staircase to put people into housing immediately.





Typical Landlord Concerns & Assumptions


- ❑ Lack of housing references
- ❑ Not suitable for this type of housing
- ❑ Not suitable for this area
- ❑ Obvious mental health issues
- ❑ Obvious substance abuse issues
- ❑ Unemployed/unemployable
- ❑ No credit references
- ❑ Past eviction problems

HOUSING FIRST CORE PRINCIPLES & ELEMENTS 5


Housing First is the best practice for addressing homelessness for people with significant barriers.

- Housing First principles: housing is a basic human right, self-determination and giving people power back in their lives, and engagement.
- We have to start looking at “these people” as actual human beings. We need to change who has the decision-making power in these situations. We need to change our perspective on how we deliver services.
- Housing First is not housing only – it doesn’t work without the proper supports.
- Choice - Housing First is about consumer choice and we need to believe that people can make decisions in their lives for the better. With choice you get responsibility, self-determination, empowerment, harm reduction and recovery promotion. We spent so many years removing choice and dictating to people.
- Program structure – important to have an intake process that allows for targeting/prioritizing and is happening consistently all of the time. Housing First is not about “first come, first served.” We need to prioritize the ones with the highest needs and take a team approach. Frequent and consistent team meetings. Housing First does not come without expectations on the people we’re working with. Home visits and paying rent are expectations. 24/7 support for clientele and landlords is important.
- Landlords are program participants and need to be a part of the team and part of the process. Landlords need to feel like they’re giving back to their community by participating in the programs.
- Home visits – Need to connect with people; it doesn’t end with housing. Home visits provide an opportunity to get to know the client and assess needs.
- Separation of housing and services – we do not remove housing because they are not participating in services. At the same time, if someone loses their housing, we’re not going to remove our supports and take away our involvement.
- Recovery orientation – we need to believe things can get better. If we have the attitude that people are broken and can’t get better, it’s not going to work. They may not become perfect individuals, but people’s lives can improve.
- Promoting social inclusion – more often than not, I see failures because people are lonely and bored. It’s important to ensure people are integrated into the community. Landlords are a part of that team.
- Important to connect people with supports as soon as possible. Need to create participant-driven goals.


Landlords as Program Partners



- 1
 - Ongoing HF Education and Involvement
 - Honesty (without breach) & Follow Through (Visits)
 - Separation of Housing and Services
- 2
 - Agency and landlord communication (two-way)
 - Responsive to Landlord Concerns
 - Support Landlord in Normal Tenancy Decisions
- 3
 - Agency works to ensure rent is paid on time (3rd Party)
 - Landlord ensures fair tenancy and attention to unit needs.
 - Plan for furnishings and tenant damages
- 4
 - Operating business while giving back
 - Advantages of using rental market (economy improvement)
 - More economical than congregate sites.



Housing First Core Principles & Elements

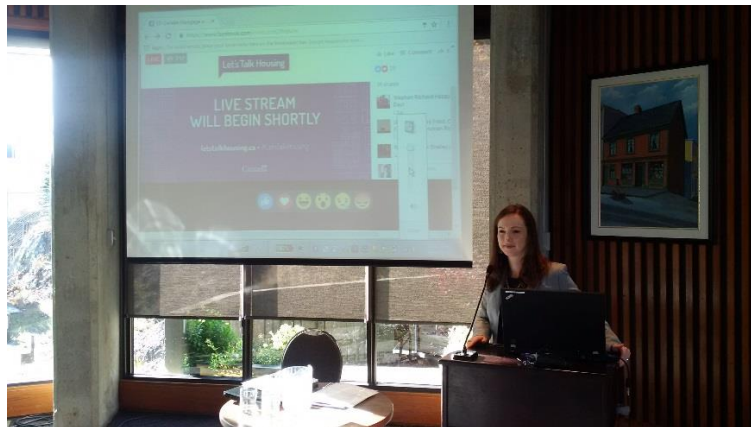


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Landlords as program partners – it's a risk, but it's a risk worth taking.

- Important to provide education about the program, ensure workers are honest with landlords (no false expectations, can't promise problem-free tenants but can promise responsiveness).
- Agency and landlord communication is important (should plan at least a monthly communication even if there's not a problem). Ensure landlords know what supports exist and seize opportunities to work together to salvage a tenancy. Programs help ensure rent is paid on time (including through third-party payment). Important to be flexible to allow for different payment options.
- Important to recognize this is a business for landlords. There are advantages, like reduced vacancies. Some landlords allot a given number of units to these programs because they know there will always be tenants and a responsive service provider. Scattered site housing is preferable.
- This is a long-term investment; don't expect returns right away.
- When we all work together, we create a happier and healthier environment.
- Think about the people we work with and what they've been through; their value is no different now than the day they entered into the world. Housing is a basic human right and allows people to live with dignity.
- There needs to be an advisory group for landlords and one for people with lived experience and one where they are joined. Need to ensure ideas are shared in a way they can be heard. Every community needs to find its own solution. Important to give people a chance to create their own lives.
- Important to consider the expectation of sustained investment in a property. One potential landlord incentive is to give them a property tax break if they lower the rent. "Habitability standards" are another option to send a signal to landlords on the minimum they must do to maintain the property.
- Landlord perspective – the nebulous structure from the outside is daunting; need a single point of contact (a gateway to available programs and services). There are too many disjointed pieces; need to centralize and get it working better from a coordination and education perspective. There is no training for private landlords or building managers; there needs to be a fundamental understanding that not everybody on the landlord side is equipped to understand these issues. Everyone has a different understanding and a different level of fear. Decisions are emotional. What we need is a structure (process) that outlines this is who you contact/how the system works.
- This is a great start, but we need to do more to demystify.

Let's Talk Housing Facebook Live Video



Jill Snow, CMHC

We ended the Landlord Forum by signing on to watch the nationally broadcast *Facebook Live Video for National Housing Day: featuring* Federal Minister Jean Yves Duclos, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Government of Canada and Evan Siddall, President & CEO, Canada Mortgage & Housing Corporation (CMHC).



Minister Duclos, along with Evan Siddall, at the launch of the "What We Heard" Report
Taken from: <https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/corp/nero/nere/2016/2016-11-22-1115.cfm>



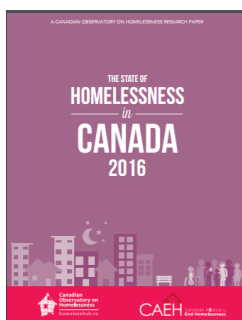
<https://www.letstalkhousing.ca/pdfs/what-we-heard.pdf>

Related Reports

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation **Rental Market Report, St. John's CMA 2016:**
https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/odpub/esub/64455/64455_2016_A01.pdf?lang=en



Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness, **The State of Homelessness in Canada 2016:**
<http://homelesshub.ca/SOHC2016>



City of St. John's **Affordable Housing Business Plan:**
<http://www.stjohns.ca/sites/default/files/files/publication/Housing%20Business%20Plan%20Final%20Draft.pdf>



Participant Evaluations

Comments below are summarized highlights from participant evaluation forms submitted at the end of the forum.

What did you like most about today?

- Brought together different pieces of the puzzle.
- Learning about various agents working in this field.
- I like the good news of all 3 levels of government working together on the issue of affordable housing and ending homelessness.
- Networking – sharing information.
- The commentary from people in the community.
- Meeting interesting people with similar goals.
- Alternate housing approach.
- Meeting different people, particularly the new EHSJ and Front Step staff.
- The diversity of the attendees at this event and the experience they bring to the table.
- The input and the interactions within the groups.
- The number of landlords.

What did you like least about today?

- Organization and sound system
- Slides hard to read from back of room (make the room darker perhaps? Have slides redrawn for a larger room population).
- I found it very difficult to hear the main speaker. I wish that he had used the mic at the podium.
- Fact that there isn't a National Housing Strategy in place.
- The length of the talkers.
- Would have been good to see more landlords attend.
- The fact that landlords that need to hear all of this are not present. However there is not much the planners can do about this.
- Nothing. It was very informative.

Are you encouraged by this initiative? Why or Why not?

- I am encouraged.
- Cautiously optimistic – let's see where it goes.
- Yes I am very encouraged and the work that is being done is great news.
- Yes. Love this forum.
- Yes. Information.
- Yes. People are taking action.
- Yes. Partnerships are strengthened.
- Yes. The partnerships are amazing and the cooperation at the different levels of government.
- Yes, because it shows what a group of individuals and/or organizations can accomplish when they put their mind to it to affect change.

What information would you like to see added to subsequent events? What topics would you be interested in learning more about?

- More info on how the systems work
- Engage tenancies board to speak on their issues –taking this puzzle piece into account would help to give some focus points for trouble spots before you run into them
- Social justice community involvement. Bettering and helping our communities.
- I would like to hear from someone actually using the resources from both sides.
- Best practices from other places that could help improve our Residential Tenancies Act. Be good to know what has worked elsewhere and see this shared with landlords as well as be used to work within government to strengthen the Act.
- More information regarding Housing First; more lived experience stories.
- Storytelling by people who have benefitted from housing initiatives.

What would you recommend we do to engage more landlords/improve this landlord engagement initiative?

- Call them. Electronic email is great but too easily missed/ignored. Ok to follow up with email but encouragement requires real people talking to real people.
- Keep reaching out. Emailing. Forums.
- Need more information from the actual services offered individually.
- Keep the discussion going with them. Get other landlords to talk to less engaged landlords.
- I have no idea but I think it is important to address it.
- Promote events/engagement in a way that makes clear to landlords how they can benefit financially by being a part of supportive housing.
- To continue to include landlords in the process through continued public events like the survey, forums. And maybe the idea of a breakfast for landlords.

Other comments/suggestions?

- Please improve presentations and sound
- Thank you for hosting this event. Great to see interest from the Minister, Deputy Mayor & Councillors. Would have been good to include some folks who have successfully been able to maintain housing and/or move to main stream housing.
- Thank you. There is a wonderful spirit of cooperation among the people gathered here.
- Great forum.



APPENDICES

Appendix A



AGENDA - Landlord Engagement Forum

Tuesday, November 22, 2016

8:30am	REGISTRATION (Coffee/tea and pastries)
9:00am	<i>Welcome/Greetings:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Minister Sherry Gambin-Walsh: Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development; Minister responsible for the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation, and the Minister Responsible for the Status of Persons with Disabilities, Government of Newfoundland & Labrador• Jill Snow, Client Relations, Newfoundland and Labrador, CMHC• Shawn Skinner, Chair of End Homelessness St. John's (EHSJ)• Deputy Mayor Ron Ellsworth, City of St. John's
9:30am	<i>Get to Know Your Neighbour – Networking Activity</i>
10:15am	BREAK
10:25am	<i>Housing First 101/Landlord Engagement:</i> Wally Czech, Director of Training with the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness
11:35am	<i>Brief Updates:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>End Homelessness St. John's (EHSJ):</i> Bruce Pearce, Community Development Worker, End Homelessness St. John's• <i>Landlord Survey:</i> Maria Callahan, Affordable Housing & Development Facilitator, City of St. John's
12:00pm	<i>Forum Wrap-Up:</i> Wally Czech
12:10pm	LUNCH
12:30pm	<i>Facebook Live Video for National Housing Day:</i> Federal Minister Jean Yves Duclos, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, Government of Canada

Appendix B



The newsletter for Landlords, Property Managers and others with an interest in helping people achieve their dream of affordable housing in the City of St. John's.

Sign up for *New Lease* (our new electronic newsletter for landlords, property managers, etc.):

Scan the code:



Or visit the link:

<https://visitor.r20.constantcontact.com/d.jsp?llr=lbnaoswab&p=oi&m=1123752621099&sit=eozr7ilkb&f=f0ab2c68-6491-46c6-b560-06b67edd98a4>

Appendix C

The Telegram

THE PEOPLE'S PAPER



[Janice Wells](#)

Published on August 20, 2016

Having just rented my house on Fleming Street for Sept. 1, I am about to begin a new landlord/tenant relationship. I dread it even though if I'd written the description of ideal tenants myself, it would have described this young couple. They love the old house and it should be a happy relationship.

I'm only dreading it because I've been a bit spoiled as a landlord with the apartments I look after for Newman. These apartments are affordable housing units under the auspices of the private landlord/Newfoundland and Labrador Housing program and a relationship we have forged with the supportive housing arm of the Stella Burry organization.

Supportive is the important word.

Read more of Janice's columns [here](#)

I decided long ago that building a real estate empire (haha) was my best shot at not being a bag lady in my dotage. It hasn't been easy, but even during my illness periods with no money and no job, I managed to cling on to my first and second houses by hook or by crook. Not really crook, but banks were much more reasonable years ago.

Over the years I've had some doozies as tenants. There was the family who started dog-sitting, resulting in a \$5,000 bill for replacing flooring. There was the guy who started taking in laundry for all his friends because I was paying the utilities, resulting in an enormous spike in my power bill. He was only a joke compared the pair who rented out the basement to a drug dealer who stole everything that wasn't hammered down and left behind a cache of very scary homemade weapons.

There was the 'creative' woman who painted a huge mural on a bedroom wall, resurfaced a century old mantle with bits of broken china, and covered a small brick patio with scraps of hardwood.

These were not supportive housing tenants. These were "regular" ones I picked all by myself.

I am obviously not cut out to be a landlord. Neither is Newman; we are pussycats/suckers. We have not only been stuck with overdue rent; we have lent tenants money (most of which was paid back).

We have had some good ones, even though the ones I thought would be the very best turned out to be the very worst, but that's another story.

Enter supportive housing. First one, then over the years, all six of Newman's apartments have been dedicated to supportive housing. It was really Newman's doing; he has strong feelings about the barriers facing people with mental health issues and believes everybody deserves a chance to have somewhere safe and decent to live. Our tenants have different challenges, some societal, some mental health, some just hard luck.

Make no mistake, we've had some nightmares with supportive housing tenants. No system is perfect and some people have greater challenges than others. For a landlord that could mean greater risks, but the organizations working with the tenants have expectations and guidelines for their clients and do their best to give whatever kind of support is needed to the tenants and can also act as an intermediary for the landlord.

I'm thinking about this today because I've been asked to take part in a video supporting supportive housing. I'll do it gladly because the best tenants we've ever had are receiving income support and have struggles and the worst we ever had were two professional women who looked good on paper and were charming but also totally devious and unethical.

We had to do some minor upgrades to have some of the apartments approved by NLHC and their top rents have not kept up with the market. That is a bad thing (the rent, not the upgrades). On the other hand, the rent is always on time, the organization is there for support and by working with them we've gotten to the stage of having buildings with long term compatible tenants. That is a good thing.

There is a great need for supportive housing and a number of organizations in the city to work with if you're a landlord. You need an open mind but if you are willing to work with one of these organizations, you may end up with more peace of mind than you expect.

Janice Wells lives in St. John's. She can be reached at janicew@nf.sympatico.ca.

Wells, Janice. (2016, August 20). The Importance of Support. *The Telegram*. Retrieved from: <http://www.thetelegram.com/Living/2016-08-20/article-4619838/The-importance-of-support/1>

Appendix D



Wally Czech

Director, Training



Wally Czech, B.A., M.C. PSYCH, CCC

Director of Training

Training and Technical Assistance Program

(403) 894-5565

<http://training.caeh.ca>

wally@caeh.ca

@CAEH_TTA



Wally is a recognized expert and leader in Housing First and ending homelessness with over 15 years' experience in counselling psychology. Wally joins the CAEH from the **City of Lethbridge**, Alberta where he was the City's Housing First Specialist for the past five years.

While at the city Wally was instrumental in the development of the city's Housing First System of Care, program development for several Housing First programs, providing clinical and operational support to funded projects and leading the development of the city's Housing First Standards of Practice. Wally has provided consultation and training to several communities in their efforts to develop or enhance their own Housing First models and was a contracted trainer for t3 (Think, Teach, and Transform) from the U.S.

