

20 YEARS
ANS

NHRC + CNRL

National Housing
Research Committee

Comité national de
recherche sur le logement

Fall 2006



NHRC Attendees Spring 2006

1st row from left to right:

Linda Prud'homme-CMHC-NHRC Secretariat,
Joan Miller-Manitoba, Kevin Sullivan-Ontario,
Hélène Aubé-SHQ-NHRC Co-Chair, Leigh
Howell-CMHC- NHRC Co-Chair, Jill
Davidson-City of Vancouver, Tom Henderson-
New Brunswick, Kildy Yuen-Alberta

2nd row from left to right:

Eileen Badiuk-Saskatchewan, Karla
Skoutajan-CHF, Alicia McGregor-
Saskatchewan, Robert Gagnon-SHQ, Annie
Cheung-CIP, Paul Gravelle-CHBA, Nancy
Walker-CMHC-NHRC Co-ordinator, Don
Johnston-CHBA, Kathleen Maynard- CMHI,
Judy Forrest-CHRA, Ruth Chamberland-CMHC,
Luis Rodriguez-CMHC, Sharon Margison-FCM

Back from left to right:

Suzanne Deschênes-NRCan, Sharon
Chisholm-CHRA, Duncan Hill-CMHC,
Barbara Maass- SHQ, Kate Moffatt-
Newfoundland and Labrador, Nicolas
Gilbert-Health Canada, Steven Ehrlich-CMHC,
Eric Cherbaka- APCHQ, Ian Melzer-CMHC,
Steve Demers-APCHQ, Mark Holzman-CMHC,
Derek Janhevich-HRSDC, Guy Gosselin-
NRC, Doug Page-British Columbia, Dan
Troke-Nova Scotia, John Engeland- CMHC,
Hans Schleibinger-NRC

National Housing Research Committee Celebrates Twenty Years of Successful Networking

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the National Housing Research Committee (NHRC). Conceived as a forum for exchange of information from various jurisdictions and levels of government and industry stakeholders in Canada, over the years the NHRC has evolved into an ongoing collaborative mechanism. It focuses on anticipating and responding to emerging issues, and on building a sound knowledge base for policy research and development.

Origins of the NHRC

In 1985 the federal government undertook a massive program review (the Nielsen Task Force) "to identify gaps and duplication of services with other levels of government, and to propose measures to make the federal presence more effective and efficient." Included was an examination of the federal role in housing programs and activities. The Study Group on Housing recommended "that Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) should proceed to create a Housing Research Committee to coordinate federal, provincial and industry involvement in housing research." Following a national consultation process led by CMHC, in December 1986 a group of people representing 27 organizations, provinces and federal departments met in Ottawa to launch the National Housing Research Committee.

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Today, the NHRC has 33 members and comprises federal, provincial and territorial, municipal, industry, social housing and academic community and consumer representatives. The Secretariat is provided by CMHC. The Committee is co-chaired by a CMHC representative and by a representative of a provincial/territorial government or one of the associations belonging to the Committee. Currently, the co-chairs are Hélène Aubé of the Société d'habitation du Québec and Leigh Howell of CMHC.

Objectives of the National Housing Research Committee

- To identify priority areas for housing-related research and demonstration
- To foster greater co-operation, develop partnerships, and minimize overlap in research activities
- To encourage support for housing research
- To promote the dissemination, application and adoption of research results

Working Groups Address Issues of Concern

Always responsive to the changing environment, from its earliest days the NHRC has established Working Groups on issues and subjects of particular interest to the housing research community. These Working Groups exchange information, discuss research gaps, and undertake research projects. Working Groups and sub-committees of the NHRC have addressed subjects such as technological innovation, renovation, special housing needs, indoor air quality, trade, environmental issues, and high rise construction research. At present, there are five Working Groups:

- Housing Data
- Homelessness
- Sustainable Community Planning
- Seniors Housing
- Housing and Population Health

Current Co-Chairs of Working Groups

Housing Data

John Engeland (CMHC) / Willa Rea (Statistics Canada)

Homelessness

Anna Lenk (CMHC) / Kevin Lee (City of Toronto)

Sustainable Community Planning

Mark Holzman (CMHC) / Kevin Sullivan (Ontario)

Seniors Housing

Luis Rodriguez (CMHC) / Doug Page (BC)

Housing and Population Health

Phil Deacon (CMHC) / Hans Schleibinger (NRC)

Communication and Information Sharing

Communication and information sharing – which continue to be the drivers of the NHRC – are fostered by vehicles such as the web site www.nhrc-cnrl.ca. NHRC meeting summaries, including all presentations, are posted on the web site for public access shortly after each meeting. The web site also includes NHRC Online, a web based collaborative tool to facilitate and simplify information sharing among members of the housing research community. Another key information tool is the

NHRC Newsletter, which publishes updates about current housing research initiatives in Canada.

To ensure effective and ongoing information-sharing on a national basis, the NHRC provides translation services to make housing research efforts accessible in both official languages.



Identification of Emerging Issues

The Committee helps to identify emerging housing issues, and helps make the link between these issues and challenges in other areas, thus encouraging a broader recognition of the horizontality of issues involving housing. This recognition is evidenced by the growing number of federal and provincial departments that want to stay abreast of the work of the NHRC. It is also evidenced by the amount of research conducted by NHRC member organizations themselves. Housing research is increasingly valued as providing a solid underpinning to good policy and programs in a wide range of sectors.

Ability to Respond to Change

One of the strengths of the National Housing Research Committee is its ability to respond to an ever-changing environment. The NHRC has continued its work through changes in government, organizational restructurings, and evolving housing issues and challenges. The ongoing commitment of the constituent members ensures that this consultative body continues to keep the value of housing research on the national agenda.

Interdisciplinary Approach

Housing research draws on diverse disciplines and professions including economics, building science and technology, geography and urban planning, demographics, architecture, environmental science, and health. The NHRC has successfully promoted and profiled "housing" as an element that needs to be incorporated into studies and research of different types and for different purposes. For example, Statistics Canada surveys and initiatives, including the Census, increasingly include housing-related questions that generate better housing research data inputs of great value to policy and program development. Statistics Canada co-chairs the NHRC's Working Group on Housing Data, enabling a hands-on relationship with the housing research needs of the provinces, industry associations, and other members.

International Perspectives

Housing research findings from other countries are also made available to the members. International guests are regularly invited to make presentations to the Full Committee and to the Working Groups, bringing to their attention housing challenges and solutions identified beyond the borders of Canada.

Housing Research: Serving the National Interest

The on-going commitment and contribution made by members of the NHRC helps to keep them abreast of current and future housing trends and needs. Their participation helps ensure that research findings contribute to informed program and policy development and ever-improving industry practices. The 20 year anniversary is an opportunity not only to celebrate what the NHRC has done, but also to pause and reflect on how the NHRC can continue to evolve and serve the national interest.

NHRC from the Perspective of Some of the Members

The continued relevance of any organization lies in the perceptions of its members concerning its effectiveness in meeting their needs. NHRC member organizations were invited to reflect on the NHRC and the value they have drawn from participation in the Committee over the years. Here is what some of the members had to say:



"Announced in October 2005, the Saskatchewan Housing Research Program offers financial assistance to enable researchers to conduct high-quality investigations on relevant topics related to housing in Saskatchewan. The objectives of the Program are similar to some of the overall objectives of the NHRC, such as encouraging greater cooperation, developing partnerships and minimizing overlap in research activities as well as promoting dissemination, application and adoption of research results."

(Alicia McGregor, Department of Community Resources, Saskatchewan)

"Our Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MAH) has used the discussions and research concerning core housing in developing various policy/program elements through the years and, more recently, in development of the Affordable Housing Program and in current research related to Aboriginal core housing need. Research studies undertaken by other provinces and territories, key stakeholder organizations and academics as well as research commissioned by MAH, and shared via NHRC forums, have assisted and continue to assist and support policy development on various initiatives that are part of Ontario's Affordable Housing Strategy."

(Kevin Sullivan, Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Ontario)

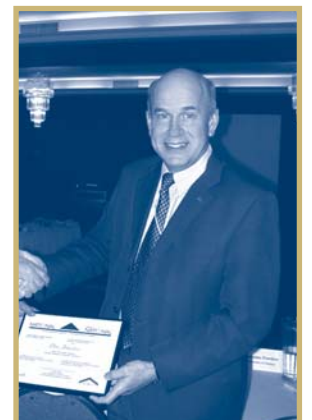


"BC's recent decision to set up a new Research and Analysis Branch stems in part from my participation at the NHRC over the last three years and the realization that, as a provincial government, we needed to be more plugged into and contribute more to the body of housing research. The mission of the Research and Analysis Branch is to lead and provide expertise in data provision and quantitative research and analysis in areas relevant to the Office of Housing and Construction Standards."

(Doug Page, Office of Housing and Construction Standards, British Columbia)

"The experience of the NHRC Subcommittee on High-rise Construction was exceptional. CMHC's project manager used the meetings to help identify and address the key challenges facing those who designed, built and operated large residential buildings with respect to quality, affordability, environmental impact, durability, etc. The Committee was very influential in how CMHC allocated a significant portion of its research budget and was instrumental in creating partnerships with time and money from a number of sources."

(Don Johnston, Canadian Home Builders' Association)





"CHF Canada has been an active member of the NHRC for many years. Over the last 20 years the NHRC has made significant contributions to housing research in Canada, particularly in the dissemination of current research. The Committee has continued to find ways to remain relevant to its members. Some examples are changes in the focus of the meetings and in the membership of the Committee. Committee meetings offer the NHRC members valuable networking opportunities with key players in the housing industry, including many federal and provincial government departments. The work of the Housing and Population Health Working Group has been of particular interest to our organization. The link between housing and health is critical to clarifying the importance of housing to the health of Canadians. The challenge the Committee faces is how its painstaking research findings can influence housing policy at all levels of government."

(Karla Skoutajan, Cooperative Housing Federation Canada)

"The Committee keeps us abreast of current research and research directions, not only by CMHC but also by provincial/territorial governments and other associations. This is necessary for our administration of the Affordability and Choice Today Program, connecting us with vital information and providing a sounding board for our work. Moreover, by being able to access and to some extent influence current housing research, we are consequently better able to do our own policy development work."

(John Burrett, Federation of Canadian Municipalities)



"The NHRC has been of great value to CHRA for the following reasons:

- it has been the only place for ongoing, cross sectoral national dialogue on housing research
- it has offered an excellent networking opportunity for all parties interested in such research
- attendance at meetings of speakers and committee members has been a good mix of practitioners, policy, government, program, private/public, consulting and academics
- there has been strong sustained commitment from CMHC to providing administrative support to the committee
- it has been a good forum for CHRA to connect to a variety of federal departments/agencies and provincial governments on a regular basis
- the meetings are well-run, respectful and professional
- it provides a forum for collaboration on issues of mutual interest.
- it promotes and encourages cross-sectoral horizontal thinking on research questions and program outcomes
- It allows for the more effective use of limited research dollars through encouraging collaboration
- It allow for the formulation of better research questions and the framing of research issues that will take more substantial resources than might be available to any one member.
- it is one of the only forums that brings together provincial/ territorial government representatives with national association and government department members interested in housing.

Indeed, the NHRC provides an excellent venue for CHRA to link with representatives from governments and other national organizations to undertake research on the expiry of social housing operating agreements. Not only did this collaboration result in raising the profile of the importance of the issue, but also CHRA was able to generate financial support from NHRC members to help cover the cost of this important research."

(Sharon Chisholm, Canadian Housing and Renewal Association)



"During my years as Chair of the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association's Research & Policy Committee and my period as Co-Chair of the NHRC, I always looked forward to the NHRC meetings. I knew that I would learn something new, that CHRA's perspectives would be valued and that I would be treated well. Congratulations!"

(Rob Cressman, CHRA, former NHRC Co-Chair)

Perspectives of the NHRC Co-Chairs

"From its inception, 60 years ago, CMHC has recognized that the creation and sharing of knowledge that supports a better understanding of housing challenges and solutions is critical to ensuring ongoing improvements in housing conditions in Canada. This premise is as relevant today as it was then and speaks to the value of an organization like the NHRC.

The need for a forum where housing stakeholders could share their views on emerging knowledge needs and research results was a key consideration for CMHC, when it brought together other key housing partners and stakeholders to establish the NHRC in 1986. In recognition of the ongoing importance of this role, CMHC has funded the operations of the NHRC and its Secretariat and has served as the Chair or the Co-Chair of the Full Committee and its various working groups, since their inception.

The regular meetings of the NHRC help to ensure that all parties are kept abreast of, and benefit from, the knowledge created by investments in housing research. Equally important, discussions at NHRC meetings have helped to ensure that housing research agendas are informed by evolving challenges and opportunities, as identified by member organizations. Over the years, these discussions have helped to identify new research priorities and have fostered the establishment of partnerships to support needed work.

It is a testament to the ongoing value of the NHRC that most of the agencies and organizations that were founding members in 1986 continue to be active members today and that the membership has grown to include new organizations. Attendance levels at NHRC meetings are very high and constitute a tangible reflection of the value that members place on their participation in Committee discussions.

In recent years, the NHRC has continued to develop as a research network by supplementing its twice-yearly face-to-face meeting with an electronic network of members and other parties with an interest in housing research. Information technology tools have helped to more widely disseminate the NHRC's main information products—its meeting summaries, presentations, and Newsletter—to reach out beyond the Committee's membership.

The active participation of NHRC members over the years has been instrumental in ensuring that the Committee remains a vibrant and relevant research forum. It has been my pleasure to serve as co-chair of the NHRC and look forward to the continued evolution of this important forum."

(Leigh Howell, NHRC Co-chair, CMHC)



"For Quebec, the NHRC represents a forum where the province can outline its viewpoints, express its expectations and present several of its current and upcoming research projects and studies. Quebec, like the other Committee sponsors, can also assess the validity of some of its initiatives, both in terms of housing research and development as well as project implementation. This forum brings together experts before whom Quebec can present new concerns, while gathering opinions and information on experiences attempted elsewhere across Canada.

Initiatives undertaken by represented organizations are submitted to Working Group participants. This transfer of knowledge often opens up new horizons for research, partnerships and the implementation of specific projects. In this manner, emerging fields can be made known and benefit from suggestions on the part of people interested in their development.

As you know, we have always been concerned about better knowledge of our clients (seniors, homeless people), statistical data and processing, market analysis, housing sustainability, renovation, home adaptations, etc.

Certain recent contributions of researchers to the NHRC have had an impact on research, such as the addition of Working Groups on Sustainable Community Planning and on Housing and Population Health. The inclusion of the notion of themes at the NHRC meetings (Aboriginal peoples, international activities, research results) and the presentation of various projects or plans of Canadian cities inform us about how the housing context is evolving. The presentation of programs offered by universities in the fields of habitat, housing or architecture allows us to be at the leading edge of development.

Our participation in the NHRC is a valued mechanism for us. We view housing research as a key component in developing innovative and effective programs and services, and ultimately, in achieving our overall objective of better, more affordable housing for Quebecers. We believe that our organization benefits from knowledge transfer and information sharing, as facilitated by the NHRC, as do our counterparts and partners in Canada, and internationally.

This innovating initiative, co-chaired in turn by representatives from provinces, cities or organizations, helps not only to meet emerging needs, adapt to change and plan for the future but also to create links between housing and other social policy priorities."

(Hélène Aubé, NHRC Co-chair, Société d'habitation du Québec)

Perspectives of Academic and Municipal Members



"My attendance at the National Housing Research Committee as one of the rotating academics was interesting, informative and beneficial both to me personally and to my Institution: the Institute of Urban Studies at the University of Winnipeg. My participation:

- kept me abreast of the housing research initiatives underway at the federal, and provincial levels of government, what was happening in many of the major municipalities and the research interests and initiatives on which major stakeholders such as the CHRA, CREA, CHBA, etc. were focusing. It provided a very good scan of what was being done and who was doing it in the housing field;
- led to productive and long lasting partnerships in the housing field. These partnerships have, and still do provide me, and my University, with research opportunities on interesting projects;
- provided me with information, and the on-going research opportunities helped me be a more effective teacher in the classroom. I was able to pass on not only new ideas, initiatives and trends in housing policy, market circumstances and neighbourhood renewal, but to refer students to actual case study material and publications that were both current and informative;
- perhaps most important of all is that membership on the Committee provided me with a range of perspectives on housing issues. With the many stakeholders and interest groups involved on the Committee there was always a diversity of perspectives. This certainly helped broaden my understanding and knowledge of the wide-ranging implication of housing issues and the importance of housing to other social and economic sectors and policy areas. This helped make me a better-informed researcher and teacher."

Tom Carter, Canada Research Chair in Urban Change and Adaptation and Professor of Geography, Institute of Urban Studies, University of Winnipeg

"During my more than ten years of participation in the NHRC, I have had the opportunity to represent not only CHRA but also for several years the City of Ottawa. This was during a period when the NHRC had several seats at the table for municipal representatives through CHRA. Involvement in the NHRC was of value to me in my work with the City and to my colleagues at the City because I would return from NHRC meetings brimming with information to share and ideas about what we could do at the City in research or policy or programs. The information about research underway, about findings and outcomes from different practices, and about what was being tried elsewhere was invaluable to us at the municipal level as we took on greatly increasing housing responsibilities, particularly in the areas of homelessness, sustainable community planning, and affordable housing. Documenting housing need is of critical importance to municipalities; thus the work of the NHRC in the area of housing needs and housing data was very informative. At the same time, I was able to identify for the other members at the NHRC what the critical issues and challenges were for municipalities like the City of Ottawa and what was needed by municipalities in research and policy development.



Over the years, the continuity of involvement has been very important to foster relationships, to promote partnerships for future projects and initiatives, and to create a basic knowledge base about the NHRC and its members so that the benefits of subsequent meetings are cumulative. The NHRC provides a unique forum for linking together many of the diverse entities in this country which have a major interest in housing and community issues. This type of forum is essential to enable the participating members to be informed and effective in their individual environments."

*Judy Forrest, Previous Municipal representative at the NHRC
Currently Chair of CHRA's Research & Policy Committee*

Canadian Housing Research Cluster Design Grant Approved by SSHRC

A group of investigators led by Cheryl Forchuk of the University of Western Ontario (UWO) has received a \$25K grant from SSHRC to prepare a concept paper on development of a Canadian Housing Research Cluster.

SSHRC's Strategic Research Clusters program stems from the Council's strategic thrust to transform SSHRC from a granting council into a Knowledge Council. In the summer of 2004, following extensive national consultations involving more than 300 stakeholders, SSHRC launched its Strategic Research Clusters Design Grants program to help support development of research clusters. These clusters were defined as "national research networks focused on a particular theme, issue or content area, that would enable researchers to interact on a long term basis with one another, with research users and other stakeholders, and with the general public."

The proposed aim of the Canadian Housing Research Cluster is to develop a "network of networks": an interactive engagement of the networks, organizations and researchers that work in housing across the country, with the goal of maximizing the knowledge impact of housing research in Canada. Phil Deacon, Senior Researcher (Policy and Research Division) at CMHC has been contributing to the effort of the team. "I think that a housing research cluster could be a great complement to the work of the National Housing Research Committee and I can imagine good interaction between the two", affirms Mr. Deacon.

The team is comprised of leading academic researchers in the areas of urban change and adaptation, aboriginal housing, neighbourhood

revitalization, immigration, social determinants of health, and mental health and housing. The team will also include researchers based in the communities with responsibilities for housing who have developed a great deal of knowledge over the years.

The team proposes a broad housing research perspective that would include geographic contexts, vulnerable groups, and the homeless as well as the housed. The balanced and integrated approach will prioritize the critical issues of housing access, adequacy and affordability that affect a minority of the population directly (about 15%) but that also have direct repercussions on the overall livability and sustainability of communities.

The concept paper on the design of a strategic housing research cluster will be presented to SSHRC in March, 2007. The report will describe development of the cluster, including its intentions and activities, and how it will be administered and operated. It will address important questions such as needs, gaps and opportunities in housing research in Canada, and how a research cluster could address these needs and gaps; the infrastructure needed to increase and strengthen linkages; how to increase the academic basis of housing research; how to increase community responsiveness to housing research; and what should be included under the housing research umbrella.

For information on the proposed Canadian Housing Research Cluster, contact: Phil Deacon, Senior Researcher, Policy and Research Division, CMHC, (613) 748-2429; email pdeacon@cmhc-schl.gc.ca



Was Chicken Little Right? Case Studies on the Impact of Expiring Operating Agreements

Building on a 2003 initial analysis, CHRA recently commissioned a new research study to create a series of case studies to illustrate what happens when social housing operating agreements expire. The consultant team, led by Steve Pomeroy (Focus Consulting Inc.), collected data from a national cross-section of providers (20 projects) to assess outcomes when the agreements end, together with mortgage payments and subsidy.

The review of projects tests two key questions:

- a) Will the project be viable when the agreement expires? That is, will it generate enough rental income, from Rent Geared to Income (RGI) and, where applicable, market units, to cover operating costs?
- b) Does the project have sufficient capital reserves combined with ongoing allocations to replacement reserves to meet the need for expenditures on capital replacement?

A simple rule of thumb, using current data, can guide providers in assessing post-expiry viability. ***If current annual subsidy is greater than total annual mortgage payments (P&I), the project is very likely to experience post-expiry difficulty.***

Overall, for most non-profit providers, the conclusion is that the sky is not falling. Most projects, and especially pre-1986 commitments, will be viable or have the potential to implement remedies that will shift the trajectory to one with viable operations. For non-profit providers with predominantly post-1985 projects, with higher proportions of RGI units, as well as for public housing and urban native projects, which are predominantly 100% RGI, there is a much higher probability of problems.

In combination, projects anticipated to be in difficulty – public housing, urban native and some portion of post-1985 non-profit – could account for as much as 50% of the total stock of social housing.

The largest issue will confront the provinces and territories, who are, outside of Ontario, the owners of public housing (which alone accounts for one-third of social housing). In Ontario this liability will confront municipalities who now own public housing.

While projects may be viable from an operating perspective, lack of reserves for capital replacement may undermine viability. Of the twenty individual cases, 12 were projected to be viable after expiry;

however, only four (20% of the total sample) have sufficient levels of capital replacement, based on a proxy measure developed in the study.

The report outlines a series of potential remedies focusing on improving revenues through various combinations of reducing the number of RGI units, reducing the number with deep subsidy, and increasing market revenues. In some cases there may be policy restrictions that will require review and approval by applicable governments responsible for administration. In the case of public housing and urban native projects, and possibly some post-1985 non-profit projects, extended subsidy commitments will be needed to retain affordability and RGI targeting.

The study does not examine the corollary of the expiry issue – the reduced expenditures that will be realized by both the federal and provincial/territorial governments. This is a large potential source from which to fund remedies as well as to undertake investment in expansion of the affordable housing stock.

For additional information, please contact Roopal Thaker, CHRA, rthaker@chra-achru.ca, Tel. (613) 748-3007 ext. 10



University of British Columbia: Leading Edge Research and Practice in Sustainable Development

The University of British Columbia is recognized internationally as a leader in cutting edge research in sustainable community development. In 1997, UBC became the first university in Canada to implement a sustainable development policy, and faculties like the School of Community and Regional Planning have adopted sustainability as a core value.

Some examples of sustainable development initiatives at UBC include:

University Town

UBC is implementing "University Town", an integrated community that benefits from and supports UBC's academic mission. Neighbourhoods, identified in a planning process overseen by the Greater Vancouver Regional District, mix housing, businesses, parks, community centres and amenities in a pedestrian-friendly setting close to the university's academic, cultural and recreational facilities. These emerging neighbourhoods will be a source of housing that is more affordable, an important drawing card to attract and retain top faculty, students and staff. The availability of housing on or near campus is also proving effective in reducing the number of vehicles coming to the campus, an important environmental consideration.

The University Town approach includes application of UBC's green building strategy, the Residential Environmental Assessment Program (REAP), which provides builders of low-rise residential construction with a system that takes account of environmental conditions, economics, and user behavior patterns.

CIRS: A Living Laboratory of Sustainability

The Centre for Interactive Research on Sustainability, CIRS, aims to accelerate the adoption of sustainable building practices and sustainable urban development policies. CIRS has three clusters of research activity: Cluster A explores sustainable building design and operation, including the technical and human dimensions of sustainable buildings; Cluster B explores the development and application of tools and processes for community engagement, including modelling, simulation and visualization tools; and Cluster C

explores the development and implementation of policies and strategies for sustainability. The three clusters bring together 40 researchers from UBC, Simon Fraser University, BC Institute of Technology and Emily Carr Institute to work across disciplines. Research at CIRS is pioneering new forms of partnership between researchers, practitioners, and community members to move the fruits of the research into the policy and business decision-making arenas. CIRS researchers and other technical specialists are involved in the design and development of the CIRS building, which aims to be one of the "greenest" buildings in North America, one that has virtually a "zero" ecological footprint.

School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture

UBC's new School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture (SALA) includes graduate level professional and post-professional programs in architecture and landscape architecture, together with an undergraduate program in environmental design. SALA Director Dr. Ray Cole is recognized for furthering the theory and practice of building environmental assessment. He was instrumental in the adaptation of the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) rating system to Canada, the creation of the Residential Environmental Assessment Program (REAP), and the Green Building Challenge (GBC) process, an initiative to assess the progress in green building practices internationally.

Finally, UBC is a leader in working closely with the private, public and NGO sectors to develop research and teaching programs linked to demonstration, testing and implementation of sustainable community development projects with the goal of accelerating sustainability on campus, in British Columbia, and worldwide.

For more information on:

University Town: www.universitytown.ubc.ca

CIRS: www.cirs.ubc.ca

SALA: <http://www.sala.ubc.ca>

UBC Sustainability Strategy: <http://www.sustain.ubc.ca/ia.html>

A Blueprint for Growth: Planning for Future Housing in the Halifax Regional Municipality

Occupying an area of nearly 6,000 square kilometers, the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) encompasses close to 200 communities, among them some of the most urban and most rural in Canada. On June 27, 2006 Council adopted the first HRM Regional Municipal Planning Strategy. The regional planning process included extensive research, community consultation, and dialogue on a shared vision of the future for the entire municipality.

Housing costs in HRM have been “catching up” to the rest of the country while wages have not, making housing affordability a rising concern for both owners and renters. The Regional Plan is based on a market demand projection of an anticipated increase in population of 90,000 residents, and an additional 60,000 dwelling units over the next 25 years (Clayton Research & Cantwell Co., 2004). Central to developing the Plan was the question of how to best accommodate this growth while supporting quality of life, social inclusion and sustainable community design.

Several studies, along with detailed GIS inventories and analyses, have been instrumental in developing the recently adopted Plan and land use by-law changes:

- *The Municipal Land Use Policy and Housing Affordability Study* (Tomalty and Cantwell, 2002) investigated regulatory, financial and planning process measures to encourage the development of affordable housing in HRM. Potential legislative changes were also identified to increase the municipal tool-box.
- The “*Urban Core Capacity Study*” (HRM, 2003) revealed that approximately 280 ha of vacant, brownfield and under-utilized commercial and industrial sites could, depending on density of development, accommodate between 10,000 and 40,000 dwelling units within the existing service boundary.



At the drawing table: Staff engage in planning session at HRM headquarters. Photo courtesy Halifax Regional Municipality.

- The “*Greenfield Study*” (CBCL & Mashall Macklin Monaghan, 2004) identified the most appropriate and cost effective areas for future service boundary expansion.
- The “*Settlement Pattern and Form with Service Cost Analysis*” (HRM, 2005) studied the costs of municipal services in eight patterns of neighbourhood form and density
- The Randall G. Arendt “*Conservation Design for Subdivisions*” (Island Press, 1996) model influenced new open-space subdivision design requirements introduced in the new Plan for areas outside the service boundary.

The Regional Plan selected a moderate growth scenario that allocates 25% of future growth to the urban core, 50% to suburban areas, and 25% to rural areas, providing ample land for future housing development. Most of this development will take place within the Regional Centre and various sizes of 50 centres, where a mix of residential and commercial uses will be a policy objective. Housing market and demographic trends and land supply will be carefully monitored. Additional reserve lands may become available should growth outpace current projections. In addition, the soon to be initiated community planning program will ensure that the full potential of regional planning policies is realized at the local level. Compact neighbourhoods are cheaper to build, service and maintain. This can lead to lower development costs, lower taxes, and reduced dependency on the private automobile. HRM’s blueprint

for future growth, coupled with efficient development processes can make a significant impact on housing affordability.

For further information on the HRM Regional Plan :
<http://www.halifax.ca/regionalplanning/Index.html>
 or contact Austin French,
frencha@halifax.ca,
 (902) 490-4717.

Major Expansion of On-line Housing Data Resources Accompanies the Release of CMHC's 2006 Canadian Housing Observer

The release of CMHC's latest edition of the *Canadian Housing Observer*, heralds the launch of a significant new resource for those interested in monitoring and analyzing housing conditions in Canada. *The Observer* is a flagship publication that presents a detailed annual review of housing conditions and trends in Canada and the key factors behind them.

This year, the release of the report is marked by a significant expansion of the online data resources being made available through the *Housing Observer* web pages on CMHC's website. The annual reporting presented in the *Observer*, coupled with the extensive online data resources, provides Canada's housing sector with an indispensable tool for identifying, addressing and monitoring housing trends and issues. It is an ideal resource for housing planners and policy makers; housing researchers; home builders; housing finance and real estate professionals; and municipal, provincial, and federal housing specialists.

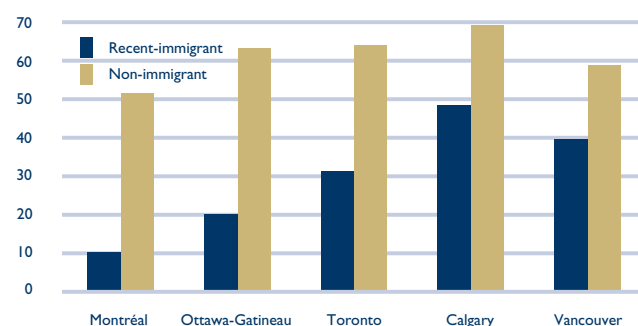
Highlights from the 2006 Canadian Housing Observer

Demographic and socio-economic influences on housing demand

Strong employment growth, rising incomes and low mortgage rates continued to fuel housing demand in 2005, as they have throughout the last decade. The *2006 Observer* explores the impact that the aging of Canada's population is having on housing demand, an influence that is expected to accelerate over the next 25 years as increasing numbers of baby boomers reach retirement age. Aboriginal people and immigrants are noted as other rapidly growing segments of the Canadian population. Recent immigrants to Canada and Aboriginal people have lower rates of home ownership and are more likely to live in crowded housing, conditions that are, in part, influenced by lower than average incomes.

HOMEOWNERSHIP RATES,
RECENT-IMMIGRANT AND NON-IMMIGRANT HOUSEHOLDS,
SELECTED URBAN CENTRES, 2000

Per cent of households owning their homes



Recent-immigrant households have primary maintainers who came to Canada from 1996 through May 15, 2001 (Census Day). The household maintainer is the person or one of the people in the household responsible for major household payments.

Source: CMHC, adapted from Statistics Canada (Census of Canada)

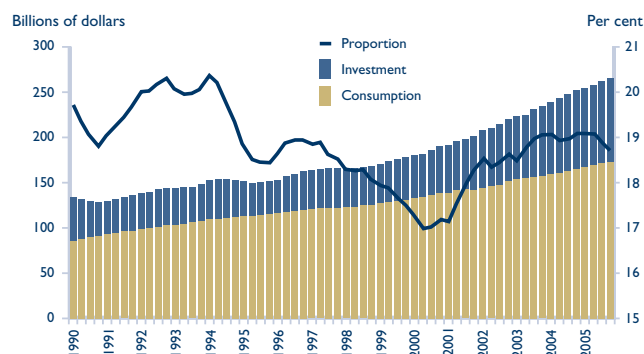
Current market developments

The Canadian housing market posted another strong year in 2005, the fourth consecutive year in which new housing starts exceeded the 200,000 mark. Existing home sales reached a fifth consecutive record high while strong sellers' market conditions pushed the average price up by more than ten per cent. Renovation spending set a record high in 2005, at some 40 billion dollars. Overall, housing-related spending, including both consumption and investment, contributed nearly \$260 billion to the Canadian economy in 2005, nearly one-fifth of total economic activity in Canada. Construction employment grew by 67,800 jobs, accounting for about 30 per cent of total employment growth in Canada.

Housing finance

Buoyant housing markets contributed to total mortgage credit outstanding reaching an annual average of \$624 billion in 2005, up almost 10 per cent from the previous year. While Canadians are taking on more debt to finance their home purchases, the ratio of mortgage debt service to income levels remains relatively low by historical standards.

HOUSING-RELATED SPENDING LEVEL AND PROPORTION OF GDP, CANADA, 1990 - 2005



Source: CMHC, adapted from Statistics Canada (National Accounts)

In your neighbourhood: intensifying and renewing existing neighbourhoods

With more than 80 per cent of Canadians now living in urban centres, Canada is one of the most urbanized countries in the world. Faced with the challenge of accommodating growth in a sustainable way, there are an increasing number of examples of how local communities are intensifying and renewing existing neighbourhoods, through infill development, adaptive reuse and conversion, redevelopment of brownfields, and secondary suites. The 2006 Observer profiles this emerging trend.

Housing outcomes by income group

Housing outcomes vary across household income groups. The 2006 Observer notes that while the majority of households are well-housed today, about 60 per cent of households in the lowest-income quintile are in core housing need, almost all because of affordability problems. Low-income households with high shelter cost burdens face significant challenges in balancing housing costs against expenditures on other household necessities.

Sixty years of housing progress in Canada

Marking CMHC's 60th anniversary, the 2006 Observer traces some of the key housing trends of the past six decades. This feature presents a capsule view of how Canada's housing needs have evolved over the past 60 years, some of the notable achievements recorded along the way, and some of the challenges that remain in ensuring that Canadians are among the best housed in the world today.

New On-Line Data Resources To Support Analysis of Housing Conditions and Trends

The release of the 2006 Canadian Housing Observer is accompanied by a substantial expansion of the on-line housing data resources available through CMHC's website. Providing detailed coverage of local housing markets and of the housing conditions experienced by households across Canada, these data resources are made available free of charge to those who wish to conduct their own investigations of housing trends and conditions, to supplement the analysis provided in the Canadian Housing Observer report.

The data resources are comprised of several distinct components. A series of Housing Observer Data Tables provide, in Excel format, a wide range of housing data and related information covering all of Canada's major housing markets. This resource is supplemented by Housing in Canada Online (HiCO), an innovative and interactive tool for building custom tables and analyzing data on housing conditions, including core housing need. HiCO has been designed with the needs of the user in mind. A "Getting Started" page provides a Beginner's Guide, which walks users through the process of tapping HiCO's information to construct a customized table of data to meet their specific information needs. HiCO is accompanied by comprehensive metadata, explaining all concepts and providing all definitions, including those for CMHC's core housing need indicator. The Observer web pages also provide links to the wealth of housing market information and data collected through CMHC's monthly and annual housing surveys, as well as to reports that provide analysis and forecasts of housing market trends.

The 2006 Canadian Housing Observer and related data resources can be accessed at CMHC's website at: www.cmhc.ca

For further information, please contact:

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World Urban Forum 3 Sets New Standard for International Dialogue



The Third World Urban Forum (WUF3), held in Vancouver, BC (June 19-23, 2006) set a standard for cooperation and international dialogue, with a 40% increase over expected participation, according to UN-HABITAT Executive Director Anna Tibaijuka. WUF3 brought together some 11,000 participants from more than 100 countries, representing governments, UN agencies, non-governmental organizations, urban professionals, local authorities, the private sector, and academia.

In his remarks to the Forum, Prime Minister Stephen Harper spoke about “enlightened urban statecraft”, with emphasis on achieving fiscal and jurisdictional balance; addressing infrastructure deficit; ensuring environmental sustainability; curbing urban crime; providing affordable housing; averting terrorism; and promoting cultural diversity.

CMHC contributed significantly to WUF3, both in the planning stages and during the Forum itself. CMHC was highly visible at the Forum, made new contacts, strengthened relations with housing interests, demonstrated its support to UN-HABITAT, and showcased how the Corporation is helping to translate ideas into concrete actions to achieve more sustainable housing, cities and communities. Staff delivered a series of networking and training events; showcased programs, products and expertise at a CMHC booth in the Canada Pavilion; presented on the Housing Awards Program; delivered two tours of Granville Island; and co-hosted a 250-person reception for domestic and international housing and urban sustainability representatives.

CMHC’s President, Karen Kinsley joined Minister Diane Finley for key bilateral meetings with foreign housing Ministers and with the Executive Director of UN-HABITAT. The President also held a series of bilateral meetings with heads of housing Ministries and the Deputy Executive Director of UN-HABITAT Inga Björk-Klevby. CMHC International met with housing ministries, financial institutions and clients, and generated considerable interest in the services of CMHC International.

During WUF3, CMHC President Karen Kinsley and André Juneau, Deputy Head of Infrastructure and Communities, co-hosted a reception with their housing and urban sustainability stakeholders who helped to commemorate CMHC’s 60th anniversary.



*Lance Jakubec welcomes visitors to CMHC’s booth at WUF3.
Photo by André Mondou, CMHC.*

A number of emerging issues were identified during the Forum, including:

- planning for rapidly growing urban populations;
- building coalitions that address the needs of the urban poor;
- increasing financial resources for sustainable infrastructure development;
- shifting reliance from international development finance to local capital markets;
- using planning as a tool for sustainable urban development;
- addressing the gap between governments’ commitments and actions to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in cities; and
- adopting strategies that recognize the specific needs of women, youth and people with disabilities.

WUF3 resulted in a growing recognition that urban issues are among the major challenges of our time, and highlighted the need to address the underlying causes of urbanization. It also emphasized the importance of good governance, civil society engagement and partnerships at all levels to create more sustainable cities and communities across the globe. As a venue for an inclusive exchange of ideas, actions and best practices, the most important outcome of WUF3 was that participants were able to identify actionable ideas and bring these ideas back to apply in their own communities and in their own contexts.

The WUF3 report will be submitted for consideration and action to the 21st session of the UN-HABITAT Governing Council in spring, 2007. World Urban Forum 4 will be held in Nanjing, China in 2008.

Proceedings of the Third World Urban Forum are available at <http://www.iisd.ca/ymb/wuf3/html/ymbvol125num6e.html>

Indoor Air Quality in Québec City Homes

Health Canada, the *Institut national de santé publique du Québec*, and the *Direction de santé publique de Québec* conducted a study on indoor air quality in Québec City homes in the winter of 2005. The objective was to measure the concentrations of pollutants in homes and, especially, to identify the main sources of these pollutants.

In all, 96 homes were visited as part of the study. Home characteristics and occupant habits likely to influence air quality were noted by means of an inspection of the premises by a research assistant and a questionnaire administered to an adult occupant of each home. The formaldehyde and nitrogen dioxide concentrations, humidity, temperature and air renewal rate were measured.

In all the homes that were visited, the nitrogen dioxide concentrations were below the current long-term exposure guideline of $100 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$. However, 11 of the 96 homes presented formaldehyde concentrations above the new guideline of $50 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ recently adopted by Health Canada. (The *Direction de santé publique* informed the occupants of these homes and gave them advice on reducing their exposure to formaldehyde.) In addition, the ventilation rate was below 7.5 litres per second per person, the level recommended by the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE), in more than 50% of the homes.

Nitrogen dioxide concentrations were higher in gas-heated homes, and even more so in homes equipped with a gas range, than in homes with electric heating. As for formaldehyde concentrations, they were higher in homes with electric heating, homes where there was new wood or melamine furniture and homes where painting or varnishing had recently been done. As well, the formaldehyde concentration was inversely proportional to the air renewal rate.

These results indicate that natural gas combustion appliances, especially ranges, are the main sources of nitrogen dioxide in homes. In homes without such appliances, the nitrogen dioxide comes mainly from the outdoor air. However, formaldehyde concentrations do not appear to be affected by the presence of combustion appliances; formaldehyde seems to come mainly from gas emissions from various sources. These results also show that adequate ventilation can help reduce exposure to formaldehyde.

For more information about this study or indoor air quality in general, please contact the Air Health Effects Division of Health Canada (613-957-1876) or visit its Web site <http://www.healthcanada.ca/air>. The new formaldehyde guideline may be consulted at the following address: http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ewh-semt/pubs/air/formaldehyde_e.html.



NRP Funds Research on Hidden Homelessness among Aboriginal Persons in Prairie Cities

With funding from the National Research Program of the National Homelessness Initiative, the Institute of Urban Studies (University of Winnipeg) in partnership with the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg undertook an examination of hidden homelessness among Aboriginal persons in prairie cities. In particular, data were gathered in Winnipeg, Regina and Saskatoon. The Principal Investigators were Jino Distasio, Gina Sylvestre and Susan Mulligan. Technical assistance was provided by Kurt Sargent and Marcie Snyder. The study is entitled *Home is Where the Heart is and Right Now that is Nowhere ... An Examination of Hidden Homelessness Among Aboriginal Peoples in Prairie Cities*.

The research sought to identify the characteristics and circumstances of the hidden homeless population, what characteristics have contributed to the phenomenon, and what programs and services are currently available to alleviate the problem. The study followed an Indigenous research approach based on building relationships with both Aboriginal people experiencing homelessness and with service providers. Information was collected in a spirit of mutual respect and trust through informal conversations, surveys, Talking Circles, and key informant interviews with service providers.

The researchers found that Aboriginal persons experiencing homelessness are a diverse group including males and females, youth, single-parent families, elders, and, increasingly, two-parent families. While the reasons for housing distress are wide-ranging, the people all suffer from overwhelming poverty and a lack of adequate shelter opportunities, both long-term and emergency/temporary. Over half the sample reported an annual income of less than \$10,000 while 19.8 percent of respondents reported no income at all.

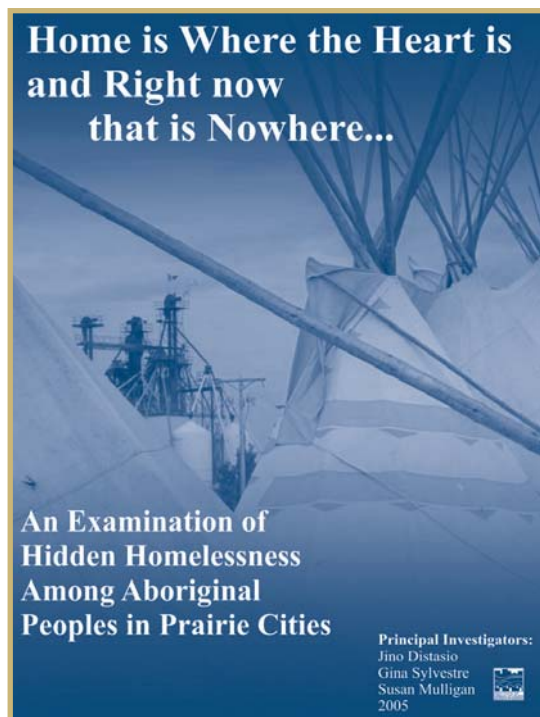
Over a six-month period, 44 percent reported residence in three or more accommodations. Those who changed residence three or more times before the survey were represented by a higher proportion of females and youth. Seventy-five percent of the sample indicated that they were currently living temporarily with friends or family.

There is a significant shortage of affordable shelter options for the urban Aboriginal population in Canadian prairie cities. Most respondents, however, indicated that they have social supports that assisted them. "It is this social support network that distinguishes

absolute homelessness from hidden homelessness. Moreover, this social support network hides the problem of Aboriginal hidden homelessness from mainstream Canadian society", state the researchers.

The study concludes with a number of recommendations related to mobility, shelter and services. These include:

- establish programming to address the hyper-mobility of Aboriginal people in urban areas;
- increase funding for construction of transitional and permanent housing both for short term needs (migrant populations) and for those wishing to reside in urban centres (long term);
- extend and diversify choice in housing design to incorporate culturally appropriate housing for Aboriginal populations; and
- acknowledge the significance of, and make financial resources available to, informal support networks such as family members providing shelter.



Home is Where the Heart is: Saskatoon Urban Treaty Day Celebration, Asimakaniseekan Askiy Reserve, Saskatoon, June 2005. Photo by Susan Mulligan

The report is available at
http://ius.uwinnipeg.ca/pdf/hidden_homlessness.pdf

CMHC Study: Creating Secondary Suites in Seniors' Homes

Most senior homeowners want to live in their own homes for as long as they can. This is often referred to as "aging in place". One way they can accomplish this is to subdivide the houses in which they live in order to create a secondary suite, that is, a self-contained apartment within the house. By doing so, the houses can better accommodate seniors and family members, or the seniors can rent the secondary suites to supplement their income. Either way, there can be benefits.

A recently completed study conducted by the Council on Aging of Ottawa, and funded under the External Research Program of Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation explored: (1) the interest of senior homeowners (aged 55+) in renovating their homes to create a secondary suite; (2) the financial and physical implications; and (3) municipal regulations and zoning by-laws which affect the creation of secondary suites.

The study was undertaken in two neighborhoods of the City of Ottawa, with senior homeowner households occupying housing constructed in the 1920s/1930s and the 1960s/1970s respectively. It included a telephone survey of 187 senior households, in-depth interviews with 17 senior households, and focus group sessions with builders, renovators and real estate specialists.

The study found that 19% of the senior households that responded showed some openness to renovate their homes to create secondary suites. In both neighborhoods, the size of houses (61% having nine rooms or more) left plenty of scope for the creation of a secondary suite. In terms of financing the renovations, interviewees preferred bank loans or mortgages to supplement personal savings, but did not like the idea of reverse mortgages. Interviewees also indicated that they would prefer to employ a contractor to do the renovations rather than do the work themselves.

A new by-law of the City of Ottawa that allows secondary suites was welcomed by builders and renovators. However, they felt that some of the new regulations, in particular, those related to entrances, yard setbacks and parking, might be too restrictive in older neighborhoods. In their view, secondary suites would be in more demand in older, city core neighborhoods than in neighborhoods farther from the city centre.

Senior homeowners who participated in the study were of the view that more information needs to be provided on this housing option and that "one-stop shopping" on all related aspects, such as design, development, maintenance and management (in the case of rental) of secondary suites would be useful.

The study is expected to be published in the last quarter of 2006. At that time, a Research Highlight will be available on CMHC's web site: www.cmhc.ca. For more information, please contact Luis Rodriguez, Policy and Research Division, CMHC, at (613) 748 2339 or email lrodrigu@cmhc-schl.gc.ca



About the NHRC Online

The NHRC Online is a web-based collaborative tool designed to facilitate and simplify information sharing among members of the housing research community in Canada. This service is provided to promote the development and dissemination of knowledge of housing research in Canada. Anyone can join the NHRC Online community as an Associate Member by requesting a free account. Some personal information is required for the system to work– your name and an email

address. You are encouraged to add other information such as your job title, organization, etc., but this information is not required. Information collected is used strictly for NHRC Online purposes and is not shared with any other organizations. Once you've set up your free account, you can log in and post questions and comments on a wide variety of subjects in the various topic areas. You will also be notified by email when new information is added to particular topic areas.



The screenshot shows the NHRC Online website. At the top, there is a header with the NHRC logo (featuring a stylized house and the text '20 YEARS AND COUNTING') and the full name 'National Housing Research Committee / Comité national de recherche sur le logement'. To the right of the logo are links for 'Calendar' and 'NHRC Search'. Below the header is a main content area. On the left, there is a sidebar with a navigation menu: 'Home', 'NHRC Announcements', 'Full Committee', 'NHRC Working Groups' (which is expanded to show 'Homelessness', 'Housing Data', 'Housing and Population Health', 'Seniors Housing', and 'Sustainable Community Planning'), 'Join NHRC On-Line', 'Newsletters', 'Links', 'Contact Us', and 'Login'. The main content area has the title 'National Housing Research Committee' and a paragraph describing the committee's purpose. Below this is a section titled 'Objectives:' with a bulleted list of five points. Further down is a section titled 'NHRC Structure:' with a paragraph explaining the committee's structure and the role of the Secretariat.

The NHRC Secretariat



Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) provides the NHRC Secretariat. The Secretariat makes all arrangements relating to the meetings, produces the NHRC Newsletter, and ensures the smooth functioning of the NHRC Web site. At the present time, Nancy Walker is the Co-ordinator of the NHRC, and Linda Prud'homme provides support for NHRC activities.

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