

[Home](#) / [Resources for Municipalities](#) / [Social Housing Business](#) / [Service Manager Updates](#) / January, 2002

**January, 2002**

### ***Service Manager Update*** **For the month of January, 2002**

#### **Greetings from the Assistant Deputy Minister**

The coming year will bring new challenges for both the ministry and Service Managers as we accelerate the pace of the stage two business transfers and rapidly approach the completion of social housing devolution in just four short months.

As you assume responsibility for social housing, one of the key Service Manager priorities will be developing and strengthening your relationship with housing providers in your service area. It is important for you to be aware of your responsibilities, your authority, and the limitations to your powers, as laid out in the *Social Housing Reform Act, 2000* and regulations to the Act.

Based on this awareness, you have the framework within which you can build cooperative and effective relationships with housing providers. I encourage you to work with the providers in your service area as you develop policies and procedures and manage the ongoing administration of the social housing business.

Ministry training sessions are an important tool, for both service managers and housing providers, in understanding respective roles and responsibilities.

This issue of *Service Manager Update* focuses on training -the opportunities still available, and what we have heard from both service managers and providers about the training we have provided. I urge you to take advantage of various other learning opportunities---networking with other service managers, establishing links with your provider groups---as you work through your first months as the administrators of the social housing business.

Best wishes for a healthy, successful, and productive 2002.

Sincerely,

*Lynn M. MacDonald*  
Assistant Deputy Minister Social Housing Business Division

#### **Transfers 40 Per Cent Complete**

On January 1<sup>st</sup>, nine more Service Managers assumed responsibility for social housing in their service areas, bringing the total Stage Two transfers completed to 19, or 40 per cent of all Service Managers. Eight more transfers will occur on February 1<sup>st</sup>, raising the percentage of completed transfers to 57 per cent.

As of this month, almost 500 non-profit and co-op housing providers in the 19 service areas are now being administered by Service Managers, in addition to the public housing portfolio transferred last year.

#### **Transfer Tips**

Each month, this section will feature excerpts from an interview with a Service Manager staff representative who has completed the social housing business transfer.

#### **Nipissing Transfer**

*The Nipissing District Social Services Administration Board assumed responsibility for the social housing business on December 1st, 2001. Bill White, Chief Administrative Officer of the Nipissing DSSAB, relates some of his experiences:*

"Overall, the transfer has gone very well, particularly from a client perspective. Tenants will have noticed no significant difference, and I'm not aware of any disruption to housing providers. In fact, I hope that we will be able to build enhancements and improved service for our providers.

#### **Quick Links**

- [Service Manager Update - January, 2002](#)

You must download Adobe Acrobat Reader (version 4.0 or above) to view/print PDF documents. [More information...](#)

"The past 14 or 15 months have been a very busy time for us, with the public housing transfer, then developing and implementing our Joint Local Transfer Plan. The support from the Ministry -training, information, advice, and ATT support -has generally been very good. There have been times when everyone was challenged for answers because decisions had not yet been made.

"For the phase one transfer, we decided to maintain the Local Housing Corporation intact and to work at developing our relationship with the LHC. This was a successful transition approach for us, building on existing strengths and expertise, and allowing the District of Nipissing Social Services Administration Board (DNSSAB) to focus on the phase two transfer. To broaden representation, we're now adding new members to the LHC board, nominated by our member municipalities. Also, we are developing a Shareholder's Declaration which will clarify the relationship between the LHC and the DNSSAB.

"Both our planning and implementation processes have been supported by really strong two-way communication and partnership with our housing providers. In mid-2000, we established an advisory group with DNSSAB staff, a DNSSAB board member, and non-profit and LHC representation. That group was an effective sounding board and provided an opportunity to get information and feedback from providers on our plans for transition. We also had a housing registry group in the District that had been set up some years ago to address coordinated access. We have built on that group's foundations, adding other stakeholders, such as federal providers. We're fortunate to have both current and past ONPHA board members on the advisory group, which helped to give us a province-wide as well as local perspective on issues.

"We've tried to be open and transparent about the whole process. We decided early to use the Internet as a means of communication. We posted draft sections of our Joint Local Transfer Plan on our website ([www.dnssab.on.ca/housing](http://www.dnssab.on.ca/housing)) and encouraged feedback. We posted the final plan once it was approved by the Ministry. We've also posted the minutes of the Advisory

Group, Board Housing Task Forces, and other social-housing-related information. "I recognize the tremendous job our Community Housing Services Manager, Bob Barraclough, and his team have done in developing and implementing our Joint Local Transfer Plan, and in building relationships with the provider community. He's been instrumental in our success and as our 'face' in the social housing community. We brought him on board early in the process in this role and his work with providers has been key to our success. He leads a team of three housing administrators -one hired early last year to assist with the transfer plan, and two others just recently hired.

"Before the transfer, we were pretty well along on the development of a district-wide coordinated access system using an Ottawa based LOTUS notes application, allowing housing providers to view the district and project waiting lists online. Access to the Internet for that system will also provide access to a much broader web-based "extranet". We recognized the huge amount of administration associated with service management, and the amount of information that will flow to and from the DNSSAB and the providers, and the DNSSAB and the ministry. We looked at business processes and the information needed to support them, reviewed existing forms through our advisory group, and built a site where providers and the DNSSAB can complete all forms online. Each provider (and the DNSSAB) can enter and submit information, and all forms are automatically archived for effective record-keeping.

"We have also included an RGI worksheet in the system so that providers can calculate rents automatically. We expect to start training providers on that component within the next month or so. And since the entire system is web-based, all that providers need is a computer and Internet access. As a service manager, our big payoff will be less paper and greater consistency, efficiency and better information management to support administration and compliance."

*[Service Managers may view a test version of the Nipissing extranet website at [www.dnssab.on.ca/test](http://www.dnssab.on.ca/test), or may call Bob Barraclough at 705-474-2151 ext. 197 for information and username/password. The tutorial, a PDF file accessed from the site, describes the many features of the system. The site was demonstrated at the ONPHA conference and the OMSSA fall training seminar, both in November 2001.]*

"The single most important action that we took was to establish strong communication and trust with the provider community. That solid foundation of communication, consultation, and experience in working with providers has helped us effect a smooth transfer, to come up with solutions that take into account the legislative and regulatory requirements, the ministry's needs, our own needs, and those of providers and ultimately our clients – to develop plans to best address all these interests. I believe the strong relationship we've established with providers will stand us in good stead in the future as we go forward and deal with the inevitable issues that will arise."

## **Service Manager Training Update**

More than 500 staff and politicians from Service Managers across the province have attended one or more of the nine social housing training modules since the pilot training began last summer. Training sessions continue in January and February at five sites.

Service Managers can register for one of the remaining training sessions through the ministry's website at [www.mah.gov.on.ca/business/SHT/training2001/registrationinfo-e.asp](http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/business/SHT/training2001/registrationinfo-e.asp). The complete training schedule and registration form are available at this site.

The level of satisfaction expressed on the course evaluations has been exceptionally high. Some of the comments received to date:

"The staff who attended the training sessions in December were really, really pleased with the quality of the sessions. Staff were impressed with the knowledge of the presenters, the level of detail, resources available, and that the presenters were able to answer their questions."

"A very well done presentation. Excellent. Thanks."

"Great handouts to accompany the presentation."

The ministry also offered the nine Service Manager training modules in French. One Service Manager, Prescott-Russell, requested and received French-language training, provided by three francophone ministry staff. In addition, all training materials were available in French.

## **Provider Training Update**

The ministry is offering one-day training sessions for housing providers to explain their new relationship with Service Managers and how the new legislation and regulations will affect them. Many Service Manager staff have also attended these sessions.

To date, more than 1,300 participants have attended the provider training sessions. Participants include provider staff and board members, as well as Service Manager staff, who use this opportunity to introduce themselves to the provider groups in their service area. Feedback from the provider training sessions has been very positive. Below are some of comments received to date.

"Very informative. You helped clear up some of the questions I had after reading the regulations."

"As a DSSAB board member, I found the session to be very informative. It gave me a great general overview."

"Found session to be very informative. Presentation covered very efficiently. Question and answer periods very helpful."

"Very clear and precise information. Lengthy but very valuable day."

As with the Service Manager training, provider training was also offered in French. About 30 individuals from different parts of the province attended a recent provider training session offered in French. Again, all training materials were available in French for the session.

Any housing providers who would still like to receive the training session in French should contact the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association, which is coordinating provider training sessions.

## **OHC Capital Funding Info Sessions Completed**

The ministry recently completed six information sessions for Service Managers on the Public Housing Capital Funding Model across the province. These sessions described the capital funding model for allocation of federal funds to Service Managers to assist in the financial support of their Local Housing Corporations, or successor organization. Service Managers who have questions about the model should contact their Area Transition Team.

## **Seaway Group Helps Service Managers Network**

Service Managers in Eastern Ontario have formed the Seaway Group to network and learn from each other's experiences as they assume responsibility for the social housing business. Started in October, the group meets monthly, with the chair's role rotating through the group.

At meetings, topics such as centralized waiting list management, local standards, access, occupancy standards, information technology, and day-to-day operations are discussed.

"It's been extremely effective for us," says Kingston Social Housing Division Manager, Greg Grange, who founded the group. "We've provided a lot of information to other Service Managers about what we're doing." For more information about the Seaway Group, contact Greg at [ggrange@city.kingston.on.ca](mailto:ggrange@city.kingston.on.ca).

## **Federal Funding Reconciliation Report for Service Managers**

Recently, some Service Managers raised issues regarding the federal funding allocation for social housing on the fourth quarter payment (October 1, 2001). As a result, the ministry reviewed the federal funding allocation.

Last month, the ministry sent Service Managers a package outlining changes to federal funding. Service Managers received a detailed report describing the reconciliation of federal funding and an explanation of the changes. Each Service Manager was provided with a customized package providing information for their service area. Service Managers who have questions about the federal funding allocations should contact their Area Transition Team.

## **Model Rent Supplement Agreements Provided**

Last month, the ministry provided Service Managers who have completed the Stage Two transfer with the files they will need to renew existing and expired rent supplement agreements under the OCHAP and CSHP programs. Service managers who have not yet completed the Stage Two transfer will receive these agreements from their Area Transition Team when they transfer.

## **Transfer Tools -"POSH"**

In the summer of 2001, the ministry provided service managers with information about a federal portfolio data management application called the Provincial Operating System for Social Housing (POSH), which the ministry had developed for the interim management of federal social housing programs. The ministry committed to making this system available to Service Managers, and to providing updates as they became available.

Last August, the ministry provided test version 1.08 of the POSH system to all Service Managers. Service Managers who transferred between October 1<sup>st</sup> and January 1<sup>st</sup> received POSH version 2.0. Since then, further enhancements have been made. A new release, POSH version 2.0.5, features enhancements that include clarifying field names, the ability to update and correct notes in the notepad, expanded tenant profile information, and the ability to view and update project in difficulty status.

POSH version 2.0.5 will be released with the February social housing business transfers. Service Managers who have already transferred, and who specified that they want to receive POSH updates, will automatically receive the new version of POSH by the end of January.

## Regulation Round-up

Regulations under the *Social Housing Reform Act, 2000* are being amended frequently to implement the Stage Two transfers as they occur. Some technical changes are also made during these amendments. All of the changes are incorporated in the amended regulations available at the province's E-Laws website at [www.e-laws.gov.on.ca](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca). You can view or download regulations from this site.

The ministry is currently finalizing a Regulations Reference Chart listing all the amendments to each regulation. This chart will be posted on the ministry's website and updated as regulations are amended. Current links to individual consolidated regulations and amending regulations will be included in the chart.

## Frequently Asked Questions about Risk Management

*Here are the answers to some questions about risk management that ministry staff have been hearing from Service Managers.*

**Q1** In a situation where a provider misses payments (taxes, mortgage, utilities, etc.), can a Service Manager make payments directly and reduce subsidy?

**A1** Part VI of the *Social Housing Reform Act, 2000* and the associated regulations under the Act outline in detail the roles and responsibilities of the housing provider. Under Part VI of the Act, the housing provider has a responsibility to meet its financial obligations for such things as mortgage, property tax and utility payments as they become due.

If the Service Manager determines under subsection 115(8) that a housing provider is unable to meet its obligations as they become due, the Service Manager has a number of options under section 116 of the Act to remedy the situation.

One of the remedies, referenced in subsection 116(3), is that the Service Manager may "pay directly to the creditor of the housing provider all or part of a debt owing by the housing provider to the creditor and may reduce the amount of any subsidy payments required to be made to the housing provider under section 102 by the amount of the payment made to the creditor."

However, before the Service Manager exercises any of the remedies under section 116 of the Act, the Service Manager is required to notify the housing provider, in writing, that a "remedy" will be exercised, as per section 117 of the Act.

**Q2 (a)** When will the Risk Management Centre be established?

**A2 (a)** An interim Risk Management Centre has been established within the Social Housing Branch, Social Housing Business Division, which currently works with regional offices to address significant projects in difficulty. The Risk Management Centre is accountable for stabilizing all housing projects excluded from transfer.

As Service Managers began assuming responsibility for the social housing portfolio, the role of the Centre has expanded, consistent with the provisions of the *Social Housing Reform Act, 2000* and its regulations. The Centre will be established in its end-state by the time social housing devolution is complete in the spring of 2002.

**Q2 (b)** Will Service Managers get a list of contact names at the Ministry?

**A2 (b)** Contact names are being provided to Service Managers as they assume responsibility for their respective social housing portfolios. Contact lists will be amended and distributed to Service Managers as necessary thereafter.

**Q3** When will projects in difficulty (PIDs) be transferred to Service Managers?

**A3** The Ministry has committed to stabilizing projects in difficulty prior to devolving them to municipalities. Before provincial PIDs are transferred, action plans will be established that will survive the financial and legal implications of devolution. For federal PIDs, where the Ministry is aware of a serious difficulty, the project will be transferred with a stabilizing action plan in place. Federal projects having underfunded capital reserves or accumulated deficits will be transferred directly to Service Managers along with any existing action plans, if applicable.

**Q4** Will the Ministry provide a process / procedures manual to Service Managers related to projects in difficulty? If so, when can Service Managers expect this to be done?

**A4** The Ministry will provide a Guide to Risk Management for Service Managers. This Guide is intended to share the best practices of the Ministry when dealing with projects in difficulty. The Guide will contain, for information purposes, various forms, policies and procedures used by the Ministry, and is being prepared with an eye to providing Service Managers with materials to help them anticipate, recognize, address and monitor projects in difficulty. The Guide will look at the legislated responsibilities of both Service Managers and housing providers, as well as the provincial Risk Management Centre.

It is anticipated that the Guide to Risk Management will be available in February 2002.

**Q5** Some projects are not transferring to Service Managers on the Service Manager's established transfer date, e.g., projects in difficulty or

projects with accumulated deficits. Who will be processing the subsidy payments for these projects after the Service Manager's established transfer date?

**A5** The Ministry will continue to process subsidy payments to all projects excluded from transfer until such time as they are transferred to Service Managers. Once such housing projects are transferred, it becomes the Service Manager's responsibility to process the necessary subsidy payments.

---

*Regular editions of Service Manager Update are published on the 15th of each month by the Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to summarize important information that will assist service managers with the social housing business transfer.*

*Special editions will be published, if required, to provide service managers with time-sensitive information.*

*For more information, please contact your Area Transition Teams.*

**Top**

---

| [central site](#) | [feedback](#) | [search](#) | [site map](#) | [français](#) |  
[Home](#) | [Front and Centre](#) | [Resources for Municipalities](#) | [About the Ministry](#) | [Related Links](#) | [Reference Centre](#) | [Newsroom](#) | [Site Updates](#) |



This site is maintained by the Government of Ontario, Canada.

[External Links Disclaimer](#)

Copyright information: © [Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2002](#)

Last Modified: December 11, 2002