

UPDATE

from the Ministry of Municipal
Affairs and Housing



May 2008

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McGuinty Government Announces Funding For Rent Banks

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"Together We're Building a Strong Ontario" Video

MESSAGE FROM MINISTER JIM WATSON

Our government is helping more low-income renters to stay in their homes by investing an additional \$5 million in our Provincial Rent Bank Program. Rent banks have been very successful in helping low-income tenants avoid eviction for missing a rent payment. [Read more](#)



MEETING THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF THE NORTH

"The neighbours are so impressed." That's how a Thunder Bay homeowner describes repairs to her home under the Northern Home Repair Program. [Read more](#)



RECOGNIZING YEARS OF SERVICE

Municipal Affairs and Housing Minister Jim Watson honoured four municipal officials from Northern Ontario at the annual conference of the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities/Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing earlier this month in Sault Ste Marie. [Read more](#)



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Minister's Message



Welcome again to UPDATE, the e-newsletter of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Each edition keeps you informed of news in the municipal and housing sectors.

Our government is helping more low-income renters to stay in their homes by investing an additional \$5 million in our Provincial Rent Bank Program.

Rent banks have been very successful in helping low-income tenants avoid eviction for missing a rent payment.

The program is simple and effective: Tenants who are facing possible eviction may apply to their local rent bank to receive financial assistance. If a tenant's application is approved, the outstanding rent is paid directly to the landlord on behalf of the tenant.

Tenants can apply for financial assistance from a Rent Bank no more than once in two years, and receive maximum assistance for two months' rental arrears.

The results have been excellent: Since launching the Rent Bank Program in 2004, we've prevented more than 13,200 low-income households from being evicted due to a missed rent payment.

This May issue of UPDATE has an article on another of our housing initiatives, the Northern Home Repair Program. I met with several homeowners in Thunder Bay recently to learn more about the success of this popular program.

Our government created the Northern Home Repair Program to meet the unique needs of Ontario's Northern communities. It was most enlightening to see firsthand how northern communities with our help are facing the particular challenges of delivering affordable housing.

You will find an article in this issue of UPDATE on the recent presentation of four [Long-standing Service Awards](#) in Sault Ste. Marie. These awards were established in 2004 to mark the dedication of elected municipal officials with at least 25 years of service.

I encourage you to provide us with your feedback. If this issue of UPDATE has been forwarded to you and you would like to continue receiving our e-newsletter, please take the time to subscribe.

Jim Watson

Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing

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Meeting the Unique Needs of the North

“The neighbours are so impressed.”

That’s how Thunder Bay homeowner Sheila Karasiewicz describes repairs to her home under the Northern Home Repair Program.

“The contractor we had, did an excellent job,” Karasiewicz says, while showing off her home’s new shingles, eavestroughs, windows and siding. She adds, “And they insulated it as well.”

Karasiewicz was one of several homeowners joining Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing Jim Watson to celebrate the success of the popular program in the Thunder Bay District.



A proud Sheila Karasiewicz displays photographs of her newly-renovated home to Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing Jim Watson in Thunder Bay. Her home renovations were carried out under the Northern Home Repair Program.

In Full Swing

The Northern Home Repair Program is in full swing across Northern Ontario. There is strong demand among local communities.

All 10 Northern Service Managers are participating in the program.

To date, more than \$32 million has been allocated towards the repair and renovation of 1,558 units.

The aim of the program is straightforward: to help to preserve affordable housing for low-income families in Northern Ontario.

“Ontario’s Northern communities face particular challenges when it comes to delivering affordable housing,” Minister Watson said. “Our government created the Northern Home Repair Program to meet these unique needs.”

Program Flexibility

The program’s popularity has been due in part to its flexibility, which allows adjustments for the unique circumstances and perspectives of the North.

Under the program, qualified homeowners receive forgivable grants or loans for an average of \$20,000 per unit. The funding is used to rehabilitate, renovate or replace substandard housing.

Homeowners are encouraged to make repairs to address home health and safety issues, or modify their homes to meet the needs of household members with disabilities.

Eligible repairs include remediation of major structural, electrical, plumbing, heating, fire safety, septic and water system deficiencies. Modifications to assist disabled persons, such as wheelchair ramps and lifts, are also eligible.

Related Links

- [“Together We’re Building a Strong Ontario” Video](#)

- [Report: Northwestern Ontario: Preparing For Change - Robert Rosehart](#)

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Recognizing Years of Service

Municipal Affairs and Housing Minister Jim Watson has honoured four municipal officials from Northern Ontario with Long-standing Service Awards. They were presented at the annual conference of the Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities/Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing earlier this month in Sault Ste Marie.

The awardees, each with at least 25 years in public office, include:

- Councillor Lila Cyr, Town of Blind River
- Councillor Rodney Swarek, Township of White River
- Mayor Gary Bishop, Town of Spanish, and
- Reeve Clermont Lapointe, Township of McGarry.

[Long-standing Service Awards](#) recognize the dedication of elected municipal officials with at least 25 years of service.

The Ontario government introduced the program in 2004.

Two years ago, another award was introduced to recognize municipal officials with 50 years of service.

In the last four years, over 100 elected municipal officials have received 25-year Long-standing Service Awards and two have received 50-year pins.

Related Links:

- [Recognizing Long-Standing Service In Northern Ontario](#)
- [Long-standing Service Awards](#)



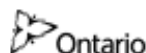
Municipal Affairs and Housing Minister Jim Watson stands between Spanish Mayor Gary Bishop and Blind River Councillor Lila Cyr after presenting them with Long-standing Service awards.

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