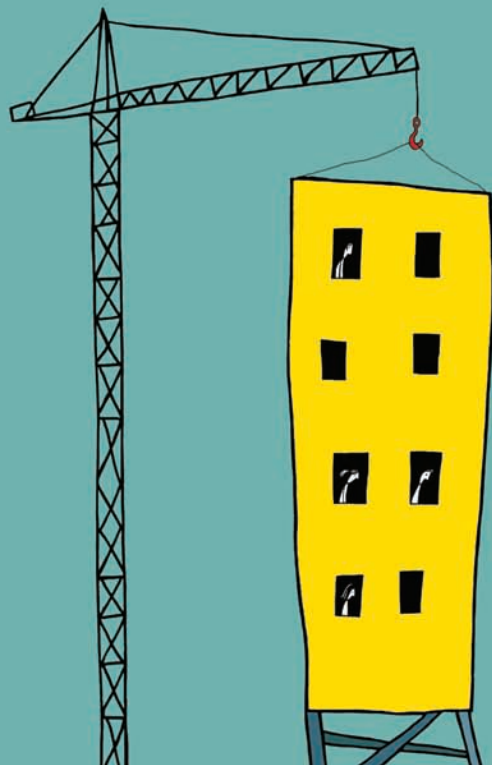


# SOCIAL HOUSING TIMES:

## A PUBLICATION OF SHSC



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## TECHNICAL SERVICES TURNS PROBLEMS INTO SOLUTIONS

The recent Social Housing Renovation and Retrofit Program (SHRRP) provided an opportunity for housing providers across the province to implement much-needed renovations and retrofits. But many providers, smaller ones in particular, were confronted with what seemed like insurmountable challenges in capitalizing on the opportunity. The program required complex technical and project knowledge. It required documentation from housing providers both to make a case for their renovation, renewable energy and retrofit projects and the expertise to actually implement them. Furthermore, their projects needed to comply with SHRRP's complex guidelines and tight timelines.

For Sylvia Statham, Housing Manager of Lutheran Social Services in Owen Sound, the issue was twofold. "While we have a fair amount of experience

in general maintenance, we didn't have in-house expertise or the time to take on a large capital project," she says. Statham had received the go-ahead to replace the roof and the make-up air unit at St. Francis' Place, a 78-unit facility. While the scope of the project was large, it was also more complicated than a standard roofing job, since the work required the replacement of the existing make-up air unit as well as having to work around large antenna systems owned by Rogers and Bell.

Pam Cripps at Kanata Co-Operative Homes near Ottawa was also faced with a sticky technical issue: "The co-op needed assistance with a project involving their domestic hot-water boiler. There were problems with the initial plan, which was to replace venting in order to remedy a seasonal freeze/thaw problem. *(continued on page 2)*



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It was discovered that drilling could not occur due to electrical conduit in the flooring. Plan B was to replace the entire boiler, which made the best of a bad situation. We needed the best solution” she says.

In both of these cases, SHSC Technical Services was able to jump in and successfully help the project along, according to a recent follow-up survey of customers over the past year.

For Statham and Cripps, Technical Services team member Bill Bacon was dispatched and delivered well beyond what either expected. For the roofing job at St. Francis’ Place, Bacon “coordinated all aspects of the retrofit, going so far as to have a representative of the supplier of the roofing product at the job-site. He also held meetings bringing all of

the partners together (including Bell and Rogers) prior to the start-date...Having Bill on-site gave me the peace of mind to know that the work was done properly,” she says.

Cripps’ experience was equally positive. “Bill Bacon came to the site in the dead of winter and basically took the project off my plate,” she says. “He wrote the RFP and handled all of the follow through. He also took care of all of the paperwork and reporting that was required. As a small housing provider, that’s the kind of service that I needed.”

SHSC Technical Services also helped providers on procurement-related issues. For example, Linda Pastushak at Cara Community Corporation in Sault Ste Marie had secured funds for two 10-kilowatt PV systems and a solar hot-water system but needed assistance on developing the RFP and in managing the project. Marilyn Gitsidis, Director of Housing, Supportive Housing & Volunteer Services at Hellenic Homes in Toronto needed advice later in the procurement process – assessing bids for a boiler replacement project.

In both of these cases too, Technical Services was able to help – not only in terms of the technical work performed but when it came to dealing with people. For Pastushak, this was critical in terms of getting support within the organization for new solar technology. “[The SHSC Technical Services representative] gained the trust of both staff and board members, several of whom are older and distrustful of new technology,” she says. “He made the board and staff feel important and knowledgeable during the process,” she adds. In Gitsidis’s case, Technical Services Director Gerry Lichty and his staff member Steve Morikawa helped Hellenic Homes determine which proponent had the best overall package.

## TECHNICAL SERVICES is Here to Stay

The Social Housing Renovation and Retrofit Program (SHRRP) is ending on March 31, 2011. Housing providers and Service Managers will continue to undertake capital projects but will need to do more with less.

Throughout SHRRP, Technical Services has helped Service Managers and housing providers deliver the right projects for the right budgets at the right time. And we’re going to continue to do that, so that you can stay focused on your core business.

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customer@shscorp.ca



“We were able to make a more educated decision, and staff felt more confident going to the board and defending their recommendations,” she says. Technical Services was initially intended to provide zero-cost support for projects under SHRRP, thanks to an SHSC-MMAH partnership. However, the team’s experience over the course of the year has indicated that there’s a strong, ongoing demand for technical support including the provision of more comprehensive services for complex projects. As

a result, Technical Services is now a permanent SHSC service and it has begun to offer enhanced services specifically customized to the needs of housing providers.

To find out more about SHSC Technical Services, visit [www.shscorp.ca](http://www.shscorp.ca). To schedule a consultation with the Technical Services Team, contact the SHSC Customer Care Line at 1.877.733.7472.

## COMINGS AND GOINGS IN THE SECTOR

Since the last issue of *Social Housing Times*, there have been several new senior appointments in the sector. Here are just some of them.

The Asset Management Centre, a joint sector initiative, recently welcomed its first Executive Director **J. Arlene Rawson**, who comes most recently from the City of Toronto where she established and led an asset management unit.

**Carl Henderson** recently retired from his position as the General Manager for Stoney Creek Community Housing and vacated his position on the Social Housing Resource Committee. He has been replaced by Bob McKinley. **Dorothea Kehrer** has also retired from her position as Housing Manager for the City of Stratford. She has been replaced by **William Tigert**.

At Toronto Community Housing, **Len Koroneos** was appointed Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer. **Deborah Simon** was appointed Chief Operating Officer. **Chuck Dowdall** became Director of Family & Seniors Housing, moving from his role as Director of Client Services at SHSC.

**Michelle Waye** moved from the City of Toronto’s Shelter, Support and Housing Administration office to become Manager of Social Housing Administration in the Human Services Division with the Region of Peel.

At SHSC, **John Osmond** was promoted to Director of Client Services. **Joanne Taylor** was promoted to Manager of Events and Community Networks. **Jeff Herrle** was named permanent Manager of Marketing & Communications and **Louanne Keay** returned from maternity leave to become the Manager of New Opportunities.



## INTRODUCING THE SOCIAL HOUSING RESOURCE COMMITTEE



From left to right – BACK ROW: Janet Rose-Jump, Bob Aykler, Catherine Jolliffe, Aaron Lynes, Karen Maki, Don Tront, Jim Steele  
FRONT ROW: Lori Simpson, Steve McGuire, Carol Barber, Darlene Cook.

Part sage advisor, part Swiss Army knife, SHSC's Social Housing Resource Committee (SHRC) is a group of housing providers and property managers that draw on their extensive real-world experience and substantial expertise to help SHSC design and shape new and future programs.

Split equally between providers and property managers, the twenty-member committee comprises of representatives from non-profits and co-ops across the province. Its co-chairs, Steve McGuire and Jim Steele, speak to the group's mix. McGuire operates Regent Property Management in Sault Ste Marie. Steele is CEO of Windsor Essex Community Housing Corporation,

"It's definitely nice to be wanted," laughs McGuire, adding, "I think it's refreshing that the people on the ground get asked for this much input."

The breadth and depth of SHRC's composition gives it deep insight into social housing, making it a dynamic tool and invaluable sounding board for SHSC in developing products and services that fit the sector. The committee always has a full

docket, hearing proposals and providing advice to a broad spectrum of groups. In the past year, it has worked closely with SHSC's Stakeholder Relations, Marketing, and Research groups, to name but a few.

SHRC has also developed generic tools to help housing providers across the province, leveraging SHSC's province-wide reach to promote and share them. Its first endeavour, "Tendering Templates for Property Management Services" – now available on the SHSC website – furnishes non-profit housing providers with an immediately useful resource and helps explain a complex process.

While the committee work keeps SHRC members busy, it has its benefits. Steele observes, "The interaction lets us share what's going on locally while learning what's going on in other municipalities. As a CEO, it gives me an important educational component." He adds, "the group is also very hands-on. It's exciting and rewarding when you see your contributions integrated into a program or how SHSC goes about its business."

For Lori-Anne Gagne, SHSC's Stakeholder Relations Manager and the person who's led the development of the group, the experience has been both personally and professionally gratifying. As a former property manager of a group of non-profits and co-ops in northern Ontario, she remembers sometimes feeling like decisions coming out of Toronto didn't involve the people who do the work. "The aim of this group is to reverse that," she says. "By facilitating better collaboration and getting SHRC's involvement and feedback, SHSC can develop products and services that better meet people's needs. And that's rewarding for everyone."

## BIG CHANGES AHEAD UNDER LONG-TERM AFFORDABLE HOUSING STRATEGY

The release of the Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy (LTAHS) brings with it winds of big change in the affordable housing sector, says SHSC's Director of Policy, Research and Networks Margie Carlson.

But details on what shape these changes will take are still anybody's guess.

"The *Housing Services Act* will likely pass in the spring but none of the regulations have been written and they are the most important part for housing providers and Service Managers," Carlson explains. "Even though the Act may pass, what the regulations entail won't be known for at least another year."

She speculates that a number of working groups will be formed to help draft the regulations so that stakeholders have input. "If the Province follows what they did with the drafting of the LTAHS itself, they will look to housing providers, Service Managers and representatives from ONPHA, OMSSA, CHF, AMO and SHSC for guidance."

Among the changes outlined in the LTAHS, is the potential for more flexibility and decision-making for municipalities when it comes to delivering affordable housing. According to Carlson, one way local authorities will be able to exercise this newfound flexibility is in how they use provincial resources.

"The strategy announces that it will consolidate 20 provincial housing and homelessness programs. They haven't decided what that will look like but presumably the idea is that people can pick and choose which program they want, providing flexibility to municipalities for what works in their area," says Carlson.

In order for this to work, Service Managers will be expected to prepare a 10-year plan to deal with housing and homelessness in their designated areas. "Generally speaking these two areas have tended to operate independently in most service manager areas. But now the province seems to be moving towards bringing them both under one big

umbrella. Some service managers need to provide more services to the homeless or those at risk of becoming homeless while others may need more focus on affordable ownership opportunities. Each Service Manager will need to look at data about their municipality's specific needs and come up with a plan to meet those needs."

The province will likely introduce a number of measurement tools to help municipalities properly assess their housing needs. But Service Managers needn't worry about scrambling to get this done in the short term.

"Of the \$430 million in annual provincial operating funding, half will be consolidated in 2013. If the consolidation process works anything like the process the province followed during the introduction of the *Social Housing Reform Act (2000)*, there will be a timetable for Service Managers to follow."

Another important aspect of the strategy is the more sharply defined provincial interest.

"The previous act was strictly about social housing, but the new Housing Services Act is about housing services. That means everything from homeless shelters to affordable housing to affordable ownership options. It's everything related to the housing continuum," says Carlson.

One of the criticisms leveled at the Province has been that they're not able to respond quickly enough to the changing needs that a lot of the Service Managers have in provincial funding envelopes. Historically, this has resulted in municipalities inventing programs to deal with situations that arise. Carlson predicts that this new program consolidation will enable municipalities to rely on provincial funding for a program as long as it meets certain criteria, offering more flexibility and, ultimately, better service to the public.

To find out more about LTAHS, visit [www.mah.gov.on.ca/Page 9181.aspx](http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/Page 9181.aspx)

## TAKING SOCIAL INNOVATION TO NEW HEIGHTS

Betty Ann Baker, the Executive Director at Niagara Peninsula Homes, has a reputation for getting things done.

She's practically the poster child for social entrepreneurship, responsible for spearheading dozens of innovative social enterprises, including the wildly successful Niagara Women's Enterprise Centre where hundreds of low-income women have learned new skills, gained sustainable employment and even started their own businesses.

The secret to her success? Knowing when and how to ask for help.



Niagara Peninsula Homes' Rick Sherk (centre), the program supervisor of Team ENERGI Program 2, is alongside the 12 program participants at Commonwealth Cooperative Homes in St. Catharines following the completion of the working component of the 6 month work experience program.

"When you're presented with an issue you want to address, you've got to find out what's going on in and beyond your own community... I talk to people and see what they've created and how they can help. One thing always leads to another when you ask for input," says Baker.

To build on Baker's approach, Social Innovation & Partnerships at SHSC is ready to help Service Managers, housing providers and tenants across the province jumpstart new initiatives that help residents participate in the economy in a meaningful way.

"People like Betty Ann are creating sustainable solutions: the people who participate in her programs are learning the skills of having real employment. And she's doing it by knitting together a group of partners who can do the things she doesn't know about to build business solutions," says Director of Social Innovation & Partnerships Cynthia Ross.

"That's exactly what we're working to do. We're pairing up housing providers and Service Managers who want to effect change in their sector with people who've been there. We're providing connections and resources they wouldn't otherwise have."

Baker herself embarked on her first act of social innovation in the early 1990s when, after years of working in housing development with Niagara Peninsula Homes, she recognized that many of the residents were single mothers who were under or unemployed.

"We started looking at ways we could help people

in co-operative or non-profit housing to either secure employment or start a business.”

With the Niagara region rich in agriculture and tourism, Baker and her team took a sector-based approach and plunged into the food industry. By first helping small-scale farmers and women who were doing unique preserving, they created a manufacturing centre and a “Best of Niagara” gift basket for other women to sell.

All this led to the creation of the Niagara Women’s Enterprise Centre where Baker and her team established a food label that women could market under, a kitchen and, eventually, Niagara Presents, a social enterprise providing co packing services, retail, wholesale and corporate gift basket sales of award winning products developed on site which is still thriving today.

Despite tremendous challenges and even some failures along the way, Baker is undaunted in her quest to create social enterprises that change lives. Most recently, she’s fulfilling the dream to engage youth living in co-operative and non-profit housing and the community at large

When the Social Housing Renovation and Retrofit Program was announced, her office put in business cases for their clients, many focusing on energy and water conservation retrofits including energy efficient window installations, heat recovery ventilators, venting insulation and toilet fans. In yet another inspired act of social innovation, she and her team took the plan one step further.

“When we secured grants for different pilots, we hired youth to give them work experience. Service Canada grants cover six months of work experience and we created a social enterprise called Team Energi, which gives a minimum of six months of employment after their work experience, offering them more than just skills but longer-term employment.



Jacob Good and Ray Catton of Niagara Peninsula Homes’ Team ENERGI Program 1 work together at Meadowgreen Cooperative Homes in St. Catharines to learn new skills, while under the direction of program supervisors and trades people.

Now we have three teams and have been approached by a private sector construction company and a property management firm and are branching out to the rest of the community,” says Baker.

Ross says this is exactly the kind of forward-thinking idea her office can help turn into a reality.

“Housing providers are well positioned to support social enterprise themselves or work with partners in their communities to create social enterprises for their tenants. We can help them get ideas off the ground by creating opportunities and making connections.”

For more information about Social Innovation & Partnerships at SHSC, email Cynthia Ross at [cross@shscorp.ca](mailto:cross@shscorp.ca).

And to learn more about a shining example of social innovation in action, go to [www.niagarapresents.com](http://www.niagarapresents.com).

## DEVELOPING STORY: SOCIAL ENTERPRISE AND THE FIGHT AGAINST BEDBUGS

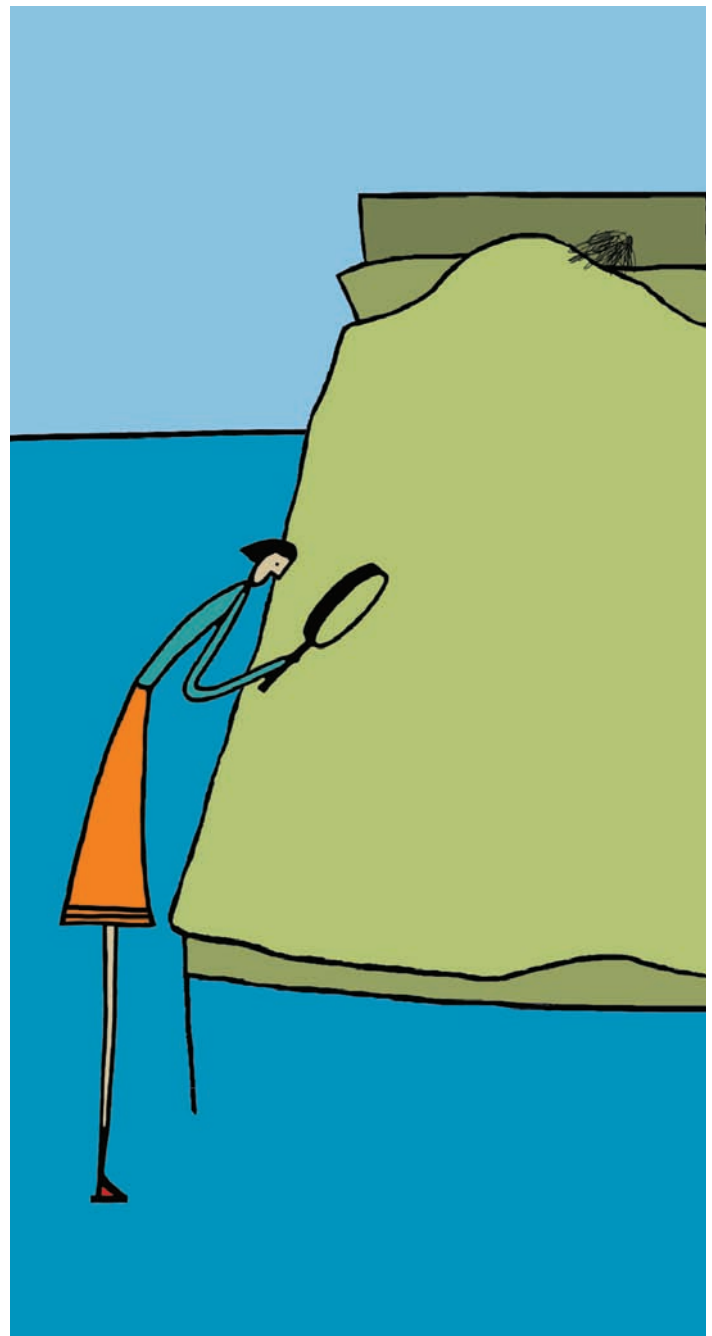
Good Shepherd Works, a Hamilton-based social enterprise, is working on a new approach to the investigation, treatment and management of bedbugs— thanks to the help of SHSC.

“For years, Good Shepherd has known what needs to be done to control bedbugs,” says Heidi Billyard, Director of Tenant and Housing Services. “We have been working on creating a ‘Centre of Excellence’ as a one-stop resource for this community. A loan from SHSC has allowed us to finally get this done and we are extremely grateful,” she adds.

The Bedbug Centre of Excellence will make use of a bedbug detection dog and feature commercial laundry units to treat contaminated linens and clothing. There will also be a hotbox to “bake” furniture and a walk-in freezer to treat items that can’t be heated, like books. The centre will also feature a training facility for staff and an information hub for the public.

Good Shepherd was recently awarded a contract to deal with bedbugs at CityHousing Hamilton sites. If successful, the pilot could play an important role in addressing the bedbug issue province-wide. “We hope that this centre will lead to others across the province,” Billyard says.

What makes Good Shepherd Works different from other businesses is that it employs vulnerable clients and helps them make the transition to other workplaces. Any money made by the program is invested back in the organization.



## ASK SHSC

A brand-new feature in *Social Housing Times*, “Ask SHSC” answers readers’ questions and provides insight into various issues that affect the social housing sector. This issue, Director of Client Services, John Osmond, kicks things off with a question Client Services received regarding insurance.

Recently, a provider from northern Ontario contacted us looking for assistance with a Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) related issue.

The provider needed a contractor to handle snow-removal and was inclined to re-hire the person he had used in previous years. However, he learned that the contractor, whose health was failing, would sometimes bring his adult children to help with the job.

On the surface, it seemed like a nice thing for the kids to do since they were not receiving wages for the work. But they were not registered with or covered by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board. The provider contacted WSIB and was told that, from their perspective, it would not be an issue as no wages were being paid to the contractor’s family.

So, the question posed to SHSC was: “Would the building insurance provide coverage if anything were to happen to the contractor’s children while on the job site?”

According to Rachel Magee, SHSC’s Manager, Insurance and Claims, the provider would definitely be at risk under such a scenario. If, for example, one of the contractor’s children were hurt on the job – or injured someone else – a lawyer would most likely go after the housing corporation for damages. The provider could add a clause to the contract that would protect him from damages. However, unless the contractor had plenty of personal insurance, such an indemnification would be practically worthless for the provider.

## THE SHSC 2009 ANNUAL REPORT



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Insurance is meant to protect the assets of your corporation, but there will always be exceptions. The bottom line is: if you are not sure about whether a specific situation is covered, ASK!

*Ask SHSC* appears in *Social Housing Times* as well as monthly on *Social Housing Today*, SHSC’s blog (<http://blog.shscorp.ca>). To have your question answered in a future installment, send it to [feedback@shscorp.ca](mailto:feedback@shscorp.ca).

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## AT SHSC

Here is a quick look at the latest developments at SHSC.

### Research

- SHSC has revived its Housing Internship and Scholar Program, teaming up with the University of Western Ontario-based think tank, the Canadian Policy Network (CPNet). It will fund two graduate-level students for a six-month term, resulting in the publication of new social housing research papers.
- In January, the United Way released an SHSC-co-funded report, “The Role of Housing in Neighbourhood Vitality.” Researchers conducted over 2,800 interviews with low-income housing tenants (both public and private sector) across Toronto and the inner suburbs, focusing on the idea of community in high-rise buildings.
- In December, SHSC produced “Financing Capital Improvements and the Renovation of Social Housing in Ontario”, a study that examines ways of structuring debt for the refinancing/recapitalizing of existing social housing projects. This proposal is currently under review by key sector stakeholders.

### Training

- This past fall, SHSC launched its Human Rights and Accessibility workshop to rave reviews, delivering 7 sessions across the province. The workshop explores real cases that had gone through the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal. The initial seminar spurred several requests for custom follow-up sessions which will be held in the coming months.



## Insurance

- Housing providers insured through the SHSC Group Insurance Program, beginning Nov 1, 2010, have access to User Insurance for Common Rooms. This coverage insures tenants or non-tenants, as well as providers, against lawsuits arising from common-room rentals and events.

Even if a lawsuit is filed, it will not affect the provider's building insurance coverage or claims record. Rates start at just \$27 per event and include \$2,000,000 in coverage.

- In 2010, sales of SoHo Tenant Insurance policies increased by more than 100% over the previous year. The increase stems from a high retention of clients at their policy expiry date, the steady growth of new policies written, and the increased instances of providers requiring proof of insurance.
- SoHo Insurance, which offers insurance to social housing residents, has a new website. Visit it at [www.sohoinsurance.ca](http://www.sohoinsurance.ca)

## Technical Services

- SHSC's Technical Services group has provided support services for projects that affect over 38,000 individual units. To meet ongoing demand, the group will continue to offer services after the conclusion of SHRRP.

## Social Innovation and Partnerships

- In 2010, SHSC began to actively promote social innovation (new and sustainable ways of solving social challenges) within the housing sector. One such innovation SHSC is piloting in 2011 is a new, interactive tenant engagement tool which features short, educational videos, simple touch screen surveys and encourages users to leave text, audio and video comments and questions. This two way communication tool was showcased at November's ONPHA conference, and will be piloted this spring with several housing providers.

## GLOBE

- Since its launch earlier this year, the GLOBE Sustainability Toolbox has been getting attention at housing events at home and abroad and prompting the development of several green office programs in the sector. Available on the GLOBE website, the toolbox educates providers and managers on sustainability concepts and benefits while also providing practical, low-cost methods for going green.
- The end of December marked the conclusion of the Multi-family Energy Efficiency Rebate program (MEER). GLOBE staff received thousands of telephone inquiries and travelled from Windsor to Thunder Bay to help Service Managers and housing providers complete the application process. As a result, hundreds of projects across Ontario received cash rebates. These included, among others, lighting retrofits, purchase of energy efficient appliances, and building envelope upgrades. In addition to the cash rebates they received, housing providers will benefit from lower utility costs and improved comfort for residents from the energy conservation projects completed under the MEER program.



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The Social Housing Services Corporation (SHSC) is a non-profit corporation led by social housing representatives who are committed to supporting Ontario's housing providers and municipal service managers with programs that add significant value to their operations.

SHSC delivers value-added services that empower housing providers to develop safe and affordable homes and vibrant communities. We use our expertise to offer programs in energy and water management, investments, insurance, natural gas purchasing, technical services, research and training.



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The Social Housing Times is published by the Social Housing Services Corporation. Your comments are welcome, please contact Jeff Herrle at ext. 239 or [jherrle@shscorp.ca](mailto:jherrle@shscorp.ca)

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