

Friends Housing Inc.

A Registered Charitable Organization
#102 163 045 RR0001

100-890 Sturgeon Road
Winnipeg, MB R2Y 0L2
204-953-1160 (ph)
204-953-1162 (fax)
fhousing@shaw.ca (email)
friendshousinginc.ca (website)

Friends Family Communique - August 2020 (Issue #10)

Office/Administration Update

Business has returned to some semblance of normal with regard to staffing. Dana Herman, Activities Worker returned to work full time at the end of June (after a 3 months' leave). Crystal, Mental Health Director returned to working full time in the office (after the last few months working part time in the office and part time from home). Note: Business office hours are back to normal, ie. Monday to Friday, excluding statutory holidays, from 9am to 4pm.

As well, caretaker James Botaitis is back to his regular 10am to 2pm Monday to Friday work schedule since August 4 after a leave of absence due to the passing of his spouse, the love of his life, Carol Shayne Markusoff. In James' words, "Carol had a twinkle in her eye and a smile that would light up a room. Her dry wit would often catch people off guard and in particular me, who, after 34 years, was still never quite sure. She loved words and language, her garden and riding her bicycle. Carol was fiercely supportive of and loyal to anyone she was close with. You can read more at <https://tinyurl.com/markusoff>." James wants to thank his friends at Friends Housing and Murdoch Management for the kindness and support shown him.

Resident Activities/Programs

Our activities have somewhat returned to normal (ie. being very cognizant of social distancing, we have set a maximum of 4 participants/activity; cooking/baking classes as well as BBQ/tenant lunches remain "on hold"). We also have been trying to get residents outdoors to enjoy some of the nice summer weather (eg. walks). We remain acutely aware of and will continue to abide by all health regulations, protocols and recommended practices regarding COVID-19 - and encourage/remind, as needed, residents regarding such things as social distancing, the wearing of face masks, etc. Activities will change as the COVID-19 situation changes.

We have also been running contests (eg. Word Search) and Bingos - with popular prizes being \$10 gift cards to Giant Tiger, Superstore, McDonalds, Walmart, etc. If you are interested in donating any such gift cards... or a monetary donation earmarked "resident activities' prizes," we would very much appreciate it. For more information or to make a donation, contact Crystal at 204-832-2254 (phone) or friendshousing.cp@gmail.com (email).

Families and COVID-19

Have you had a conversation with your family member about the wearing and caring of masks? (Perhaps you've gone shopping for masks together - or bought some for him/her.) Have you talked about the importance and proper technique of good hand washing...maybe also picking up some hand sanitizer for him/her? And what about social distancing - have you discussed what that "looks like?" We appreciate your help and cooperation in helping ensure your family member - and all of the Friends Housing "family" - are safe.

Building Renovation Update

The estimated cost for our new ventilation system and re-roofing project came in higher than expected. Manitoba Housing has approved \$258,000 which will cover the cost of a new ventilation system and either replacement or repair of about 60% of the apartment building's roof, ie. the roof area directly affected by the ventilation system work. NRG Management was awarded the contract and work will most likely happen next spring.

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Common Room Furniture

The Board has approved the purchase of **two new sofas** for the Common Room to replace the very worn ones currently there. After researching the most suitable type which will serve residents well for many years to come, we purchased them from Dufresne Furniture who kindly billed us at “30% off list price” based on our non-profit status. Delivery is expected very soon so look for them next time you visit.

We are also considering replacement of our aging, 50” basic **TV** with a larger (likely 65”) Smart TV. Doing so would allow more viewing options (eg. Netflix, Hulu and other streaming services) and also provide a better and easier viewing experience, especially when several residents are together watching a movie or other program. While adequate funds from donations covered the cost of the sofas, **we need to fundraise \$1500** for this purchase. Big or small, your donation is greatly appreciated.

**** NEW Donation Payment Options!** For the convenience of our donors, we are now pleased to offer the option to donate online - using credit card or PayPal payment methods - through canadahelps.org (search “Friends Housing”). Of course, we continue to happily accept cheque and cash donations directly through the office as well. If you have any questions/concerns, contact Crystal.

Speaking of Donations... Thank You, Donors!

A belated, but no less sincere, thank you to both [Assiniboine Gordon Inn on the Park](#) and [Diamond Retirement Planning Ltd.](#) for their donations to Friends Housing. With such support, we are able to continue to help provide quality programming and services to our residents.

Manitoba Disability Support Program

In October 2019, the Manitoba government announced its commitment to develop a new income support program for persons with severe and prolonged disabilities separate from Employment and Income Assistance (EIA). Consultations with interested Manitobans took place this past November through January to determine what Manitobans would like to see in such a program.

In summary, some key themes in the feedback the government received were:

- Enthusiastic support for the separate program, ie. one which would focus on disability support exclusively.
- Financial support should: a) be increased over current EIA levels, b) not require annual review of disability eligibility, and c) allow for some employment income without reducing benefits. Non-financial benefits should also be coordinated through this program.
- Program staff should have knowledge and expertise in disability support.

A full copy of the report can be found here: http://www.manitoba.ca/asset_library/en/proactive/2020_2021/disability-consultation-report.pdf.

For more information about the report or the public engagement process, contact Employment and Income Assistance Programs: 1-888-827-9947 (phone); gov.mb.ca/fs/eia (website).

To participate in future consultations, register with EngageMB at <https://engagemb.ca/> or email EIA@gov.mb.ca

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Friends Housing Profile* : Peter Burnett, Board Director

Tell me a little about how you got involved with Friends Housing?

About 5 years ago, I learned about Friends Housing through a friend, John Gosselin. (I hadn't - nor have I ever - had any personal connection with Friends Housing, ie. no family member living there.) However, one of my sons was struggling with bipolar disorder and I wanted to help increase awareness of mental health - and the fact that mental illness is more common than many realize. I met with the Friends Housing Board (who must have thought the knowledge and skills developed during my long career in management and committee work would be of benefit) and joined the board two years ago. And though our son, Ben passed away a couple of years ago, I remain committed to volunteering with Friends Housing.

What keeps you up at night regarding Friends Housing?

I am concerned about the long term future of Friends Housing. Manitoba Housing has not yet determined what they are going to do, ie. their involvement when our official partnership agreement expires in four years, which in reality, is not that far away. Our organization's partnership with them has existed since our beginnings back in the late 1980s, and their support has been critical in allowing us to provide secure, quality, affordable housing to our residents. At present, despite having very good management at the Board level and at the operations level (Murdoch Management), we could not "go it alone." We need their continuing strong support. A possible meeting a little later this year with other non-profit organizations facing a similar situation is being considered.

What message(s) would you like to give to families of Friends Housing residents?

1. Families need to support their family members who have chronic mental health issues. COVID-19 has made it even more important - and somewhat more challenging, but there are ways - personal visits, phone calls, video chats... whatever works. Checking in regularly and frequently is very important.
2. Families can be assured that Friends Housing is a great place for their family members - with very good staff and facilities.
3. Consider (you or another family member) getting involved on the Board. With many of our Board members being long-serving members and/or older, new energy and help is needed to build upon the good that has been done to date. Start the process... all it takes is a phone call to John Gosselin, Chair (204-488-1237).

* Friends Housing Profile is an ongoing series featuring board members, staff, family and other volunteers.

2020 Annual General Meeting + Residents/Family Event

With the uncertainty that COVID-19 presents, the Board is unsure if an AGM "as usual" will be held this October. And although the Board is able to conduct the required AGM business on its own, it is still hoping to be able to host a public event for families and residents. Stay tuned.

Next Issue: November 2020