

International Housing Exchange Partnership Summary of Toronto Meeting May 13, 2009

With the global economic meltdown as a backdrop, leaders from 60 of the foremost nonprofit housing organizations from the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States (plus a guest group from Australia) met in Toronto on May 13th for a day-long exchange. This was the fourth in a series of international exchanges since 2003 among chief executives of leading housing nonprofits. Discussions focused on the impact, challenges, and solutions relating to the financial crisis at the community and organizational level, strategies to promote sustainable and energy efficient development and operations, and on innovative efforts underway in each country to advance business excellence and performance benchmarking.

Key themes that recurred throughout the conference were the importance of repositioning social housing as critical infrastructure, the significant opportunities and demands to spearhead community revitalization through housing initiatives, and the need to realign housing policies to incentivize more efficient capitalization and performance. Though all participants expressed significant concern at the outlook for much needed capital over the next several years, there was also consensus that this is a time of great opportunity, though it will require doing things in new ways. Overall everyone was very positive and energized to rise to the challenges and opportunities set in motion by the crisis. The exchange also featured two site visits—a walking tour of the St. Lawrence Neighborhood, a top example of a vibrant mixed-income community, and a visit to Regent Park, a massive regeneration effort by Toronto Community Housing with a focus on energy efficiency and tenant engagement.

IMPACT OF THE GLOBAL FINANCIAL CRISIS

The opening session featured a discussion on the impact of the financial crisis on the three countries—the differences and similarities, ideas for common responses, and plans to continue to share information about new approaches.

Following the plenary, smaller group discussions were held focused on capital, risk, new products and markets, and organizational constructs. As noted earlier, repositioning social housing as infrastructure was a key element that came across all the discussions. With the response of government centered on stimulating the economy with infrastructure spending, it was clear that until now housing has not been considered critical infrastructure. There was also recognition that now is the time to improve how social housing is viewed and to create new investment vehicles and simplify current grant structure regimes. On the new products side, there was recognition that the homeownership market, and along with it the strategy of aggressively promoting homeownership for everyone, has changed and that vehicles such as shared ownership and shared equity could play important roles in the future.

In terms of accessing capital, though there was agreement that the outlook was not bright for the foreseeable future, leaders from all three countries saw this as an opportunity to make much needed changes. In the UK, there has been a move toward creation of aggregated financing structures as a way of approaching lenders and investors as a group rather than as individual organizations. Freeing up organizational equity for reinvestment is an important consideration, particularly for US groups, as is developing more simplified grant or development finance

structures. Policy and regulatory changes will be needed, and there was recognition of the importance of offering constructive solutions, rather than just criticizing what doesn't work.

Perhaps the most agreement was reached on the case for change in organizational constructs across all three countries. This includes consolidation of entities, with the resulting economies of scale, and the use of different enterprise structures and new approaches to governance. There is a need to share more details of the various funding and business models in place in the three countries with a view to taking the best from each to design an improved construct. Participating leaders agreed on the need for them to continue to share examples of their most successful elements over the next several months and to work towards a common platform—a best practices model for organizational structures.

INTERNATIONAL WORK GROUPS:

SUSTAINABILITY, BUSINESS EXCELLENCE, HOUSING AND CARE, AND RESIDENT SERVICES

Four international work groups were created early this spring and they have been in the process of getting launched via surveys and initial conference calls. The groups met in breakout sessions in Toronto to review and guide their work.

Performance/Benchmarking has been renamed **Business Excellence**. The objective is to look at points of commonality in measuring performance with an eye to working toward international standards. The United Kingdom has sophisticated systems that are looking at service quality and financial performance. There is also interest in the collaborative work in the US by Housing Partnership Network members in measuring organizational operating performance and creating transparency and consistency in financial reporting.

Resident Services and Community Investment has engaged some twenty organizations and will be moving forward with web exchanges on youth programs and financial inclusion. While program directors are enthusiastic about information sharing on program content, the CEOs at the Toronto Exchange expressed interest in ensuring that the conversations also focus on impact measurement and funding. The group will move forward as an exchange among program directors, with chief executives being updated periodically.

Housing and Long Term Care initially only had interest from British groups, but a number of US and Canadian groups have now expressed interest in sharing best practices in the provision of housing and support services to older and special needs populations. The group did not meet in Toronto, but did agree to re-launch.

Sustainable Development and Operations has garnered the most interest to date. At the session in Toronto, participants agreed that significant resources from stimulus spending will be available for energy retrofits over the next few years. The focus on energy efficiency, for both environmental and economic reasons, is a strong theme in the response to the financial crisis in all three countries. Given the interest and the multiple issues involved, this working group has been split into two—one focused on new development and the other on energy retrofits. Each group will be limited to eight participants each, though the groups will report frequently on their progress to all interested parties. Each group will produce a final paper with recommendations around best practices within twelve months.

EXPANDING THE EXCHANGE

Participants agreed on the importance of continuing and expanding the exchange on three fronts: sharing information, ideas, and examples with one another; collaborating and working towards concrete common objectives in the working group areas; and extending the collaborations into actual businesses (such as the UK interest in the Housing Partnership Network's insurance company and the Canadian interest in the Network's group buying cooperative). There is also keen interest in formalizing ongoing discussions among leaders around organizational issues (constructs, capital, risk, policy, etc.). The next face-to-face meeting among chief executives of the international exchange will take place in Europe in the spring of 2010 and will be strongly focused on approaches to energy-efficiency and long-term sustainability.

HISTORY OF THE EXCHANGE

A series of exchanges took place between 2003 and 2008 among members of the Housing Partnership Network and European housing associations, chiefly from the United Kingdom. The meetings significantly broadened the leaders' understanding of the respective housing systems and the participants identified many shared challenges, opportunities and perspectives. In April 2007, an historic exchange of experiences, practices and ideas took place between the foremost affordable housing organizations in the US and the UK in Washington, DC, which featured a presentation on Capitol Hill with Rep. Maxine Waters, Chair of the Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity. The UK group later adopted the name "Old Glory Group" and now comprises 18 housing associations. A reciprocal visit to London took place in April 2008. The 2007 and 2008 meetings were attended by top executives of 40 organizations from both countries.

A key outcome of the London Exchange was a commitment to build upon and sustain ongoing contact and develop protocols to provide a framework to guide the development of the relationships, help give additional purpose and structure to future exchange visits, and set out clear objectives for the International Housing Exchange Partnership. There was agreement to meet in Toronto in 2009 and to expand the exchange to Canadian groups, coordinated through the Social Housing Services Corporation. In December 2008, a steering committee for the International Exchange was established; it now is constituted by five representatives from the US, and three each from the UK and Canada. Protocols for the Exchange were adopted and specific areas were identified for initial working groups. There is also strong interest in business initiatives established by the Housing Partnership Network (insurance and group buying) and in working together to create new ones.

International Housing Exchange
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
May 13, 2009

List of Participants

AUSTRALIA

Jan	Berriman	Deputy CEO/COO	Housing Choices Australia
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CANADA

Derek	Ballantyne	CEO	Toronto Community Housing Corporation
Michael	Blaschuk	Vice President	BC Housing
Catherine	Boucher	Executive Director	Centretown Citizens of Ottawa
Margie	Carlson	Global Networks Manager	Social Housing Services Corporation
Carol	Conrad	CEO	Nipissing District Housing Corporation
Colin	Gage	Executive Director	Victoria Park Community Homes Inc.
Sharad	Kerur	Executive Director	Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association
Don	McBain	Executive Director	Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services
David	Millar	General Manager	SHSC Financial Inc.
Keiko	Nakamura	COO	Toronto Community Housing Corporation
Jo-Anne	Poirier	CEO	Ottawa Community Housing Corporation
Dale	Reagan	Managing Director	Co-op Housing Federation of Ontario
Lindsey	Reed	CEO	Social Housing Services Corporation
Brian	Smith	CEO	Woodgreen Community Services
Jim	Steele	CEO	Windsor-Essex Community Housing Corp.
Don	Tront	CEO	Thunder Bay District Housing Corporation
Francois	Vermette	Directeur Général	Réseau Québécois des OSBL d'Habitation
Graham	Watts	Dir., Resource & Exchange	Social Housing Services Corporation
Brigitte	Witkowski	Executive Director	Mainstay Housing

UNITED KINGDOM

Tony	Cotter	CEO	Gallions Housing Association
Jacqui	De-Rose	CEO	Progress Housing Group
Stewart	Fergusson	Managing Director	Orbit Heart of England HA
Bernard	Gallagher	CEO	Regenda Group
Phil	Gandy	CEO	Vicinity
Neil	Hadden	CEO	Aldwyck HA
Michael	Hinch	CEO	Newlon Housing Trust
Stephen	Howlett	CEO	Peabody Trust
Geraldine	Howley	CEO	InCommunities
Chris	Moquet	Chairman of the Board	Chartered Institute of Housing, International
Wayne	Morris	CEO	Spectrum Housing Group
Catherine	Purdy	CEO	Housing Hartlepool
Paul	Tennant	CEO	Orbit Group Ltd
Kenneth	Walker	Co-ordinator	Ken Walker & Partners Ltd
Rob	Young	CEO	Helena Partnerships

United States

Amy	Anthony	President and CEO	Preservation of Affordable Housing
Michael	Bodaken	President and CEO	NHT/Enterprise Preservation Corp.
Rebecca	Clark	Executive Vice President	National Community Renaissance
Annie	Donovan	Chief Operating Officer	NCB Capital Impact
Stephan	Fairfield	President and CEO	Covenant Community Capital Corp.
Paul	Fate	President and CEO	CommonBond Communities
Thomas	Fulton	President	Family Housing Fund
Peter	Gagliardi	Executive Director	HAP, Inc.
LoriAnn	Girvan	Director, Common Ground Institute	Common Ground Community
Hunter	Johnson	President and CEO	LINC Housing Corporation
William	Kelly	President and CEO	SAHF
Carol	Lamberg	Executive Director	Settlement Housing Fund
Kimberly	Latimer-Nelligan	Chief Operating Officer	Low Income Investment Fund
Richard J.	Leeds	President and CEO	AHC Management LLC
Linda	Mandolini	Executive Director	Eden Housing
Tim	Marx	Executive Director	Common Ground Community
Kate	Monter Durban	Assistant Director	Cleveland Housing Network
William	Perkins	Executive Director	WI Partnership for Housing Dev.
Rebecca	Regan	COO and Loan Fund President	Boston Community Capital
Mark	Ricketts	Chief Operating Officer	National Church Residences
Hipólito	Roldán	President and CEO	Hispanic Housing Development
Brian	Shuman	Chief Operating Officer	Mercy Housing
Douglas	Smith	Chief Executive Officer	Rocky Mountain Communities
Robert	Snow	Vice President	National Affordable Housing Trust
Lawrence	Swanson	Executive Director	ACTION-Housing, Inc.
Brenda	Torpy	Chief Executive Officer	Champlain Housing Trust
Dee	Walsh	Executive Director	REACH Community Development
Thomas	Bledsoe	President and CEO	Housing Partnership Network
Harvey	Boulay	Director, Fundraising & Communications	Housing Partnership Network
William	Kelsey	VP, Insurance and Group Buying	Housing Partnership Network
Manuel	Muelle	Director, Collaborative Enterprises	Housing Partnership Network
Matthew	Perrenod	Chief Lending Officer	Housing Partnership Network
Janet	Saglio	CFO and EVP, Business Operations	Housing Partnership Network
Mary	Tingerthal	President, Capital Markets Companies	Housing Partnership Network
Alexandra	Turner	Director, Housing Partnership Exchange	Housing Partnership Network
Charles	Wehrwein	Pres., Housing Partnership Exchange	Housing Partnership Network
Robert	Whittlesey	Founder	Housing Partnership Network