

**ESTABLISHING AN
ATLANTIC CANADA AFFORDABLE HOUSING NETWORK**

**Research Findings:
Newfoundland & Labrador**

**Prepared for:
The Canadian Housing & Renewal Association (CHRA)**

**By:
Bruce Pearce
St. John's, NL
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Executive Summary

Between November 28-December 9, 2003, the Canadian Housing & Renewal Association (CHRA) sponsored research interviews (10) and surveys (8) involving housing/service providers and advocates throughout Newfoundland & Labrador regarding their interest in establishing an Atlantic Canada Affordable Housing Network.

The research findings indicate that the majority of respondents expressed significant interest and support for enhanced regional housing networking opportunities.

Respondents see inherent value in networks and networking, and most currently participate in some form of networking within their communities and province – though none could identify any organization that is currently facilitating Atlantic-wide networking related to affordable housing.

Those participating in the research said they would be attracted to the network if it offered: information valuable to their day-to-day work; financial support for face-to-face networking, training and capacity-building; and was perceived as inclusive, credible and effective by its members and those it wishes to influence. Advocacy was also suggested by several respondents as an important function for the network.

Several respondents cautioned that a network would not be successful if its focus was too broad or its membership not committed to a common vision. Strong leadership and sufficient resources were seen as requirements to permit the network to best address members' needs.

Respondents were evenly split on whether the membership should be narrow or broad-based. Most felt that having a network that is broad-based and inclusive, but focused primarily on advancing affordable housing issues could bridge this split.

The structure or type of organization was not deemed as important as leadership, focus, resources and a committed membership. Several respondents felt the network should be an incorporated association rather than a loose-knit network, and that it could possibly be affiliated with a larger housing network such as the CHRA. Respondents would not support a network based on a charity model. Others said that it should not be housed within one of the smaller organizations that come together to create it.

Respondents identified membership fees and grant funding as sources of revenue to sustain the network. Half of the survey respondents indicated they would be willing to pay a modest annual membership fee, while half the interview respondents said funding constraints would prevent them from doing so.

Identified funders include the federal government (CMHC, HRDC, ACOA), provincial and municipal governments, corporate sponsors, homebuilders, and the CHRA.

All respondents except one expressed interest in participating in further discussions regarding the establishment of an Atlantic Canada Affordable Housing Network.

Research Background

During the Canadian Housing & Renewal Association's (CHRA) Atlantic regional meeting in Saint John, New Brunswick on September 26, 2003, several participants recommended establishing a regional housing network to foster greater collaboration and information-sharing among organizations with an interest in affordable housing.

In order to assess the level of interest in establishing an Atlantic Canada Affordable Housing Network, CHRA engaged consultants in the Atlantic Provinces to solicit input from housing stakeholders during November-December 2003. The research will be used to determine next steps.

Methodology

Bruce Pearce was engaged to conduct the research in Newfoundland & Labrador. Mr. Pearce provides community development services to the St. John's Community Advisory Committee on Homelessness, a multi-stakeholder advisory group convened under the National Homelessness Initiative. The Committee's co-chair Marie White assisted Mr. Pearce in conducting this research.

CHRA developed the survey and interview guide in collaboration with the consultants (Appendix A).

The research in Newfoundland & Labrador involved 10 interviews and 8 surveys of key informants conducted between November 27-December 5, 2003. A total of 19 organizations were contacted and, of these, 18 participated in the research. This represents a 95% response rate.

As part of the research process, CHRA also sponsored a face-to-face stakeholder discussion in Halifax, Nova Scotia on December 10, 2003 involving individuals attending a Canada Mortgage & Housing Corporation-sponsored Atlantic affordable housing conference the next day. The consultants' interim research findings were presented at the discussion, where additional input from participants was also received.

This document is the final report based on the research conducted in Newfoundland & Labrador, and was submitted to CHRA on January 12, 2004.

It should be noted that the interim research findings presented December 10, 2003 (Appendix B) strongly echo those contained in this final report, due to the fact that most of the interviews/surveys (with the exception of 1 survey) were completed by December 5, 2003 – thus allowing for the research results to be generally known early in the process.

Although the research instruments for interviews and surveys differed somewhat (the interview tool tended to yield greater detail and generally qualitative information, while the survey tool generated less detail and yielded quantifiable data), the combined findings provide a rich information resource regarding Newfoundland & Labrador stakeholder perspectives on the research topic.

The Research Participants

The research in Newfoundland & Labrador involved 10 interviews with key informants and 7 surveys of stakeholder group representatives conducted between November 27-December 5, 2003, plus 1 survey which was received December 16, 2003. A total of 19 organizations were contacted and, of these, 18 participated in the research. This represents a 95% response rate.

The participating organizations include a diverse range of provincial and community-based affordable housing/shelter providers, as well as related service providers and advocacy groups. In addition to the organizations with a provincial mandate, research participants were drawn from the following geographic areas within the province: Avalon Region (St. John's), Eastern Newfoundland (Gander), Western Newfoundland (Port aux Basques), Coastal Labrador, and Western Labrador.

Key Informant Interviews (10)

- Newfoundland & Labrador Housing Corporation
- City of St. John's Nonprofit Housing Division
- The Salvation Army
- Choices for Youth
- St. John's Women's Centre
- Hope Haven – Labrador West Family Crisis Shelter Association
- Coalition of Persons with Disabilities
- Stella Burry Community Services
- The Presentation Sisters
- Gateway Status of Women's Centre – Port aux Basques

Stakeholder Surveys (8)

- Cabot Habitat for Humanity
- Seniors Resource Centre
- Iris Kirby House
- Community Youth Network
- Single Parents Association
- Association for New Canadians
- Cara Transition House
- Inuit Women of the Torngats

A complete contact list of interview and survey participants is attached to this report (Appendix A).

An Overview of the Participating Organizations

The 10 Key Informant Interview respondents were asked to describe their organizations' links to affordable housing, as well as their staffing, clientele, and geographic scope – this information is provided below. (Note: this information was not requested from the 8 survey respondents).

Description

- **NLHC (Newfoundland & Labrador Housing Corporation) -** owns/operates and administers upwards of 6000 social housing units across the province; administers rent supplements with approximately 1000 private landlords; has some community-based housing [co-ops and private non profits] which are operated with assistance from NLHC for maintenance, developing reserve funds, etc. The organization is a member of the St. John's Community Advisory Committee on Homelessness and is helping lead efforts to develop a provincial supportive housing strategy through the delivery of the bilateral Affordable Rental Housing Program, which targets the development of 600 new units of affordable rental housing.
- **City of St. John's -** has a 420-unit non-profit housing division that includes Rent Geared to Income [RGI] units as well as Lower End of Market [LEM] units. The City administers these units for NLHC, providing affordable housing to people living in poverty as well as the "working poor". The City is a member of the St. John's Community Advisory Committee on Homelessness.
- **Salvation Army -** currently operates the Wiseman Centre hostel for single men in downtown St. John's. Future plans include the development of affordable housing units for long time clientele [older men]; as well as the creation of appropriate short-term shelter for the same population. The organization is a member of the St. John's Community Advisory Committee on Homelessness.
- **Choices for Youth -** a supportive housing program for youth that has operated since 1990. At any given time, it supports 45 youth to live independently in the community - youth for whom living at home is not an option. Support is provided through an outreach model - youth are supported to find affordable and safe housing. In addition, CFY is completing construction of a shelter for young men combined with a multi-agency youth services site in downtown St. John's. The organization is a member of the St. John's Community Advisory Committee on Homelessness.
- **St. John's Women's Centre -** advocates for individual women who are at risk of becoming homeless. A need has been identified to provide stable housing for women on very low income; single mothers, etc. The Women's Centre provides both individual and systemic advocacy on housing in the province. Recently, the Centre has undertaken research projects regarding the

existing state of available housing as well as the availability of affordable housing in Newfoundland & Labrador. The organization is a member of the St. John's Community Advisory Committee on Homelessness.

- **Hope Haven (formerly Labrador West Family Crisis Shelter Association)** - provides services to women who are victims of violence and who have no alternative housing options; provides women with interim housing until they find more permanent accommodations. The Association is completing construction of an emergency shelter for women and children escaping abuse.
- **Coalition of Persons with Disabilities** - a provincial cross-disability advocacy organization that addresses systemic barriers to housing and other services. It is an integral member of the St. John's Community Advisory Committee on Homelessness and its goal is to ensure inclusion in all aspects of this initiative as well as any new affordable housing initiatives.
- **Stella Burry Community Services** - provides housing supports and services in St. John's to persons with mental health issues and other complex needs. SBCS provides leadership in the development/management of supportive housing for people who are marginalized. SBCS would like to purchase additional properties to create a larger portfolio of affordable housing in the downtown core. Currently, it provides affordable housing (individual and family units) in the city center. The organization is a member of the St. John's Community Advisory Committee on Homelessness and its executive director is a member of the Premier's Council on Social Development, and president of Raising the Roof, Canada's only national homelessness charity.
- **Presentation Sisters** - a new housing initiative is being undertaken by the Sisters to provide supportive housing for low-income women in St. John's. This project will begin with one multi-apartment house that will provide units for single women as well as shared common space. The Sisters' goal is to assist women who experience difficulty both finding affordable housing and living on their own without support.
- **Port aux Basques Women's Centre** - assists women upon request to find affordable housing. This is problematic as there is little available affordable housing in the immediate area.

Number of Staff and Volunteers Doing Housing & Related Work

The majority of respondents reported that their organizations had fewer than 20 staff working in housing and related areas

The exceptions to this are: NLHC, which has hundreds of people working in the administration, provision and maintenance of affordable housing; and Stella Burry Community Services, which has more than 50 staff.

Only two organizations had volunteers doing some housing-related work – and these numbers were small as well.

Number of Members or Clients With an Interest in Affordable Housing

Respondents provided information about their current or potential clients/members, and/or target groups requiring affordable housing, rather than those who may merely be “interested”, as the latter category was not recognized as particularly relevant to their work.

NLHC and the City of St. John’s identified waiting lists of between 300-400. Several of the community-based organizations in St. John’s identified significant numbers needing adequate affordable housing both in the City as well as across the province.

Three other respondents felt that their housing/housing-related services were required by approximately 25-35 people, with the remaining organization noting a significant need for a range of affordable accessible housing – particularly in rural areas.

Only one organization was unable to provide an estimate of numbers due to the fact that people come to it through an external referral service.

Geographic Scope

NLHC is the only housing provider mandated to serve the province. The Coalition of Persons with Disabilities is likewise mandated to work with, and on behalf of, persons with disabilities throughout the province.

The remaining organizations generally respond to the needs of clients/members/target groups within their municipalities or immediate region.

Research Findings – Newfoundland & Labrador

Presentation of Findings

The combined survey and interview findings are presented in following sections under the general subject headings below:

- A. Perspectives on Current Networking Activities**
- B. Networking on an Atlantic Canada Level**
- C. What Would an Atlantic Network Do?**
- D. Membership**
- E. Structure**
- F. Resources**
- G. Respondents That Want to be Kept Informed**

The above-referenced headings were also used to frame the interim findings report dated December 10, 2003 (Appendix B), in order to facilitate comparison of the findings.

Raw Data & Supporting Documentation

The findings outlined in the following sections of this report are based upon information gathered during the research period. The raw data from the research is appended to the report, contained in Appendix D (Survey Responses) and Appendix E (Interview Responses). Please refer to these appendices for further information.

A. Perspectives on Current Networking Activities

Interview respondents were asked to describe current housing-related networking they are involved in with colleagues in other Atlantic provinces, and within their own provinces and communities. They also discussed the reasons for their level of networking, and whether enhanced Atlantic Canada networking would be valuable to their work.

All interview respondents (10) participated in this discussion. The 8 survey respondents were not asked this set of questions and are therefore not included in these findings.

Q1: Do you regularly network with colleagues in other Atlantic Provinces around housing and related issues?

Of the 10 respondents interviewed, the majority (7) reported they are engaged in some level of networking with their Atlantic colleagues in other provinces, while 3 did not.

Among those organizations involved in such networking, only 2 reported the level of activity as 'significant', while 5 described their activity as 'infrequent or limited'.

One government organization has extensive formal links with other provincial and federal government bodies across the country, including the Atlantic region. Only one community-based group cited a similar level of networking capability.

The majority of organizations interviewed have networked with colleagues in Atlantic Canada on a limited, informal and infrequent basis. When it occurs, networking tends to be with organizations closely connected through mandate or purpose.

All organizations interviewed cited similar reasons for networking: increasing knowledge base, and gathering information on service delivery and best practices.

Of the 3 organizations not engaged in such networking, 2 (both located outside St. John's) cited a lack of opportunities to network with others in Atlantic Canada. A third respondent noted that time constraints prevent any in-depth networking: it is limited to that done when staff travel to events/conferences where they can converse with their colleagues.

Q2: Do you regularly network with colleagues in your own community and/or province around housing and housing related issues?

All 10 respondents reported extensive and regular networking with colleagues in their own communities. Nine of the 10 respondents cited the St. John's Community Advisory Committee on Homelessness (through SCPI) as integral to the relationships they have developed.

In addition, several community-based organizations in St. John's are involved with NLHC through its Interdepartmental Committee on Supportive Housing, and NLHC itself sits on other community-based housing committees such as the St. John's Women's Centre's Gender Inclusive Analysis Project Working Group.

Similarly, community-based organizations cite strong connections with various departments of the provincial government (Human Resources & Employment, Health & Community Services) and federal government (Human Resources Development Canada, Canada Mortgage & Housing Corporation).

The Port aux Basque Women's Centre is the only respondent that does not have a connection with SCUPI (likely due to the fact that the SCUPI Committee serves St. John's only). However, the Centre reports extensive community networks of its own, including HRDC, HRE and church-based groups.

Q3: Why are you involved in networking?

The 10 interview respondents cited networks as being invaluable to their work. The information derived from ongoing communication, discussions and meetings with others in the housing field is a source of support, particularly for agencies with limited resources.

According to respondents, networking also has a preventative dimension. Having a level of knowledge about what others are doing in the housing field prevents duplication of services, and prevents 'reinventing the wheel' to address shared issues.

Respondents gave the following reasons for their networking:

- "In order to develop and direct policy we have to know needs of community and what they are doing; We do not want our plans/policies to conflict with any other department/level of government or with the community."
- "Involvement in the community will ensure open communication: for example, through SCUPI, we have established informal connections simply by participating on the Committee."
- "Networking gives you a better perspective on who is looking for housing - where the gaps are."
- "Networking gives you a hands-on approach and glimpse into others' work - gives you ideas as to how you can approach issues."
- "Networking helps us to know where our services need to be directed particularly as we reorganize."
- "Networking means that as stand-alone agencies with limitations we have a collective to whom we can refer:
 - others may capture an identified need to a greater or lesser degree than we do
 - others can tackle broader issues or gaps and provide services which as a stand alone agency we can not address
 - others can support our clients in a manner we can not due to our limited

- funding
- for information sharing
- to assist us in identifying people who may need our service”
- “Networks have been established to assist us with research and follow-up in areas of identified housing need.”
- “Networks assist us to coordinate services to ensure there is no duplication.”
- “Networks help us to learn from others’ experiences so we do not have to ‘start from scratch.’”

B. Networking on an Atlantic Canada Level

Q4: Does your current networking meet your needs or do you want additional opportunities to do so?

The majority of interview respondents (9) see inherent value in enhanced networking opportunities - citing the ability to increase their knowledge base and to learn from others' experiences. In addition, there is thought to be 'strength in numbers' (i.e. the larger the network, the stronger and more influential the lobby effort supporting affordable housing and housing related services).

These respondents agreed that an opportunity to network on an Atlantic Canada level would be beneficial because the provinces/communities share similarities in terms of community size, income levels, and lobby efforts.

In addition, most respondents felt that increased Atlantic Canada housing networking opportunities could provide valuable information relevant to their work. These respondents cited the following opportunities:

- "look at how others (other provinces, communities) support people who need housing-related services"
- "if our clients want to move outside the province, we would know to whom/where they can be directed"
- "learn from others' experiences - an opportunity to visit other sites and see projects"
- "identify people who are on the same 'wavelength' to see how they are addressing specific issues and client groups"

Only one respondent, while noting the benefits of additional networking opportunities in Atlantic Canada, cited the concern that organizations with limited means may not have the capacity to fully engage in networking opportunities and the benefits they may provide.

Q5: If you do not seek additional Atlantic Canada networking opportunities, do you network with colleagues in your community, your home province or in other provinces outside Atlantic Canada?

The following questions were not relevant to those interviewed for this process:

If so, does that meet your needs fully?

If not, why is networking not part of your operations?

Would you like to network more?

What could be done to facilitate your networking more?

Q6: Do you see networking with colleagues in Atlantic Canada as potentially valuable to your work?

In Question 4 above, interview respondents articulated why they would value additional networking opportunities. These same reasons were cited in their responses to Question 6.

However, several interview respondents stated that such networking opportunities would only be welcome and beneficial if:

- there is a real reason to so do
- there are opportunities for face to face networking
- the information to be shared is relevant and useful to their work
- there is real learning around what works and why
- the network's goals and objectives are relevant to their organizations

In other words, respondents want to ensure that networking on an Atlantic Canada level accomplishes the collective goal of increased affordable housing and related services for people who are in need of such support. This type and level of networking has to have an identified purpose - and it must provide relevance to the work being undertaken by housing providers and related service providers in Newfoundland & Labrador.

Views of Survey Respondents on Establishing an Atlantic Canada Affordable Housing Network

Survey respondents (8) were also asked whether they believe an Atlantic Canada affordable housing network should be formed. Their views are similar to those of the interview respondents. The majority (7) felt that establishing such a network would be 'extremely' (5) or 'somewhat' (2) important, while only 1 respondent felt it was not important at all.

The majority of respondents who felt it was either 'extremely' or 'somewhat' important for a network to be established saw its primary purpose as enabling Atlantic regional cooperation - a means of bringing like-minded organizations/advocates together to speak as one voice on the issue of affordable housing. Further, it was seen as a mechanism to give regional issues higher profile at the national level as well as to influence federal funders and standards.

The one respondent who did not consider such a network to be important was skeptical about its capacity to improve the affordable housing situation in Newfoundland & Labrador.

1. How important do you feel it is that some sort of network of affordable housing practitioners from across Atlantic Canada be established?

R= 8

Response	Extremely	Somewhat	Not at all
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Number	5	2	1
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Briefly explain your response:

Here are the survey respondents' views on this question, in their own words:

EXTREMELY IMPORTANT

- “With the current provincial government focus on fiscal responsibility, the role of advocates for those experiencing difficulty in finding affordable housing will no doubt become much more difficult. Speaking together with one voice is stronger than speaking alone. Any cooperation between the Atlantic Provinces can only strengthen our work to bring national focus to our issues as well.”
- “To address the issues of an aging population [because] contrary to the belief often expressed - not everyone will have expendable income and therefore we need to plan now.”
- “In order to ensure that affordable housing is available through a collaborative effort of all stakeholders.”
- “There is a need to create a national housing standard and a means to implement it.”

SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT

- “This network could provide training, advocacy and information sharing.”
- “The issues of affordable housing are growing in our City and I would suspect this is a trend seen across the Atlantic Provinces. I think it is important for groups to network to share information, develop innovative approaches to address this issue and increase the regional voice on this issue to Federal funders.”

NOT IMPORTANT AT ALL

- “I do not understand how such a network would help our situation in Newfoundland & Labrador.”

C. What Would an Atlantic Canada Affordable Housing Network Do?

Survey Respondents

Survey respondents (8) were asked to select their top two choices from the following menu of options regarding what an Atlantic Canada network should do, and the results are provided in the table below.

Respondents did not restrict themselves to two top choices, preferring instead to indicate all of the activities they would like to see such a network undertake.

R= 8

Response	Number
Share information on other members' activities and interests	3
Deliver or coordinate training and other learning opportunities (capacity building)	2
Advocate for the implementation of policies, programs, practices that would benefit the region; link to national advocacy movements	6
Bring members together to talk about housing issues and ideas	5
Share housing news specifically relevant to Atlantic Canada	3
Other	1
No response	1

The favored response was for the network to have an advocacy role - to facilitate implementation of policies/programs/practices that would benefit the Atlantic region and link to national advocacy movements.

Respondents also thought the network should have the ability to disseminate housing information relevant to the Atlantic region, and the resources necessary to bring network members together face to face to share information/ideas.

One respondent also suggested that the network have a role in identifying gaps regarding the availability of affordable housing, and make recommendations for filling this gap.

Interview Respondents

The 10 interview respondents were offered the same prompts as the survey participants regarding what the proposed network could do. Almost half (4) suggested 'all of the above', recommending a multi-purpose network serving a range of needs.

Interview respondents generally viewed 'information sharing' and 'advocacy' as priority activity areas for a network, expressing interest in each of these activities, in their own words, as follows:

Information Sharing:

- “looking for ‘how to’ tools to assist us if we decide to move in a different direction; what are others’ experiences? If direction has proven feasible, how does one approach such change?”
- “information is always good”
- “best practices is something we are seeking”
- “to learn from others successes/failures - what works/does not work”
- “inform each other about on-going projects and activities - so we are not starting from the beginning when it is not necessary.”

Advocacy/Lobbying:

- “as a government body would have to be cautious re level of involvement in advocacy and lobbying to government members but certainly this type of Association should provide a stronger voice for community.”
- “to lever more money out of federal governments for affordable housing - advocacy /lobbying piece would be key. This would be most useful due to ground that has been lost over the last 10 years.”
- “advocacy for low income people to access affordable housing.”
- “stronger voice in lobbying: coordination of policies - one voice.”
- “enable Atlantic Canada to bring their needs to their Premiers, which in turn could be brought to a federal level.”

One respondent stressed the network must feel ‘real’ to people. It cannot be an abstract concept, or removed from agencies. Some respondents cautioned that networks could be very removed - even when they facilitate people coming together, they may have no real impact.

Another respondent sought opportunities for training, citing a limited budget for this (“we have shelter but not necessarily the effective supports people are seeking”).

One respondent also sees keeping the housing issue in the forefront as an important need (“we have to ensure it is on the public plate and on their minds. Keep it visible.”)

Q. Is there anyone currently providing these services?

All interview respondents (10) indicated there is no one currently providing/facilitating this level of Atlantic Canada networking.

Survey respondents were not asked this question.

Q. How should people be brought together?

Survey respondents were asked how the network should bring people together. Respondents were most interested in being connected face-to-face or via teleconference, in order of preference. Fewer respondents were interested in being connected through email or a website. Face-to-face meetings (at least on an annual

basis) were seen to facilitate the development of stronger connections, necessary for the development of regional approaches and sustained meaningful action.

R= 8

Response	Number
Email/website	5
Teleconference	5
Face-to-face	7
No response	1

D. Membership

Both survey and interview participants were asked who should be members of a network, while interview participants were further asked to comment on how broad the membership should be, and the benefits that would be derived from such membership.

Q. Who should be targeted for participation in the network?

Survey Respondents

R= 8

Response	Number
Affordable housing providers	6
Housing-related service providers	6
Private developers	5
Housing advocacy groups	6
Economic development groups	6
Other social service/social development groups	7
Academics	3
Government	6
Other (* see below)	3
No response	1

Generally, survey respondents see a value in broad-based membership (housing providers, advocacy and service groups, private developers, government) as long as the focus is on affordable housing.

* One respondent suggested consumer involvement, and organizations representing their interests were also suggested for membership (youth, persons with disabilities, mental health). Inclusion of these groups, including consumers, would help keep the network grounded.

The only suggested network member group that received little support was the academic sector – respondents were unable to identify how this group would support the network's intended work.

Interview Respondents

Respondents were evenly split in terms of how broad the membership of a network should be. Those in favour of broad membership note that it would allow for diverse perspectives, inclusive membership and strength in terms of lobby and advocacy efforts. One respondent noted that faith groups should be included in this broad membership - given their role as well as their need to be educated on different approaches to housing provision.

Those who supported more limited membership saw merit in targeting housing providers, related service providers, individual and group housing advocates. They cite a

need to ensure a focus on housing needs as identified by community and to ensure accountability back to these communities. They note that broad membership may dilute this focus.

It was suggested that such a network could start with targeted membership and invite other groups/individuals as needs are identified for same.

Q. Would targeting membership broadly be an asset or a burden? What would core (housing) and non-core (other) members get from the network?

While interview respondents varied in their view of whether broad membership would be an asset or a burden to the network, several stressed that a clear mandate, a focused common purpose, and strong leadership could bridge diverse perspectives and membership.

Respondents suggested that interest in membership would flow from a common vision as a starting point – groups would determine their involvement according to their support for the vision.

Respondents cautioned against inviting members to join simply for the sake of having a large membership base. The network should ensure that members know what their role is and why they are involved.

Half of the interview respondents said they could not predict the impact broad membership would have on the needs of members whose core focus is housing provision. The remaining respondents said there would be benefits for all members in having a range of knowledge and perspectives at the table – as long as there is a shared purpose and strong leadership.

Respondents generally felt that non-core members (those not directly in the business of providing housing and related services) would derive great benefit from their participation by becoming better grounded in their knowledge about housing issues, which may lead to their becoming valuable allies in promoting the aims of the network.

Policy makers would also benefit from network membership, which would help enhance their understanding of housing issues, possibly leading to more responsive public policies.

Q. Are you likely to become an active member of the network?

This question was posed to survey and interview respondents in slightly different ways. Survey respondents were asked the question as written above, while interview respondents were asked what would encourage/deter their potential membership.

Survey Respondents

R= 8

Response	Number
Yes	4

No	0
Maybe	4

Those who responded 'maybe' to the question regarding their potential network membership said their decision would depend on the relevance of the network to their needs, as well as their capacity to contribute and devote time to it.

Interview Respondents

Q. What would encourage you to become part of the network?

A network that provides valuable information, financial support for member participation, and a solid, credible, effective focus on regional affordable housing issues, would attract respondents to become active members.

Information: respondents expressed interest in 'being kept in the loop' regarding housing issues, and noted that sitting at a network table could help them access needed information to help their organizations achieve their goals.

Financial Support: respondents said they would be attracted to a network that could provide resources to allow them to participate in face-to-face networking (travel assistance), and which was sufficiently resourced to address common regional housing issues that individual groups working alone could not address.

Focus, Credibility, Effectiveness: knowing that the network offers a real possibility for change and action on affordable housing would encourage membership, as would the perception by governments, communities, consumers and other stakeholders that it is a credible organization.

Q. What would deter you from becoming part of the network?

Respondents indicated that if the network could not offer the information, financial support and focus/credibility/effectiveness cited above, they would be less likely to consider membership.

It was also noted that the level and nature of the network's advocacy activity, if significant, could dissuade some organizations, particularly government departments/agencies, from becoming active members.

E. Structure

Survey and interview respondents were asked for input on the shape the network should take in terms of its organizational structure. They were also asked if there are models the network could be based on, or existing networks it could be affiliated with.

Q. What type of organization should the network be?

Survey Respondents

R= 8

Response	Number
Informal group	1
Incorporated association	3
Affiliate of a larger organization	2
Other	0
No response	2

The structure favoured by most survey respondents was an incorporated association, which was seen to be the structure that would engender most respect, and which could be autonomous and able to attract the legitimacy and resources required to function as envisioned.

Interview Respondents

In general, interview respondents noted that the actual type or organization was less important than the leadership and resources needed to ensure it becomes a reality and moves forward as articulated in Section C (“What should a network do?”), page 15. Key elements should include: on-going communication between and among members, opportunities for face-to-face networking, and guiding principles of inclusion.

There was concern that the network could become a structure mired in bureaucracy (e.g., a charity based model). Most respondents do not believe a charity model is desirable.

Several respondents said the network cannot be a ‘loose’ organization (its tasks would be greater than an informal network could manage), nor should it be housed within any of the smaller organizations that come together to form it (it should not be tied to the mandate of an existing organization). However, it was suggested that it could be placed within a larger existing umbrella organization such as CHRA.

Once again, respondents noted the need for focus, direction and dedicated leadership/resources to actualize such a network.

Q. Are there other networks/associations that could be a potential model for this network?

Of the survey respondents asked this question, 6 out of 8 could not identify an existing network that could serve as a model for the proposed network. The remainder identified the CHRA (2) and the Community Health Promotion Network (1) as possibilities.

F. Resources

Most survey and interview respondents agreed that the network would require dedicated, sufficient financial resources in order to carry out its duties. Membership fees and grant funding were the two sources of funding most often identified.

However, when research participants were asked whether their organizations would be willing to pay a 'modest annual membership fee' to help support the network, they were evenly divided on the question. Those that were willing to contribute indicated they would need more information prior to making a commitment, and that such contributions would be very modest.

Nevertheless, a 50% positive response rate to a hypothetical request for funding should be seen as encouraging given the lack of information regarding the network at this stage.

Survey Respondents

R= 8

Response	Number
Yes	3
No	3
No response	2

Interview respondents

Half of the respondents (5) said they would be unable to make a financial contribution toward the network (citing funding constraints). The remainder (5) said they would need more information first, or that such a decision would require board or government approval.

Other Funding Sources

Most survey respondents (5) and some interview respondents could not identify other funding sources for the network.

The remaining respondents suggested the following funding sources:

- CMHC
- Federal (HRDC, ACOA), provincial and municipal governments
- Home builders
- Corporate sponsors
- CHRA

G. Respondents that Want to be Kept Informed

The following research respondents from Newfoundland & Labrador expressed interest in being kept informed about future discussions regarding an Atlantic Canada Affordable Housing Network (see Appendix C for contact information):

▪ Association of New Canadians	Survey
▪ Cabot Habitat for Humanity	Survey
▪ Cara Transition House	Survey
▪ Choices for Youth	Interview
▪ City of St. John's	Interview
▪ Coalition of Persons with Disabilities	Interview
▪ Community Youth Network	Survey
▪ Inuit Women of the Torngats	Survey
▪ Iris Kirby House	Survey
▪ Hope Haven (Labrador City)	Interview
▪ Newfoundland & Labrador Housing Corporation	Interview
▪ Port aux Basques Women's Centre	Interview
▪ Presentation Sisters	Interview
▪ Salvation Army	Interview
▪ Seniors Resource Centre	Survey
▪ St. John's Women's Centre	Interview
▪ Stella Burry Community Services	Interview

One respondent did not wish to be contacted regarding the network:

- Single Parents Association of Newfoundland & Labrador Survey

H. Conclusion

This document summarizes research conducted in Newfoundland & Labrador regarding the possible establishment of an Atlantic Canada Affordable Housing Network. The research engaged front line housing providers, related services providers and housing advocates in helping to determine the level of interest in establishing a network.

The research indicates that significant interest exists in Newfoundland & Labrador in continuing the discussion leading toward the possible formation of such a network. It is hoped that this report and its supporting documentation, together with the related research conducted in the other Atlantic provinces, provides a foundation for better understanding and addressing the networking needs of housing stakeholders in Atlantic Canada.

**Appendix A:
Newfoundland & Labrador Survey/Interview Participants**

Association for New Canadians
P.O. Box 2031
St. John's, NL A1C 5R6
Contact: Janet Mackey
T (709) 722-9680
F (709) 754-4407
E jmackey@nfld.net

Cabot Habitat for Humanity
2 Canada Drive, P.O. Box 220
St. John's, NL A1C 5J2
Contact: Kevin Williams
T (709) 737-2823
F (709) 724-3149
E habitat@newfoundlandpower.com

Cara Transition House Inc.
P.O. Box 305
Gander, NL A1V 1W7
Contact: Ann Marie Connors
T (709) 256-9306
F (709) 256-6130
E annmarieconnors@hotmail.com

Choices for Youth
58 Lemarchant Road
St. John's, NL A1C 2G9
Contact: Sheldon Pollett
T (709) 754-3047
F (709) 754-6102
E Sheldon@nfld.net

City of St. John's (Nonprofit Housing
Division)
15 New Gower Street
P.O. Box 908
St. John's, NL A1C 5M2
Contact: Helen Handrigan
T (709) 576-8317
F (709) 576-8078
E hhandrigan@stjohns.ca

Coalition of Persons with Disabilities
4 Escasoni Place
St. John's, NL A1A 3R6
Contact: Mary Ennis
T (709) 722-7011
F (709) 722-4424
E codmain@nf.aibn.com

Community Youth Network
P.O. Box 26067
St. John's, NL A1C 5T9
Contact: Angela Crockwell
T (709) 754-0536
F (709) 754-0842
E acrockwell@cyn-stjohns.nf.ca

Inuit Women of the Torngats
P.O. Box 109
Makkovik, Labrador, NL A0P 1J0
Contact: Ruth Flowers
T (709) 923-2156
F (709) 923-2157
E tia@nf.aibn.com

Iris Kirby House
P.O. Box 6208
St. John's, NL A1C 6J9
Contact: Deborah Keats
T (709) 722-8272
F (709) 722-0164
E deborahkeats@hotmail.com

Hope Haven (formerly Labrador West
Family Crisis Shelter Association)
350 Booth Ave.
Labrador City, Labrador, NL A2V 2K1
Contact: Marsha Power Slade
T (709) 944-7124
F (709) 944-7747
E hopehaven@crstv.net

Newfoundland & Labrador Housing
Corporation
P.O. Box 220
St. John's, NL A1C 5J2
Contact: Cynthia King
T (709) 724-3029
F (709) 724-3149
E caking@a1.nlhc.nf.ca

Gateway Status of Women's Centre –
Port aux Basques
P.O. Box 1359
Port aux Basques, NL
A0M 1C0
Contact: Susanne Ingram
T (709) 695-7505
F (709) 695-9756
E gswc@nf.aibn.com

Presentation Sisters
c/o The Lantern
35 Barnes Road
St. John's, NL A1C 3X1
Contact: Emma Rooney
T (709) 753-8760
F (709) 753-8789
E erooney@thelantern.nf.net

Salvation Army
21 Adams Avenue
St. John's, NL A1C 4Z2
Contact: Wanda Burt
T (709) 579-2022
F (709) 576-7034
E wanda_burt@can.salvationarmy.org

Seniors Resource Centre
Bally Rou Place
280 Torbay Road, Suite W100
St. John's, NL A1A 3W8
Contact: Rosemary Lester
T (709) 737-2333
F (709) 737-3717
E seniorsresource@nf.aibn.com

Single Parents Association of
Newfoundland & Labrador
Virginia Plaza, Suite 209
P.O. Box 21421
St. John's, NL A1A 5G6
Contact: Yvette Walton
T (709) 738-3401
F (709) 738-3406
E span@span.nf.net

St. John's Status of Women
Council/Women's Centre
83 Military Road
St. John's, NL A1C 2C8
Contact: Jane Robinson
T (709) 753-2820
F (709) 753-8317
E sjstatusofwomen@nf.aibn.com

Stella Burry Community Services
83 Cochrane Street
St. John's, NL A1C 3L7
Contact: Jocelyn Greene
T (709) 738-7809
F (709) 738-1030
E jgreene@stellaburry.nf.net

APPENDIX B – SURVEY RESPONSES

A Questionnaire Regarding the Formation of an Atlantic Canada Affordable Housing Network December 2003

9 surveys were distributed and we received responses from 8 of these:

- Habitat for Humanity
- Seniors Resource Centre
- Kirby House
- Community Youth Network
- Single Parents Association
- Association for New Canadians
- Cara Transition House
- Inuit Women of the Torgats (TIA)

Response was not received from the Native Friendship Centre.

1. How important do you feel it is that some sort of network of affordable housing practitioners from across Atlantic Canada be established?

R= 8

Response	Extremely	Somewhat	Not at all
Number	5	2	1

Briefly explain your response:

EXTREMELY

- *With the current provincial government focus on “fiscal responsibility”, the role of advocates for those experiencing difficulty in finding affordable housing will no doubt become that much more difficult. The voices of many speaking will be that much stronger than a voice of one. Any cooperation between the Atlantic provinces can only strengthen our work to bring national focus to our issues as well.*
- *To address the issues of an aging population [because] contrary to the belief often expressed- not everyone will have expendable income and therefore we need to plan now.*

- *In order to ensure that affordable housing is available through a collaborative effort of all stakeholders*

SOMEWHAT

- *This Network could provide training, advocacy and information sharing*
- *The issues of affordable housing are growing in our City and I would suspect this is a trend seen across the Atlantic provinces. I think it is important for groups to network to share information, develop innovative approaches to address this issue and increase the regional voice on this issue to Federal funders.*

NOT AT ALL

- *Do not understand how such a Network would help our situation in Newfoundland & Labrador*

Comment:

The majority of respondents who felt it was either “extremely” or “somewhat” important for an Affordable Housing Network to be established saw its primary purpose as enabling Atlantic Regional cooperation - a means of bringing like-minded organizations/advocates together to speak as one voice on the issue of affordable housing. Further, it was seen as a mechanism to both give our Regional issues higher profile at the national level as well as to influence federal funders and standards.

The one respondent who did not consider such a Network to be important was skeptical as to its benefit to the affordable housing situation in the Province of NL.

2. What should this network do? Please select your top two choices:

R=8

Response	Number
Share information on other members' activities and interests	3
Deliver or coordinate training and other learning opportunities [capacity building]	2

Advocate for the implementation of policies, programs, practices that would benefit the region; link to national advocacy movements	6
Bring members together to talk about housing issues and idea	5
Share housing news specifically relevant to Atlantic Canada	3
Other	1
No response	1

Comment:

Respondents did not restrict themselves to two top choices, preferring instead to indicate all of the activities they would like to see such a Network undertake.

The favored response was for the Network to have an advocacy role - to facilitate implementation of policies/ programs,/practices that would benefit the Atlantic Region and the link to national advocacy movements. The ability for the Network to disseminate housing information relevant to this Region as well as to have resources to bring Network members together to share information/ideas, etc., were also favored by respondents.

One respondent also suggested that the Network have a role in *“identifying gaps regarding the availability of affordable housing and making recommendations for filling this gap.”*

3. Based on the things you feel the network should do, how should people be brought together to do them?

R=8

Response	Number
E-mail/Website	5
Teleconference	5
Face to Face	7
No response	1

Please Explain:

- *All of the above - but face to face is necessary occasionally if we are going to work together in a meaningful way*
- *Better ideas are generated in discussion [format]*
- *All of the above*
- *Need the ability to meet face to face on a yearly basis*
- *I believe there is great value in face to face meetings. Other forms of communication can supplement face to face meetings and provide on-going communications, but for the development of regional approaches, advocacy on policies/programs, etc., I believe face to face is important.*

Comment:

Respondents were most interested in being connected via teleconference or face to face - with the latter being the majority response. Fewer respondents were interested in connecting via e-mail/website.

The value of face to face meetings was seen to be the provision of opportunities to establish stronger connections, to facilitate development of the required regional approaches and to enable meaningful action.

4. Who should be targeted for participation in the Network

R=8

Response	Number
Affordable Housing Providers	6
Housing Related Service Providers	6
Private Developers	5
Housing Advocacy Groups	6
Economic Development Groups	6

Other Social Services and Social Development Groups	7
Academics	3
Government	6
Other **	3
No Response	1

****OTHER:**

- b. Consumers. It is important to keep the process and discussion grounded in reality. It might also help to invite ALL housing providers to become involved. If you create a national standard, then it would be useful to have a rental registry*
- c. I would recommend that groups representing special interests also be involved - such as mental health services, disabilities, youth, etc. It would be important to ensure the needs and voice of these individuals are at the table.*
- d. Relevant community and advocacy groups, i.e. Seniors organizations, Atlantic Senior's Health Promotion Network, Nova Scotia Center on Aging, etc.*

Comment:

The only suggested Network member group which received little support was the academic sector - perhaps because of an inability of respondents to see this group's value to the Network's intended work. Other groups suggested for Network membership were those with additional challenges seen to be further marginalized than the general population in their search for affordable housing, i.e. persons with disabilities [particularly mental health consumers], youth and seniors. Inclusion of these sectors - and of individual consumers in general - was seen to be a mechanism for keeping the Network's processes and discussions grounded.

One respondent noted that perhaps the Network should target membership even more broadly - inviting all housing providers from whom a registry of available housing could be discerned.

5. What should the Network be?

R=8

Response	Number/5
An informal group	1
An incorporated Association	3
An affiliate of a larger organization	2
Other	-
No response	2

Please explain your choice:

INFORMAL GROUP

- *I would suggest that the group be formed informally and then the group could organize the set up themselves based on what needs and priorities are identified.*

AN INCORPORATED ASSOCIATION

- *An informal group may not be met with the same respect /response as an incorporated association. By forming a new association, goals and values can be determined by those interested in being part of that group as opposed to assuming the goals and values of an already existing organized*
- *There is a need for a body that would develop national housing standards. There is a need for housing units to be registered so that the consumer is assured of quality housing. This cannot happen without national regulations/standards and consequences for those who break the standards.*
- *The organization should be officially incorporated and should not be deemed to serve the interests of a larger organization but, rather, as an entity in itself. With an established mission and mandate, the role and work of the organization would be clear and meaningful.*

AN AFFILIATE OF A LARGER ORGANIZATION

- *Less bureaucracy; more efficient as already well-established and known*

Comment:

Of the two who did not respond - one noted that it was too early in the process to be able to determine what the Network should be while the other did not state an opinion re the Network's structure.

Of the remaining six respondents, the favored organizational structure was an incorporated Association. The latter was seen to be the structure that would engender most respect and which could be autonomous [i.e. not under the umbrella of an established larger organizations], thus developing its own goals, objectives and direction.

In contrast, two of the respondents favored affiliation with an established larger organization noting that it would negate the time normally spent in the developmental stages - and likely would result in more effective connections for the Network.

The remaining respondent suggested that the type of structure be determined once members have been determined and have had the opportunity to collectively identify their needs/priorities.

6. Are there other networks or associations that you see as a potential model for this network?

No response [3]

Not aware of any/do not know [2]

CHRA

Community Health Promotion Network - Atlantic Region

Comment:

6 of the 8 respondents offered no suggestions as to other networks or associations that might be used as potential models for the proposed Network. The remaining respondents suggested 1] Community Health Promotion Network; 2] CHRA . No reasons were provided for these suggestions.

7. Are you likely to become an interested and active member of the network?

R=8

Response	Number/8
Yes	4
No	-
Maybe	4

Please explain your response:

YES

- *No response [2]*
- *Being an active member would provide the opportunity [for] exchanging ideas and best practices of providing affordable housing*

MAYBE

- *Depends on its function*
- *Housing is an issue which I believe to be important for many of the youth with whom my organization works. However, it is not an issue with which I have a great deal of experience or understand and therefore, I am not sure I could contribute a great deal to such a Network.*
- *Time restrictions may prevent this but a group or organization representing*

- *stakeholders should most certainly participate.*
- *Depends on time requirements*

Comment:

Two of the respondents who indicated they would likely become part of an Atlantic Region Network provided no reason for same, while one who answered in the affirmative pointed to the opportunity such membership presented for networking and sharing ideas.

The remaining four respondents all stated that they “may” become members of the Network and that the latter depended on the relevance of the Network to potential members and their possible contribution to same, as well as the time required to dedicate to it.

8. Would you be willing to pay a modest annual membership fee to help support the network?

R=8

Response	Number/6
Yes	3
No	3
No Response	2

Comment:

The six respondents were evenly divided re their willingness to pay a modest annual membership fee.

9. Where else do you recommend looking for funding to support the network?

No response [5]

*Federal, provincial and municipal governments, Home Builder Associations
CMHC*

Comment:

The majority of the respondents did not have suggestions for funding sources to support the Network. The remaining respondents suggested that CMHC, the three levels of government and/or Home Builders as potential sources. One respondent indicated willingness to help identify funders.

If you are willing to be contacted again about this network, please fill out your name and contact information below:

- Angela Crockwell, Community Youth Network
- Deborah Keats, Iris Kirby House

- Rosemary Lester, Seniors Resource Centre
- Janet Mackey, Association of New Canadians
- Ann Marie Connors, Cara Transition House
- Kevin Williams, Cabot Habitat for Humanity
- Ruth Flowers, Inuit Women of the Torngats

[Note: Contact information is on a separate sheet]

Not Willing:

Yvette Walton, Single Parents Association of NL

APPENDIX C – INTERVIEW RESPONSES

Establishing an Atlantic Canada Affordable Housing Network - Interest Assessment, December/03

The following information was obtained from interviews with 10 key informants from diverse organizations/agencies in 3 centres across the province. [The majority of these respondents are based in St. John's.]

1. Could you describe your organization and explain its link to affordable housing?

- **NLHC** - owns/operates and administers upwards of 6000+ social housing units across the province; administers rent supplements with approximately 1000 private landlords; has some community based housing [co-ops and private non profits] which are operated by community with assistance from NLHC for maintenance; developing reserve funds, etc.
- **City of St. John's** has a non-profit Housing Division which includes both Rent Geared to Income [RGI] Units as well as Lower End of Market [LEM] Units. [It administers these Units for NLHC]. The City provides affordable housing to people living in poverty as well as the "working poor".
- **Salvation Army** - currently operates the Wiseman Centre in downtown St. John's. Future plans include the development of affordable housing units for long time clientele [older men] ; as well as the creation of appropriate short term shelter for the same population.
- **Choices for Youth** is a supportive housing program for youth which has operated since 1990. At any given time, it supports 45 youth to live independently in the community - youth for whom living at home is not an option. Support is provided through an outreach model - youth are supported to find affordable and safe housing.
- **St. John's Women's Centre** advocates for individual women accessing its services, who are at risk of becoming homeless. A need has been identified to provide stable housing for women on very low income; single mothers, etc.
- The Women's Centre does both individual as well as systemic advocacy on housing in the province. Recently, the Centre has undertaken research projects on the existing state of available housing as well as the availability of affordable housing.
- **Labrador West Family Crisis Shelter Association** - provides services to women who are victims of violence and who have no alternative housing options; provides women with interim housing until they find more permanent

accommodations. There is sufficient housing available for the women to so do.

- **Coalition of Persons with Disabilities** is the Provincial cross disability advocacy organization which addresses systemic barriers. It is an integral member of the St. John's Homelessness Committee and its goal is to ensure inclusion in all aspects of this initiative as well as any new affordable housing initiatives.
- **Stella Burry Community Services** provides supports and services to persons of low income who generally have mental health issues and face related barriers. SBCS provides leadership in the development/ management of and access to supportive housing for people who are marginalized.

SBCS would like to purchase additional properties downtown so as to create a larger portfolio of affordable housing in the downtown. Currently, it provides affordable housing - both individual and family units - in some areas of the City.

- **Presentation Sisters** - a new housing initiative is being undertaken by the Sisters: to provide supportive housing for low income women. This project will begin with one multi apartment house which will provide individual apartments for women as well as shared common space. Their goal is to assist women who experience difficulty both finding affordable housing and living on their own without support.
- **Port aux Basques Women's Centre** assists women, on request, to find affordable housing . This is problematic as there is little available in the immediate area.

2. **How many staff and volunteers regularly do housing and housing-related work for your organization?**

With the exception of NLHC which has hundreds of people working in the administration/ provision/maintenance of affordable housing, the majority of respondents' organizations had fewer than twenty staff working on housing and in housing related areas. Only two organizations had volunteers doing some work around housing - and these numbers were small as well.

3. Approximately how many members or clients do you have with an interest in your affordable housing work?

Respondents provided information about their current or potential clients/ members, and/or target groups who are in need of affordable housing, versus those who might be merely “interested” as the latter was not recognized as particularly relevant to their work.

NLHC and the City of St. John’s identified waiting lists of between three and four hundred. Several of the St. John’s based community organizations’ respondents also identified significant numbers needing adequate affordable housing both in the City as well as across the province.

Three of the remaining respondents each felt that their housing/ housing related services were required by between 25 and 35 people, with the remaining organization noting the significant need for a range of affordable accessible housing - particularly in rural areas.

Only one organization was unable to provide an estimate of numbers due to the fact people come to it through an external referral service.

4. What is the geographical scope of your operation?

NLHC is the only housing provider mandated to serve the province and COD is likewise mandated to work with and on behalf of persons with disabilities throughout the province.

The remaining organizations generally respond to the needs of clients/ members/target groups within their municipalities or immediate region.

Current Networking Activities

5. Do you regularly network with colleagues in other Atlantic Provinces around housing and related issues?

a. If so, with whom? Why? How? (Prompt: formally/informally; directly; through another organization...)

SIGNIFICANT NETWORKING:

We [NLHC] belong to several FPT Working Groups on supportive housing and affordable housing, and other government committees as well which enable networking with Atlantic Canada colleagues.

We have the opportunity to so do if the need arises directly, although informally, through links established on other issues relevant to our members..

INFREQUENT OR LIMITED:

Not many opportunities - little networking with other Atlantic municipalities - unless there

is a particular issue on which information is being sought. Do have contacts with CHRA. [City of St. John's]

Through our partner/sister organizations. Look at their shelter data, best practices, can discuss housing, etc. [2]

Some informal connections with other treatment type centres. Trying to see how we might do things differently - think outside the box

Very little - have connected with non-profit housing groups in other municipalities [St. John/ Halifax] but do not have a lot of regional contacts.

Comment:

NLHC has extensive formal links with other provincial and federal government bodies across the Country including the Atlantic Region. However, only one community based group cites a similar level of networking capability.

The majority of organizations have networked with colleagues in Atlantic Canada on a limited, informal and infrequent basis. When it occurs networking, also, tends to be with organizations closely connected through mandate or purpose.

All organizations cite increasing knowledge base, gathering information on service delivery and best practices as reasons for the connections which they have made.

b. If not, why not?

We do not have any time to seek or do networking with others - unless there is a specific event organized to which staff travels. If we are looking for something specific, we would know to whom we could go.

The opportunity has not presented itself [2]

Comment:

Two organizations [both of which are outside of St. John's] cite lack of opportunities to date to network with others in Atlantic Canada. The remaining respondent noted that time constraints prevent any in-depth networking: it is limited to that done when staff travel to events/conferences, etc., where they can converse with their colleagues.

6. Do you regularly network with colleagues in your own community and/or province around housing and housing related issues?

a. If so, with whom? Why? How? (Prompt: formally/informally; directly; through another organization...)

All respondents cite fairly extensive and regular networking with colleagues in their own communities. Nine of the ten respondents cite the SCIP Committee as integral to the relationships which they have developed.

Additionally, some of the community based organizations in St. John's are involved with

NLHC through its Interdepartmental Committee on Supportive Housing and the former also sits on community based committees such as the St. John's Women's Centre GIA project Working Group. Similarly, community based organizations cite strong connections with various Departments of the Provincial government [such as HRE & HCS] as well as HRDC.

The Port Aux Basque Women's Centre is the only one of the ten respondents who has had no connection to date with SCIP. However, it cites reasonably extensive community networks as well and examples of those contacted include HRDC, HRE and church based groups.

Why?

In order to develop and direct policy we have to know needs of community and what they are doing; NLHC does not want its plans/policies to conflict with any other department/level of government or with community

Involvement in community will ensure open communication: for example, through SCIP, we have established informal connections simply by participating on the Committee.

Gives you a better perspective on who is looking for housing - where the gaps are

Gives you a hands on approach and glimpse into others' work - gives you ideas as to how you approach issues.

Helps us to know where our services need to be directed particularly as we reorganize

Networking means that as stand alone agencies with limitations we have a collective to whom we can refer i.e.

- *others may capture an identified need to a greater or lesser degree than we do

 - *others can tackle broader issues or gaps and provide services which as a stand alone agency we can not address**
- *others can support our clients in a manner we can not due to our limited funding*
- *for information sharing*
- *to assist us in identifying people who may need our service*

Networks have been established to assist us to do research and follow-up in areas of identified housing need

Assist us to coordinate services to ensure there is no duplication

Help us to learn from others' experiences so we do not have to "start from scratch"

Comment:

All respondents cite networks as being invaluable to their work. On-going communication, discussions and meetings with others who provide housing and housing related services are seen by all to be a consistent source of comprehensive information and support particularly for agencies with limited resources - but whose client base

requires many and diverse services.

Networking is seen to have a preventative element as well: having a level of knowledge about what others are doing prevents duplication of service and additionally prevents one from having to “reinvent” the wheel to address shared issues.

e. If so, does this level of networking meet your needs or do you want additional opportunities to so do? Why/why not?

YES - ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES:

An opportunity to network on an Atlantic Level would be beneficial as we have similar issues in terms of community size, income levels, lobby efforts, etc.

Information source:

- *look at how others support people who need housing related services*
- *if clients want to move outside the Province, we would know to whom/where they can be directed*
- *learn from others' experiences - an opportunity to visit other sites and see projects*
- *identify people who are on the same “wavelength” to see how they are addressing specific issues and client groups*

The bigger the network the bigger influence it can have - enhanced collaborative effort and resources to support people

Comment:

The majority of respondents see inherent value in enhanced networking opportunities - citing once again the ability to increase their knowledge base and to learn from others' experiences. In addition, there is thought to be “strength in numbers” i.e. the larger the network the stronger and more influential the lobby effort seeking affordable housing and housing related services.

c. If not, why not?

One respondent, while noting the benefits of additional networking opportunities in the Atlantic Canada Region likewise cites concerns. There is a need to recognize that despite enhanced networking opportunities, one can not go beyond one's own current capacity to benefit from same.

If an organization does not have the resources and capacity to either manage such

networking

nor to avail of opportunities which is provides, then it is of questionable benefit to so

engage.

d. If not, do you network with colleagues in your community, your home province or in other provinces outside Atlantic Canada?

Note: The following questions were not relevant to those interviewed for this process

i] If so, does that meet your needs fully?

ii] If not, why is networking not part of your operations?

1. Would you like to network more?

2.What could be done to facilitate your networking more?

- 7. Do you see networking with colleagues in Atlantic Canada as potentially valuable to your work? If yes, why? (Prompts: Share information and best practices; accessing technical advice; organizing for advocacy purposes; organizing training and capacity building supports...)**

In number 6 b above, respondents articulated the many reasons they would value additional networking opportunities and these apply to same with colleagues in Atlantic Canada.

However, several groups state that such networking opportunities would only be welcome and beneficial **if**

- *there is a real reason to so do*
- *there are opportunities to face to face networking*
- *the information to be shared is relevant and useful to their work*
- *there is real learning around what works and why*
- *the networks goal's and objectives are relevant to their organizations*

In other words, respondents want to ensure that networking on an Atlantic Canada level accomplishes the collective goal of increased affordable housing and related services for people who are in need of such support. This type and level of networking has to have an identified purpose - and it must provide relevance to the work being undertaken by housing providers and related service providers in our Province.

a. If not, why not.

Not applicable

The next set of questions relates to the possibility of establishing an Atlantic Canada Affordable Housing Network:

- 8. If an Atlantic Canada Affordable Housing Network were to be established, what would you like to see it do? (Prompts: share information on other members' activities and interests; deliver training and other learning opportunities (capacity building); advocacy; facilitate dialogue between members; share housing news specifically relevant to Atlantic Canada...)**

All of above {4 respondents]

Sharing information:

- *looking for “how to” tools to assist us if we decide to move in a different direction; what are others’ experiences? If direction has proven feasible, how does one approach such change?*
- *information is always good*
- *best practices is something we are seeking*
- *to learn from others successes/failures - what works/ does not work*
- *inform eachother about on-going projects and activities - so we are not starting from the beginning when it is not necessary.*

Advocacy/Lobbying:

- *as a government body would have to be cautious re level of involvement in advocacy and lobbying to government members but certainly this type of Association should provide a stronger voice for community*
- *to lever more money out of federal governments for affordable housing - advocacy /lobbying piece would be key. This would be most useful due to ground that has been lost over the last 10 years.*
- *advocacy for low income people to access affordable housing*
- *stronger voice in lobbying: coordination of policies - one voice*
- *enable Atlantic Canada to bring their needs to their Premiers which in turn could be brought to a federal level.*

Primarily, it has to feel “real” to people. It can not be an abstract concept or removed from agencies. Sometimes such a network can be very removed and even when it facilitates people coming together, it has no real impact.

Particularly seeking opportunities for training as we do not have the budget for this - so we have shelter but not necessarily the effective supports people are seeking

Keep issues in the forefront - keep the issue of housing for poor people in the media; we have to ensure it is on the public plate and on their minds. Keep it visible.

9. Is anyone currently providing these services?

a. If so, which ones and to what degree?

There was no one seen to be currently providing/facilitating this level of Atlantic Canada Networking and related services.

10. If there are no groups currently meeting a specific need, is there a group you feel could or should meet it without an Atlantic Network? Please explain.

While one respondent noted that this kind of work had been done by the Urban Core Support Network in the past, none of the respondents were aware of any group or any

existing networks which could facilitate information sharing, communication, etc. in the Atlantic Region.

The Organization

11. What type of organization should such a network be?

a. Prompts

i] Informal group that individual members can call on for specific purposes or that communicates regularly

ii] Informal collective of provincial groups (which do not currently exist in NL and PEI)

iii] A charity (with a limited advocacy mandate as per charity regulations)

iv] An incorporated non-profit

v] An affiliate of a larger organization

vi] Other, please explain.

b] Why that option?

GENERAL:

Aside from not wanting a charity - it does not much matter which option is chosen as long as someone spearheads it and keeps it alive - i.e. to determine where should it be? who should move it along?

Has to be enough money for info sharing and face to face meetings

Affiliate of a larger organization may be beneficial as this may be the middle ground - CHRA is an organized respected formal structure

LEADERSHIP

- *needs a structure with someone at the helm - eg., a non-profit so someone is driving the process*
- *everyone is so busy that unless someone sets out to do it, it won't be done*
- *the option does not matter as long as it has leadership and drive and resources to make it real*
- *has to have life of its own; has to exist outside of any of the agencies which are forming it - then it has real leadership*
- *the job is to make it work - at some point someone has to be there to push the agenda. Existing organizations, staff and volunteers are busy so realistically who is going to do it within their structures?*
 - *whatever it takes on requires organizational leadership - i.e. can not be done by a series of loose organizations*
- *leadership to ensure it happens and people who are really committed to it - and then it would evolve according to the needs of each Province*

INCLUSION/RELEVANCE:

- *the key is to ensure that the structure enables on-going, consistent and relevant information sharing and that it meets the needs of those coming together to form it.*
- *it must be guided by overall principles of inclusion.*
- *perhaps it could be governed by a larger Umbrella organization for smaller groups - structure and representation could be guaranteed*

Comment:

In general, respondents noted that the actual type or organization was less important than the leadership and resources needed to ensure it becomes a reality and moves forward as articulated in number 8 above. Key to this would be on-going communication between and among members, opportunities for face to face networking and guiding principles of inclusion.

There was concern that it not become a structure which could become mired in bureaucracy [e.g., a charity based model]. Additionally, several respondents noted that it can not be a “loose” organization, nor should it be lodged within any of the organizations which come together to form it although it was suggested that it could be placed within a larger existing umbrella organization such as CHRA..

Once again, respondents noted concern re the need for focus, direction and dedicated leadership/ resources to actualize such a Network.

12. In Nova Scotia and New Brunswick

How would you see this organization relating to the Affordable Housing Association of Nova Scotia/New Brunswick Affordable Housing Association?

This question is not relevant to those interviewed for this process.

13 If the network were to form, how broad should the membership be?

a. Prompts:

- i] Affordable housing providers**
- ii] Housing related service providers**
- iii] Private developers**
- iv] Housing Advocacy Groups**
- v] The social services/social development community**
- vi] Economic development groups**
- vii] Government**
- viii] Academics**
- ix] Others, please explain.**

BROAD INVOLVEMENT

See all as being involved - link is housing and all different perspectives are important

Faith organizations should be included - they operate housing and need opportunity to update their thoughts and be exposed to different possibilities.

Sounds like a good cross section

Housing is a broad issue and so it is better to have more perspectives and all groups affected need to have representation.

There is strength in numbers; need to include all and identify common ground; have to tie in economic and social piece

LIMITED MEMBERSHIP

Not too broad - don't know if government and academics need to be there. However, do need NLHC and non-profits who are involved in some aspect of housing and need builders/private developers.

Membership is a dilemma. My gut instinct is that when you bring in academics and government it may take it in a direction which removes it from community. On the other hand, without some of those folks, you may miss opportunities.

Do not see this being government; should be housing providers and community groups trying to provide or develop services

Not sure - there are advantages to hearing what everyone is saying and having access to enhanced level of information. Perhaps stay more focused on housing and related services, individual and group advocates. Then as issues arise, we could identify who else should be at the table.

May want to invite government, business and academics at the beginning; caution however, that if we start too big, we may lose focus

Broad is important - if it is to be accountable at the grass roots level and be in touch with real needs, then would have to be broad based and accessible to groups which do not have a lot of funding. However, this should focus in on groups doing work on housing and related income support pieces

Comment:

Respondents were evenly split in terms of how broad the membership of an Affordable Housing Network should be. Those in favor of broad membership note that it enables diverse perspectives, inclusive membership and strength in terms of lobby and advocacy efforts. One respondent noted that faith groups should be included in this broad membership - given their role as well as their need to be educated on different approaches to housing provision.

Those who supported more limited membership saw merit in targeting housing providers, related service providers, individual and group housing advocates. They cite a

need to ensure a focus on housing needs as identified by community and to ensure accountability back to these communities. They note that broad membership may dilute this focus.

It was suggested that such a Network could start with targeted membership and invite other groups/individuals as needs are identified for same.

b. Would targeting membership broadly be an asset or a burden to the organization's operations? Why?

- *There is a need to keep members interested and so if the focus is too broad, members may lose interest in the Network.*
- *The more organizations/agencies involved from a broader spectrum the less likely it would be focused on the real issue; first thing to do is try and develop common vision*
- *Sometimes too broad can bog you down - can not have people who are totally out of touch with area of housing.*
- *Key is to have those who are affected by lack of housing eg., a self advocate - to bring us back to reality the consumer voice has to be there*
- *It have a lot of members, could lose focus: key is to have a strong mandate and work within it*
- *Leadership is key to maintaining focus. Strong leadership would enable the Network to value diversity.*
- *People should be able to come if they choose but the Network has to have something for them*
- *It has to have purpose to meet people's needs - can not invite people just for the sake of having a large membership: the Network must ensure that members know what their role is i.e. why they are involved*

Comment:

While there was a split in terms of how broad the membership should be [#10a], the majority of respondents noted cautions around a broad membership base with the main concern being the potential to lose focus on the core issues of affordable housing provision and related services.

However, a number of respondents noted that strong leadership and a clear mandate would likely prevent such a dilution of intent. Additional safeguards to same include the presence of self advocates who have housing experiences and members who have chosen to come because the Network has something to offer them.

c. Would core housing and service providers get what they need from the network if it's membership is broad? Please explain.

Half of the respondents indicated that they could not predict the impact of broad membership on the needs of members whose core focus is housing and related service provision. Of the remaining respondents, the majority felt that there would be a benefit to all to have additional depth and breadth of knowledge and experience available.

Once again, however, a caution was articulated that this could only be an asset if the Network had a clear focus and mandate on housing.

d. What benefits might the non-core members derive from network?

Respondents generally felt that the non-core members would derive great benefit from their participation as they would be "grounded" in terms of their knowledge and interest in the issues around housing provision/services, and it might entice them to become advocates in their own right.

Additionally and specifically to external policy makers, it was felt that they would become informed about the realities of housing affordability/availability which would enable more responsive policies in this regard.

Once again, however, a caution was noted that any benefits for this group would really depend on who was involved in the Network.

Your Participation

14. What would encourage you to become part of this network, and why?

INFORMATION SOURCE

As provincial government agency, we need to be at the table to see what is happening - want to be kept in the loop, not isolated from community

As municipal government body, it is mutually beneficial to know what is happening in the housing industry in Atlantic Canada; see what we should be doing and have additional justification for it

Interest in doing something in the community around housing - to learn from others' experiences

FOCUS AND CREDIBILITY

Knowing who will be there - that they are credible, committed and that there is real opportunity for change and action

Would depend on the Network's goals and objectives/criteria and how it would affect our organization

Would participate if I see that it will be effective;/interesting and if it has a clear focus on housing and activities to increase availability of same

Participate if I think it will level the playing field and enable access to housing for all and not a select few

The goals and objectives would have to be clear and inclusive - with a mandate to increase access to safe, accessible and affordable housing.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Knowing funding will be available to non-profit groups who don't have resources to spend to travel to networking events

Would need to have good representation and resources to bring people together and share information

Comment:

The government respondents and some of the community respondents noted that they would be interested in participating in a Network which provides them on-going information about activities, best practices, and experiences of others in the area of housing.

For many respondents, participation in such a Network would depend on its having a clear mandate/focus on housing and its level of credibility in the community. Additionally, a number of community respondents noted that it must be able to support [financially] groups who wished to participate in face to face networking opportunities.

15. What would deter you from becoming part of this network, and why?

Respondents note that if their vision as articulated for the Network [presented in #14] is not met then they would likewise be deterred from participating, i.e. if the Network lacked credibility; relevant/responsive, inclusive goals and objectives, and/or adequate resources to support organizations' capacity to participate in face to face meetings.

Additionally, there were specific issues articulated by a small number of respondents:

- government cited a need to have to tread cautiously in the area of advocacy
- a community organization cited the need to keep confidentiality uppermost in the minds of those advocating on others' behalf
- the issue of time to enable effective involvement was noted

Financing

16. If the network met your needs, would you be able and willing to make a modest financial contribution to support its operation? The answer: "I would need specific costs or other specific information to make that decision." is fine here.

No:

No [5 respondents]

- *no additional funding for such expenditures*
- *limited operating resources*
- *we have had cutbacks due to funding constraints*

MAYBE:

Need more information - if it is for travel or telephone costs then this is a cost of doing business. Do we want to fund another structure? This is fairly complicated for government as there would be no new money and so it would have to be identified as part of existing budgetary process

Depends - this would be a political [municipal] decision

Depends - small registration or membership fee would be possible

- *it would have to be very modest*

Cannot commit as this would be an organizational decision

Comment:

Half of the respondents responded with an unequivocal no to any suggestion that belonging to such a Network would require any type/level of financial contribution: they cite funding constraints within their own organizations as prohibiting such expenditures.

The remaining respondents were less adamant in their opposition but neither were they affirmative. Within the government agencies, a political process would determine whether or not such contributions were possible and the remaining respondents noted that such a contribution would have to be very modest.

17. What other potential financing sources/strategies can you identify to support this network's operation.

While some respondents had no suggestion, others cited CMHC, HRDC, ACOA, corporate sponsors and possibly CHRA itself.