



Wood Buffalo Housing receives grant to furnish accommodations

FORT MCMURRAY, AB, July 20, 2020 – Wood Buffalo Housing (WBH) learned last month that they are the successful recipient of a grant provided by the Alberta Real Estate Foundation (AREF) to create affordable furnished accommodations for the people of the Wood Buffalo Region. Funding from this initiative will provide 30 single and multi-family units in one of Alberta’s most progressive communities, meeting immediate housing needs during these challenging times. In the long-term, these units will also provide bridge accommodations as people look to establish longer-term real estate options.

Representatives from AREF contacted WBH following the flood to see if there was some way their organization could help the people of this community.

“We were completely honest with them,” says Henry Hunter, President and CEO of WBH. “Based on the overwhelming number of calls we were receiving at that time, people were in need of affordable furnished accommodations and we only had a handful to provide.”

WBH saw a similar situation after the wildfire in 2016.

“Suddenly we had an entire group of people who are without their homes, their belongings and their basic furnishings, and they needed to find somewhere that they could stay until they had access again,” says Hunter.

AREF told WBH they could apply for a grant with their organization. So they completed the application and submitted it that week. They received notice in late June that their application was approved.

“We were of course ecstatic,” says Hunter. “Funding from this grant means we will have increased capacity to accommodate more people in times of emergency. Even outside of these natural disaster-type scenarios, we often receive requests from people seeking affordable furnished accommodations, whether it’s someone travelling from one of our region’s rural communities for an extended period of time for medical or other reasons, or someone new to the community that needs an affordable and safe place to lay their head at night.”

“Our Board was unanimous in its desire to help the people of Wood Buffalo,” says Doug Leighton, Chair of the Alberta Real Estate Foundation. “We are all aware of the extraordinary chain of events that has hurt this community and our Board was eager to fund an initiative that would have a significant and immediate impact. While the Foundation does not normally fund capital projects, the Board agreed that the creation of furnished emergency accommodations will help meet immediate housing needs and enhance affordable housing options in Wood Buffalo.”

Work to furnish the units will be conducted in the coming months, and the units will be ready for applicants as they are completed. If you are in need of affordable furnished accommodations, or have been affected by the recent flooding in Wood Buffalo, please contact WBH at 780-799-4050 or info@wbhousing.ca.

About Wood Buffalo Housing (WBH): Founded in 2001, WBH is the lead non-profit housing agency in our region. We collaborate with our many stakeholders, including tenants, community groups, non-profits, industry and government to pursue safe and sustainable housing solutions for all of the people of our community. Since 2001, we've helped more than 10,000 people – those new to our community and those making a new start – find the right apartment, the right townhouse, and the right way to achieve home ownership. WBH also facilitates the provision of funding for the Rent Supplement Program and Community Housing on behalf of the Province.

About Alberta Real Estate Foundation (AREF): The Alberta Real Estate Foundation invests in real estate policy, research, practices, and education that strengthen Alberta's communities. Under the Real Estate Act, whenever a consumer deposits money in trust through a real estate broker, property manager, or commercial broker, the interest earned on the deposit is accumulated and forwarded to the Foundation for reinvestment into Alberta's communities. Individually, it is nickels and dimes. But across the province it adds up. Since its inception in 1991, the Foundation has invested over 22.6 million in grants to 640 initiatives across Alberta. For more information about the Alberta Real Estate Foundation visit www.aref.ab.ca.

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