



**Ontario  
Aboriginal**  
Housing Services

# ANNUAL REPORT

2022-2023



*Building homes,  
empowering communities*

CONTENTS

Overview.....3

Letter from the Board Chair.....3

Letter from the Board Treasurer.....5

Letter from the Chief Executive Officer.....7

Why Housing Matters.....9

About OAHS.....11

Mission, Vision, and Values.....11

Our Organizational Structure.....13

Our Governance Structure.....14

Service Departments.....15

Property Management Services.....15

Programs.....18

PolicyServices.....21

Technical Services.....22

Housing Development Services.....26

Supportive Housing Services.....29

AdministrationServices.....32

Our Partnerships.....34

Our Policy Activities.....37

Our Financial Performance.....39

LookingForward.....41

Appendix A.....43





# OVERVIEW

## LETTER FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

*“At OAHS, we understand that solving the housing crisis will require a significant amount of cooperation and collaboration.”*



Over the last year, I have seen Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services' (OAHS) incredible growth as an organization—in helping an increasing number of urban Indigenous people and families with safe affordable housing. We are making a significant difference in the communities we serve and welcoming more partners into our network than ever before.

Every seed or tree that is planted and given what it needs to thrive, contributes to a healthier more diverse, and inclusive environment. The same can be said for the work of OAHS. Every time we provide an Indigenous person or family with a home where they can feel safe, welcomed, and supported, we not only change their lives, we also collectively impact the lives of everyone around them.

OAHS' work is about so much more than simply building housing. Our work is about building communities, opportunities, and a better understanding of the housing priorities and needs of Indigenous people. OAHS builds trust, ignites hope, and builds a future where every Indigenous person in Ontario has a safe, affordable, and culturally relevant place they can call home with the supports and opportunities they need to thrive. As CEO of the Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA), I am especially proud of OAHS' work to ensure the safety of Indigenous women and their families by placing them in priority housing that offers protection from violence, exploitation, and human trafficking.

Within this year's annual report, you will come to appreciate the breadth and scale of the work that OAHS does and the impact that it has on the lives of urban Indigenous people in Ontario. While every development, program, and initiative is worth celebrating, I want to highlight two unique activities that OAHS undertook this year that I believe will make a major difference for many generations to come.

On the development front, OAHS signed a portfolio deal with Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's (CMHC) National Housing Co-investment Fund (NHCF) that will see nine new projects—including 276 new units—built over the next two-to-three years in Ontario. This portfolio deal reflects OAHS' truly innovative thinking and allows our organization to develop more projects and units at one time than ever before. I am confident that the success of this deal will pave the way for other multi-development funding deals in the years ahead.

On the advocacy front, OAHS helped found the National Indigenous Collaborative Housing Inc. (NICHl) – a new For Indigenous, By Indigenous organization to act as a national voice for the housing needs of urban Indigenous people, and as a vehicle for obtaining and distributing federal funding and resources to housing development projects and programs from coast-to-coast-to-coast. At OAHS, we understand that solving the housing crisis will require a significant amount of cooperation and collaboration. We look forward to working collaboratively with NICHl members, different levels of government, other housing providers, community members, and stakeholders to accelerate the development and delivery of safe and affordable urban Indigenous housing.

Evolving from the pandemic, the housing and homelessness crisis has never been more urgent. But neither has the case for change: the value, importance, and impact of providing affordable urban Indigenous housing and robust culturally relevant support programs means that every Indigenous person and family can feel safe and thrive in their homes and in their communities.

Looking ahead, I am excited about how well-positioned OAHS is to make an ever-increasing difference in the lives of urban Indigenous people in Ontario. I extend my sincere gratitude to the dedicated staff and leadership of OAHS, my fellow board members, and every community member and partner who helps make what we do possible.

Miigwetch, Matna, Kinahnaskomihtin, Marsee, Nia:Wen, Merci, Thank you,



Cora-Lee McGuire-Cyrette  
Chief Executive Officer, Ontario Native Women's Association

## 2022-2023 Highlights



*Funded 27 Indigenous service and/or housing providers to provide housing support services to 2,147 households*



*Received \$7.5 million in Mental Health and Additions Program funding (ongoing)*



*Created a new Tenant Support department*





# LETTER FROM THE BOARD TREASURER

*“Every single positive action that we take is a stepping-stone to a better future—for today, tomorrow, and for all the generations to come.”*



In the year 2022-2023, OAHS achieved significant milestones in fortifying its financial base, enabling it to pursue more complex development projects, handle multiple developments simultaneously, and respond swiftly to new opportunities such as acquiring housing units and amalgamations.

OAHS partnered with BMO Bank of Montreal to increase its lending facility to \$60 million, facilitating the acquisition of additional rental units. This move expands housing options for those on the waitlist, diversifies revenue streams, and enhances long-term financial stability. Furthermore, OAHS negotiated a portfolio deal with Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's National Housing Co-investment Fund, resulting in nine new developments in Ontario and 276 new affordable housing units with over \$86 million in federal funding.

On the programs front, OAHS helped secure a commitment for funding to support the establishment of the National Indigenous Collaborative Housing Incorporated (NICH), including over \$281 million in program funds and \$5.6 million for administration-focused funding from the federal government. The organization also attracted \$7.5 million in ongoing Mental Health and Addictions Program (MHA) funding. This additional funding is just one example of the incredible work that OAHS has been doing for many years; it shows how OAHS has established a trusted relationship with its government partners—proving its capability, capacity, and dedication to acting as a steward of public funds. Time and again, OAHS has readily demonstrated that it is an action-oriented organization able to achieve its targets and objectives.

This year's annual report includes excerpts from OAHS's audited financial statements for the year ending March 31, 2023, including the independent auditor's report, balance sheet, and notes to the financial statements. These documents can be found in Appendix A.

The truth is, we are currently facing a severe housing crisis, and it has escalated to a catastrophic level following the COVID-19 pandemic. This catastrophe is particularly impacting urban indigenous communities at a disproportionate rate. If we intend to address this extensive housing challenge within our lifetime, OAHS must expand and enhance its collaborations with governments, nonprofit organizations, and private sector companies.

I fully expect that 2023-2024 will be another exciting year as OAHS forges ahead with its ambitious development activities, seeks out opportunities to purchase existing housing units and transforms them into safe and affordable housing for urban indigenous people, and works to expand program activities and reach.

The incredible work that OAHS does is only possible thanks to its dedicated and passionate staff and its broad circle of partners. My appreciation for all of you knows no bounds.

Thank you and Marsee,



Joanne Meyer  
Chief Operating Officer, Métis Nation of Ontario

## 2022-2023 Highlights



*Shifted to an all hybrid vehicle fleet*



*Supported the founding of NICHl to act as a national voice for the housing needs of urban Indigenous people*





# LETTER FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

*“Every single positive action that we take is a stepping-stone to a better future—for today, tomorrow, and for all the generations to come.”*



Housing is a human right—and yet, there are more urban Indigenous people in need of safe and affordable housing than ever before in Ontario. And this number is only growing.

Right now, today, we need approximately 22,000 new units of affordable housing stock to address the needs of homeless urban Indigenous people and those living in unsafe, overcrowded, and otherwise unfit conditions. This number is only expected to grow in the coming years if there isn't a major concerted effort to make change happen.

As important as this immense need for new affordable housing units is, it doesn't tell the important story. The story of the individuals and families who would have real opportunities to thrive if they had safe and affordable housing. Women who have experienced violence. Young people who have aged out of foster care. Single parents and sole-income families. Individuals with mental health challenges. People who have never known a safe home or a home where they can drink the water coming out of a tap.

The reality is that there are far too many urban Indigenous people in need of safe and affordable housing—and every one of them has a story. They aren't numbers. They aren't faceless. They're our brothers and sisters. Our aunts and uncles and cousins. Our fellow human beings.

At OAHS, our mission is to design, develop, and deliver a sustainable and culturally appropriate continuum of housing for urban Indigenous people in Ontario. But we also believe that it takes more than four walls to build a home. That's why we're also committed to working with our partners and collaborators to build inclusive communities where Indigenous people have a sense of belonging, where people have the supports they need to become successfully housed for the long-term, and where individuals can develop the skills they need to manage housing challenges and embrace opportunities.

The work we do isn't easy, but it's work that everyone within our organization is passionate about, whether they work in finance or in the field. Every day, we see the outcomes of our work firsthand. Within our OAHS family, there are a number of people working in different roles who were once individuals who needed help. Seeing them continue the cycle—helping other Indigenous people find a safe home, a supportive community, and opportunities to learn new skills and find meaningful work—highlights how making a difference in one life can have an impact that resonates across generations.

In this year's annual report, you'll learn more about the work that we do at OAHS and about the people that we've helped. You'll read about some of our exciting development projects, our partnership with BMO Bank of Montreal, and our work with other Indigenous housing providers to bring NICHI—the National Indigenous Collaborative Housing Inc.—to life. You'll also find highlights of our successes and what we're looking forward to accomplishing in the year ahead.

Looking to the future, it can be easy to feel overwhelmed by the scale of the challenges that we face—by the number of urban Indigenous people who need safer and more affordable need housing, by the amount of funding needed to make a dent in the housing and homelessness crisis, by the level of work and commitment that is required to make change happen.

But at OAHS, we know that change is possible—that solving the housing and homelessness crisis is possible. In the past five years alone, OAHS has grown quite substantially. We have more funding, more development projects, more units, and more tenants—and we are working with more public and private partners so that together we can provide culturally appropriate housing and supports to more people. Every single positive action that we take is a stepping-stone to a better future—for today, tomorrow, and for all the generations to come.

As you read this annual report, my biggest hope is that you will feel the invitation to join OAHS and our partners on our journey—that you will accept our invitation to come in, to join our circle, to learn more about the work that we do and what you can do to become one of the next stepping-stones in our journey forward.

Chi'Miigwetch to everyone on our Board for their support over the year. Chi'Miigwetch to everyone on our OAHS team and to our partner organizations and communities. Chi'Miigwetch to Creator for allowing us the opportunity to serve.

All my Relations,



Justin Marchand  
Chief Executive Officer,  
Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services

## 2022-2023 Highlights



*Negotiated a portfolio deal with CMHC's National Co-investment Fund, which will see 9 new projects developed—creating 276 new unit*



*Completed Sturgeon Falls development – a container-built **Net Zero** development*



*Preparing to break ground on a new **24-unit** housing development in Thunder Bay*





# WHY HOUSING MATTERS

The **imperative**: *Housing is a human right*

The **reality**: *We need far more safe, affordable housing for urban indigenous people in Ontario*

The affordable housing crisis in Ontario isn't new—but it has gotten worse since the COVID-19 pandemic.



Over **800,000** Indigenous people in Canada live in large urban centres

Over **17%** of Indigenous people live in overcrowded housing in Canada



Indigenous people are **3x** more likely to live in a dwelling in need of major repairs

Indigenous people living in urban and rural areas are **11x** more likely to experience homelessness than other Canadians



Indigenous people represent **up to 99%** of homeless individuals depending on the community

There are **2x** the number of Indigenous, single-parent families with children under 15 compared to non-Indigenous single-parent families



Indigenous women are **2.5x** more likely to be victims of violence than non-Indigenous women

Indigenous people make up a significant proportion of all vulnerable groups in:

Homeless  
Seniors  
Youth exiting care

Targets of abuse and violence  
People with mental health and addictions challenges  
People who are incarcerated

# WHY HOUSING MATTERS

By resolving homelessness, we can reduce the **costs** of social services associated with homelessness.



**\$4000+**

per child in  
care



**\$1,932+**

per shelter bed



**\$4,333+**

per person in  
provincial jail



**\$10,900+**

per hospital  
bed

## What will it take to resolve the homelessness crisis?

In 2022, the National Housing Council called for a *minimum* of **\$6.3 billion** budget to help address housing needs for urban, rural, and northern Indigenous people.

*We need more...*

Safe, affordable spaces

New affordable housing stock

Rent-geared-to-income (RGI) units

Supportive housing options

Support programs that enable the success of community members

Partnerships and collaborations

Land donations and funding



## Why supportive housing matters

"We can't solve homelessness without providing support. It's imperative. But I don't think most people really understand the severity of the struggles you can face when you've been homeless and move into a home. If we could get more people educated—if we could destigmatize the idea of supportive housing and help people and communities understand the positive impact associated with helping people transition from being homeless to having their own home—then we'd be able to do so much more to help resolve homelessness in Ontario."

Jessica Smith, *Acting Director of  
Supportive Housing*



# ABOUT OAHS

Over the past nearly thirty years, OAHS has grown from the seed of an idea into the largest provider of urban Indigenous housing in Canada. Our people—a team of more than 140 passionate and committed individuals—work collaboratively with our partners, representatives of different levels of government, community members, and other stakeholders to help over 10,400 people on any given day.

## *Mission*

**OAHS is a leader in the design, development and delivery of a sustainable and culturally appropriate continuum of housing for Indigenous people in Ontario.**

## *Vision*

**Urban and rural Indigenous communities throughout Ontario have culturally safe and affordable housing.**

## *Values*

### **Indigenous teachings guide our work**

- Seven Grandfather Teachings: respect, wisdom, humility, honesty, love, truth, bravery
- Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit principles
- We hold knowledge, practices and ways of knowing and being

### **Housing is a fundamental human right and is linked to the self-determination of Indigenous people**

- At different places in our life cycle, we have different housing needs
- Inclusivity – includes issues of geography, gender, etc.

### **When we build housing, we are contributing to building community**

- We are building communities where Indigenous people have a place of belonging.
- Social Economy and returns
- Community empowerment through skills enhancement and transfer

### **The way we build housing recognizes our responsibilities to Mother Earth**

- Environmental stewardship

***Our work is based on a commitment to excellence***





## *The Evolution of OAHS*

In 1992, consultations were held with the grassroots members of organizations serving First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people not living on reserve lands in order to determine the need for affordable, adequate, and suitable housing for individuals and families with low and moderate incomes.

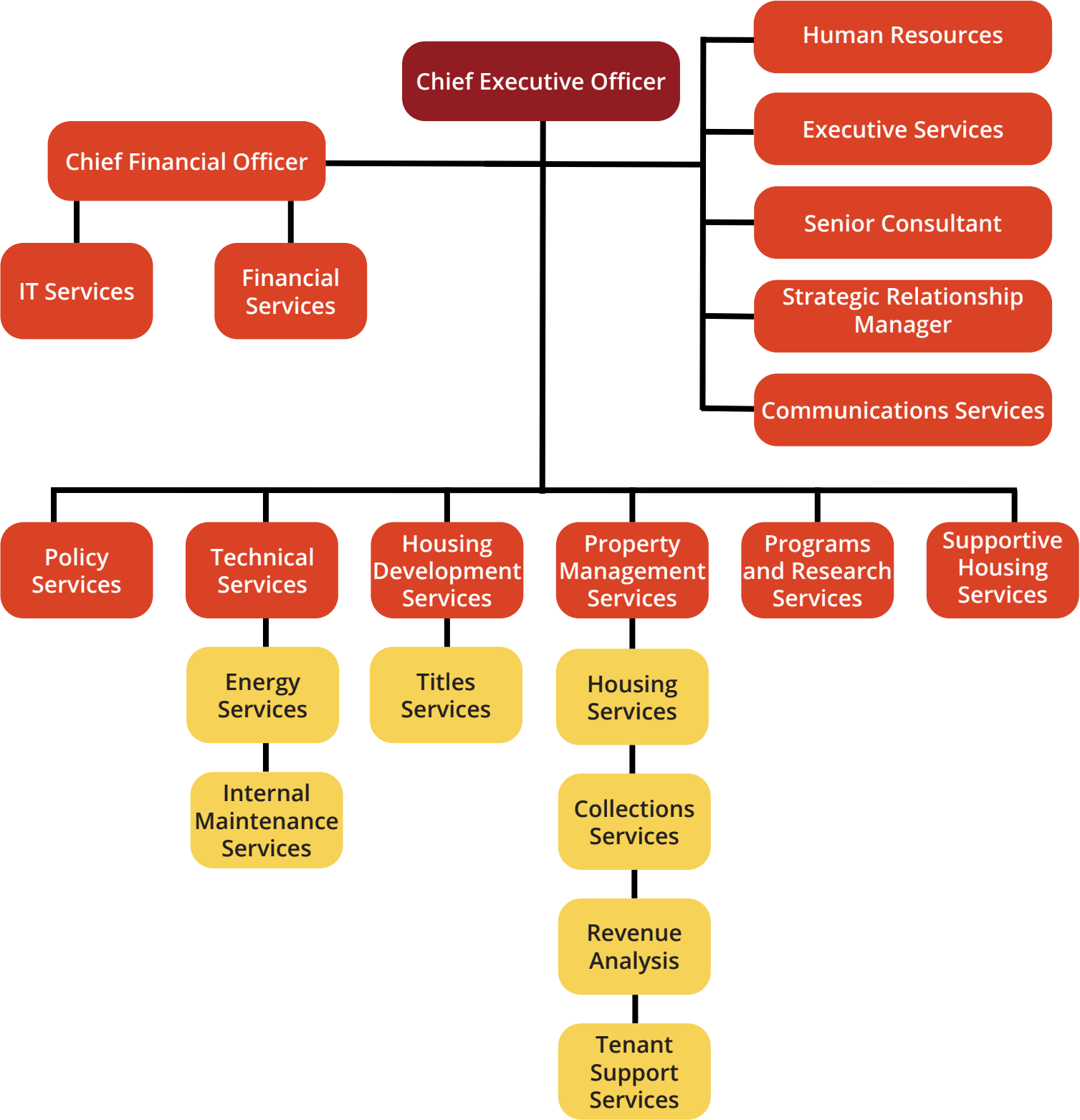
These consultations led to the incorporation of the Ontario Aboriginal Housing Support Services Corporation in September 1994—with two representatives from each organization forming the Board of Directors.

Over the years, OAHS has amalgamated with a number of other urban Indigenous organizations in order to share our knowledge and experience, extend our reach, and combine and grow our impact. We see this coming together as an important part of our evolution, giving OAHS a combined history of over forty years of making a difference in the lives of urban Indigenous people.

Today, OAHS's Board continues to include representatives of three of the largest off-reserve Indigenous organizations in Ontario—the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC), the Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA), and the Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO)—which allows us to better understand the diverse needs of urban Indigenous people, to collaborate more seamlessly with other Indigenous and non-Indigenous service providers and partners, and to make a bigger impact in the lives of Indigenous people and in communities across Ontario.



Our Organizational Structure





## Our Governance Structure

The Board of Directors of OAHS is comprised of representatives appointed by our Director Member Organizations, including the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC), the Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA), and The Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO).



OFIFC represents the interests of 29 Indigenous Friendship Centres located across Ontario. These centres provide welcoming places for urban Indigenous people to gather, make connections, and receive culturally-based services. OFIFC provides research, policy advocacy, training, and program support aimed at expanding the influence, reach, and impact of the work that Friendship Centres do.



ONWA is a not-for-profit organization focused on supporting and empowering Indigenous women and their families in Ontario. It does this through research, advocacy, and policy development, and by delivering a range of programs and services specifically tailored to the unique needs of Indigenous woman.



The Métis Nation of Ontario, through its Housing and Infrastructure Branch, provides a wide range of housing services and housing stabilization support services to Métis citizens. The organization's housing mandate is to increase housing and related support options for Métis people across the housing continuum—from homelessness to homeownership.

### OAHS Board of Directors 2022-2023

#### Chair

Cora-Lee McGuire-Cyrette (Executive Director of ONWA)

#### Vice Chair

Gerti Mai Guise (Executive Director of OFIFC)

#### Secretary/Treasurer

Joanne Meyer (Chief Operating Officer of MNO)

#### Director

Dawn Lavell-Harvard (President of ONWA)

#### Director

Jennifer Dockstader (President of the Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre)

#### Director

Tana Troniak (ONWA)

# SERVICE DEPARTMENTS

The majority of OAHS staff work within one of six service departments. In this section, we provide an overview of each of these departments, including their key successes during 2022-2023 and their plans for the future.

## PROPERTY MANAGEMENT SERVICES

### Overview

Property Management Services is responsible for managing nearly all of OAHS's rental units (2,800+), including apartment buildings, townhouses, and single family homes in locations across Ontario. Work within the department is split across a number of different sub-functions, including:



#### Portfolio Assessment

Responsible for assessing Urban Native Housing (UNH) portfolios in distress to identify options in order to retain any housing as Indigenous units.



#### Property Management

Responsible for overarching property management activities and for overseeing teams that act as boots-on-the-ground to provide day-to-day management and maintenance of units.



#### Housing Services

Responsible for all activities related to the rental process, including processing all applications, selecting tenants, conducting term reviews, and conducting RGI calculations and updates.



#### Rent Analyses and Reporting

Responsible for reviewing rents, ensuring revenues are in check, conducting term renewals, conducting required reporting (e.g., rent supplement reporting), and assessing results against revenue targets.



#### Collections

Responsible for coordinating payments, posting charges, managing Landlord-Tenant Board processes as required (e.g., N4s, N1s), and working with others across OAHS to assist with eviction prevention.



#### Tenant Support

Responsible for bridging the gap between tenants and OAHS, working with Collections and Client Services and Building Coordinators (CSBCs) to understand tenant challenges, and helping connect tenants to external organizations in order to receive assistance (e.g., support for tenants in arrears, case management services).

## Key Successes

Established the Tenant Support department using long-term funds provided by the provincial Mental Health and Addictions program (MHA).

Achieved the lowest vacancy rate in OAHS history.

Worked closely with other departments to manage a range of challenges (e.g., rising costs, arrears, loss of rent relief, lack of contractors) coming out of the pandemic.

Hired a Senior Property Manager to provide oversight and establish metrics for property managers.



## Looking Towards the Future

Conducting tenant engagement sessions in tandem with other OAHS departments in order to establish relationships and strengthen the sense of community.

Updating standard operating procedures (SOPs) for the department to focus operational improvement efforts.

Working to understand staff turnover and make adjustments in order to better retain staff.

Working with Technical Services to improve asset planning.

Continuing to build the Tenant Support department—and establishing baseline metrics in order to validate the value associated with providing tenant support.

Improving the central applicant registry and reporting mechanisms in order to better understand applicant needs and challenges.





## Making a Difference for Indigenous Tenants in Kenora

In 2022-2023, OAHS took ownership of a 30+ unit building from a private landlord in Kenora because the majority of tenants in the building were Indigenous. A subsequent building and unit inspection highlighted the significant disrepair of the building and the need for major renovations to be completed. The conditions of one family's unit were so poor, Property Management and Technical Services worked together to find the family a more suitable OAHS unit within the community.

Through the dedicated efforts of three on-site Internal Maintenance team members, a significant amount of progress has been made to improve the conditions of both the building and individual units in a very short period of time. In addition to making repairs to tenanted units, six of seven vacant units in the building have also been repaired and offered for rent.



One of the units before renovations



One of the units after renovations



*"What makes OAHS so important is the impact that we can have on the lives of Indigenous people and their families.*

*One story that stands out for me is when a family moved into one of our Red Lake units from a remote community. The kids were so excited to have running water.*

*As much as that is heartbreaking to think about, it is also exciting because it really emphasized how much OAHS was making a difference."*

Meghan McCarville,  
Director of Property Management

# PROGRAMS SERVICES

## Overview

The Programs department is responsible for administering provincial funds for the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH). In 2022-2023, the Programs department administered approximately \$35 million in program funding to other Indigenous housing and service providers through open Request For Proposal process.

In addition to administering program funds to other Indigenous non-profits, the OAHS Programs department delivers programs:



### Assisted Home Ownership Program

Provides eligible Indigenous households with low-to-moderate incomes with financial assistance for down payment and closing costs associated with the purchase of a home. Funding is provided through the provision of forgivable loans.

**19** households assisted in 2022-2023



### Assisted Home Repair Program

Provides eligible Indigenous homeowners with financial assistance to make repairs to and improve the energy efficiency of their home. Homeowners can receive up to a maximum of \$25,000 in the form of a forgivable loan.

**62** households assisted in 2022-2023

"Thank you for...all of the support throughout this very new, exciting, and challenging learning experience. I am excited and happy beyond words to move into my home with my sons this week."

- Assisted Home Ownership Program participant (2022)





## Key Successes

Received a \$7.5 million in ongoing Mental Health and Addictions Program (MHA) funding.

Enhanced engagement with service providers by increasing the number of in-depth interviews conducted per quarter in order to understand their experiences, challenges, opportunities, lessons learned, and success stories.



## Looking Towards the Future

Continuing to work collaboratively with service provider partners to deliver much needed supports to Indigenous people.

Fostering mechanisms to identify and share experiences, lessons learned, and best practices across OAHS's service provider partners.

Cross-training staff to ensure that every position has coverage.

Improving program application templates to make them easier and more user friendly for applicant organizations and individuals.



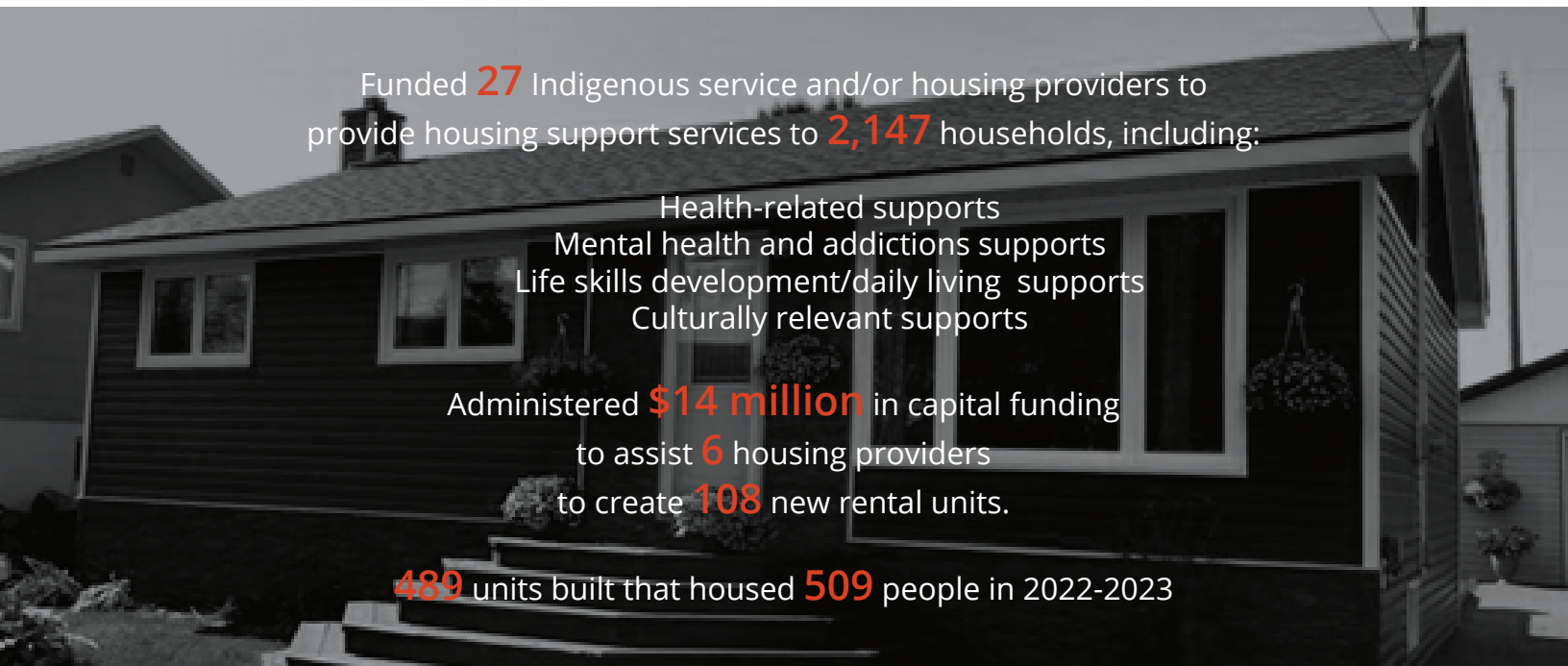
## Administration of Provincial Funding: By the Numbers

Funded **27** Indigenous service and/or housing providers to provide housing support services to **2,147** households, including:

- Health-related supports
- Mental health and addictions supports
- Life skills development/daily living supports
- Culturally relevant supports

Administered **\$14 million** in capital funding to assist **6** housing providers to create **108** new rental units.

**489** units built that housed **509** people in 2022-2023





## Stories From Our Service Providers: Looking Beyond the Numbers

"We were able to successfully discharge a client this quarter. The client was successful in attending Georgian College on his own to upgrade his communications credit and gained acceptance into the two-year Indigenous Community and Social Development diploma program. The client was able to use the college's resources to help with financial aid for program tuition and found housing on his own. The client has also been actively participating in ceremonies, earning a place as a fire keeper for some events. The client has moved towards economic independence, and we wish him a bright future."

- Biminaawzogin Regional Aboriginal Women's Circle's (BRAWC) Indigenous Housing First Program



"Our culture program continues to empower and strengthen the identity of the women in our residential program. We are fortunate to have direct access to our Cultural Knowledge Keeper. Every two weeks, she facilitates workshops, such as planting and medicine teachings, blow and dot art on canvass, macramé feathers, dream catchers, and creating hearts and roses from edible strawberries. Our clients are deeply connected to her—and her storytelling each week gives them a sense of hope. One of our clients is also of Cree ancestry and our knowledge keeper is Cree. This has helped our client connect with her lineage, strengthen her sense of identity, and start to learn some of the Cree language."

- BRAWC'S Biminaawzogin Transition Homes



*"As we look back at what we achieved last year, we're excited about what's in store for 2023-24. With more funds, smart planning, and teamwork, we've been able to help even more Indigenous organizations make a real difference in their communities when it comes to housing."*

*"We're truly moved by the dedication and heart these housing and service providers put into fighting homelessness and housing insecurity, and we're honored to be part of their journey."*

Daneen Dénommé,  
Director of Programs and Research

# POLICY SERVICES

## Overview

The Policy Services department is responsible for helping foster change at a policy level and for fostering better understanding among all of OAHS's stakeholders—including different levels of government, service provider partners, private sector partners, community members, and others—in order to build a stronger commitment to solving the challenges of homelessness for urban indigenous people.

Education and knowledge sharing is a big part of the work that the Policy Services department undertakes. This is because helping people become successfully housed for the long-term takes more than simply giving them a roof over their head; it also takes helping them build a strong foundation across a number of different dimensions (e.g., physical and mental health, spirituality, culture, community) so that they can thrive.

## Key Successes

Strengthened relationships across the province—with different levels of government (e.g., federal, provincial, municipal), community organizations, and private sector partners.

Collaborated with our Director Member Organizations in order to discuss and evaluate policies, shape future thinking, and draft documents, position papers, and viewpoint pieces to the support the Board and CEO.

Supported the founding of NICH—*a new organization with the mandate to act as the national voice for the housing needs of urban Indigenous people, and as a means for obtaining and distributing federal funding and resources.*

Fostered the idea of Policy Services being a safe space and sounding board for the entire organization so that staff come to them for support, advice, and relevant insights.

## Looking Towards the Future

Giving team members the freedom to find their own voice, to trust themselves, and to share their ideas with confidence.

Continuing to educate and share knowledge with different stakeholders in order to foster better understanding within different communities, gain stronger buy-in and support for the work that OAHS is doing, and strengthen and forge new partnerships for the future.



*"OAHS cares about people, not only about building houses. While a house may be the end goal to make sure that people are sheltered, if people aren't safe, secure and happy in their house—we've failed."*

Peggy Rice,  
Senior Policy Analyst



# TECHNICAL SERVICES

## Overview

The Technical Services department is responsible for activities related to the capital repairs and sustainability of OAHS's rental units. Work in the department is split across six areas:



### Maintenance Administration

Responsible for overseeing a 24-hour maintenance line for tenants, and documenting tenant concerns/requests in the maintenance system to support work required by field staff.



### Internal Maintenance

Responsible for a variety of in-field maintenance activities related to OAHS units in order to improve response times, reduce OAHS's reliance on external contractors, and manage costs more effectively. Work includes assessing units being onboarded by OAHS, improving units prior to being offered for rental, responding to tenant maintenance requests, cleaning out and refreshing units between tenants, and training team members participating in the 52-week Property Maintenance Program.



### Energy Division

Responsible for improving the energy efficiency of OAHS assets both at the organizational level (e.g., applying for funding to complete energy audits and retrofits, improving utility tracking) and at the tenant level (i.e., providing a Tenant Assistance Program to help tenants save energy, avoid falling behind on their energy bills, and apply for forgiveness programs).



### Invoicing

Responsible for processing all invoices from field staff prior to hand-off to finance.



### Quality Assurance

Responsible for conducting field and office reviews of procurement and purchasing to ensure the quality and transparency of work from both contractors and OAHS field staff, in addition to supporting field staff with technical expertise and experience.



### Capital Repairs

Responsible for overseeing larger capital repairs and planning, and for asset management, including the vehicle fleet.





## Key Successes

Shifted to an all hybrid vehicle fleet.

Restructured field roles to reduce the number of people and vehicles on the roads.

Added six new team members, including two new energy staff, an energy supervisor, and a Tenant Assistance Program (TAP) representative.

Enhanced training for incoming field staff from one week to four weeks.



## Looking Towards the Future

Conducting tenant engagement sessions in tandem with other OAHS departments in order to establish relationships and strengthen the sense of community.

Working with Ameresco to train field staff to become certified to conduct building condition assessments.

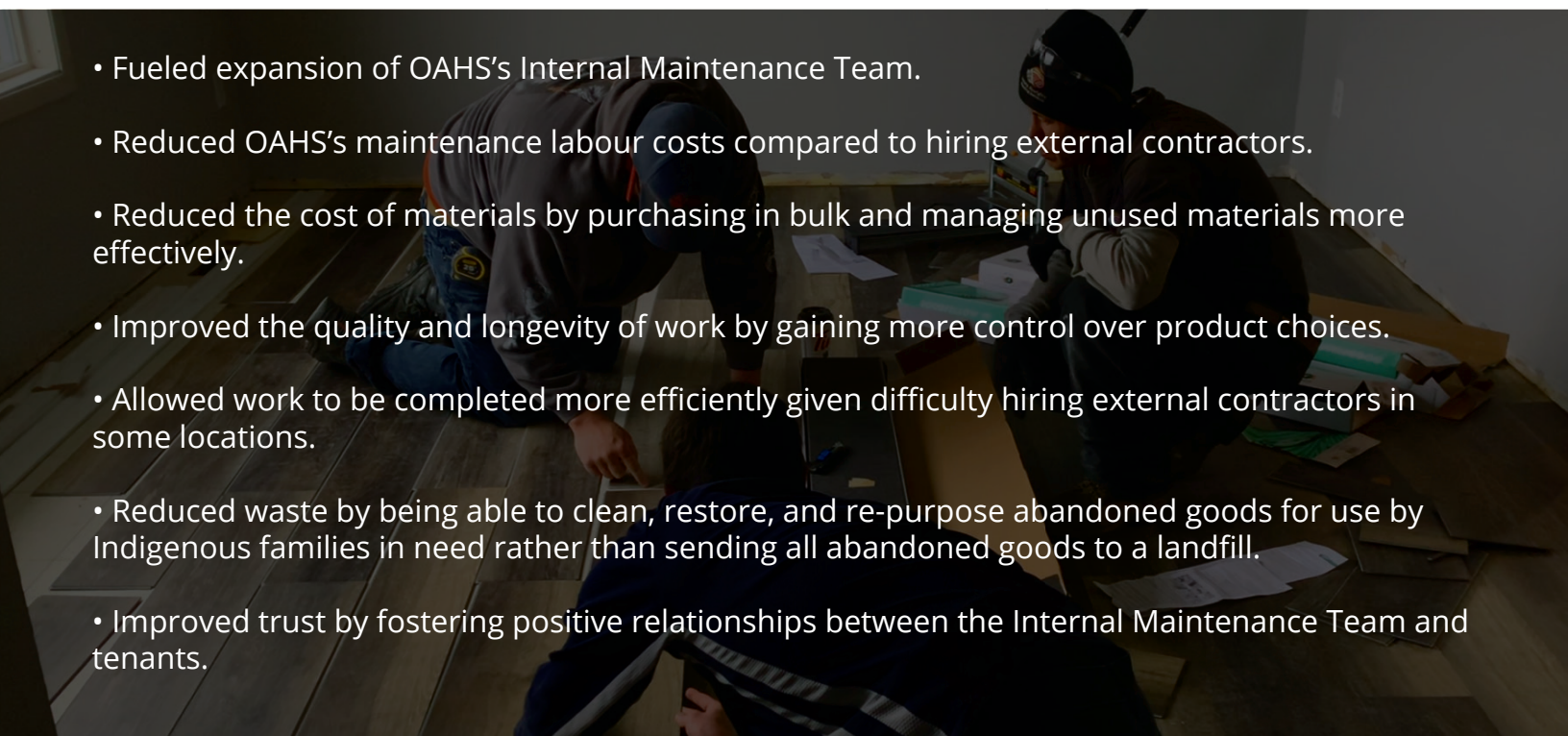
Using available training dollars to train OAHS field staff and potentially PMP participants so that they can also act as certified energy advisors.

Cross-training existing field staff so that they can respond to both maintenance requests and energy program needs.

Updating OAHS's capital database in order to significantly enhance asset management, forecast capital requirements, and manage a wide range of activities (e.g., annual safety inspections).

## Making a Difference in OAHS's Operations

- Fueled expansion of OAHS's Internal Maintenance Team.
- Reduced OAHS's maintenance labour costs compared to hiring external contractors.
- Reduced the cost of materials by purchasing in bulk and managing unused materials more effectively.
- Improved the quality and longevity of work by gaining more control over product choices.
- Allowed work to be completed more efficiently given difficulty hiring external contractors in some locations.
- Reduced waste by being able to clean, restore, and re-purpose abandoned goods for use by Indigenous families in need rather than sending all abandoned goods to a landfill.
- Improved trust by fostering positive relationships between the Internal Maintenance Team and tenants.



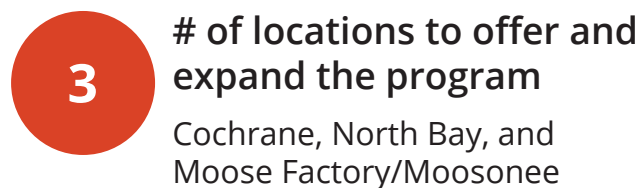
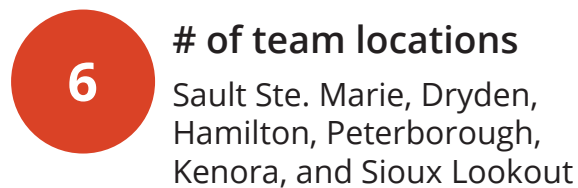
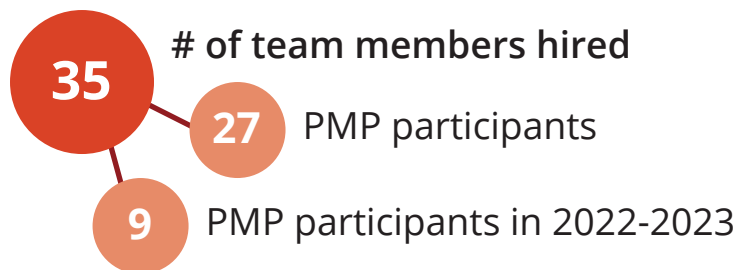
## Recognizing the Impact and Value of OAHS's Property Maintenance Program

The Property Maintenance Program (PMP) is a collaboration between OAHS's Internal Maintenance department and OFIFC focused on breaking down barriers—such as a lack of opportunity, education, or experience—experienced by the Indigenous community by offering meaningful training, hands-on experience, and employment opportunities to community members.

The 52-week program provides participants with both classroom and experiential learning experiences under the oversight of a mentor so that they can learn a wide range of home repair, renovation, and property maintenance skills (e.g., painting, flooring installation, drywall installation and repair, basic plumbing). Individuals interested in entrepreneurship following completion of the program are given additional support to help them begin their journey.

### Making a Difference to Urban Indigenous People

Over the past 3 years, the PMP program has:



25 Youth (25 & under)

12 Ages 26-49

2 Ages 50+

20 Men

6 Women

3 Two-Spirit



## OAHS's Internal Maintenance Team: By the Numbers

The chart below compares work estimates from external contractors with the actual costs associated with the Internal Maintenance Team doing specific work. These numbers reflect quantitative costs only. In addition to actual cost savings, the use of OAHS's Internal Maintenance Team also resulted in significant time efficiencies given the shortage of available contractors in some communities.

Work Required	Contractor (Estimated Cost)	Internal Maintenance Team (Actual Cost)
Tub Surround	\$4,850	\$2,620
Painting	\$6,500	\$1,450
Kitchen Update	\$11,762	\$4,569
Flooring	\$17,250	\$5,360
Cleaning Unit	\$22,000	\$3,500 <sup>1</sup>
<b>Total Cost</b>	<b>\$62,362</b>	<b>\$17,499</b>

<sup>1</sup> includes traveling to a remote site



*"All cost savings achieved by our Internal Maintenance teams are re-invested back into our units and into the continued development of our Internal Maintenance Program."*

*"With repair costs and materials continuing to rise, these two steps will play an important role towards the long-term viability of our assets and our maintenance team."*

Dan Gartshore,  
Director of Technical Services



# HOUSING DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

## Overview

The Housing Development Services department is responsible for driving OAHS's goal of adding new affordable housing stock for urban Indigenous people in Ontario. It does this by facilitating both the building of new developments and the transformation of existing properties into affordable housing stock. As part of its work, Housing Development Services:

- Oversees all new housing under construction.
- Manages the renovation of properties in order to turn them into affordable housing stock for urban Indigenous people.
- Applies for all manner of federal and provincial funding to help OAHS build affordable housing developments across Ontario.



As part of its development work, Housing Development Services works very collaboratively with a broad range of service provider partners, including the Indigenous Friendship Centres located across Ontario and a broad range of local and regional Indigenous service providers. These partners are a critical part of the work that OAHS does when building supportive or transitional housing.

## Key Successes

Signed a complex and highly innovative portfolio deal with CMHC's National Housing Co-investment Fund (NHCF) that will see nine new projects (276 new units) built in Ontario, including affordable housing units for urban Indigenous people, supportive housing for chronically homeless youth, transitional housing for youth aging out of care, and others.

Preparing to break ground on a new 24-unit affordable housing development in Thunder Bay.

Received donations of land or other contributions from the involved municipalities for all current development projects, including Kenora, Marathon, White River, and Sarnia and Thunder Bay.

Completed Sturgeon Falls development—a container-built Net Zero development.

## Looking Towards the Future

Significantly reducing energy and GHG emissions as part of the developments within the NHCF portfolio.

Making 20% of units accessible within the NHCF portfolio—which is 10% higher than the Ontario Building Code.

Continuing to make progress on the Biindigen Well-Being Centre in Hamilton—a collaborative project involving OAHS and the De dwa da dehs nye>s Aboriginal Health Centre, Niwasa Kendaaswin Teg, McMaster University's Department of Family Medicine, and the City of Hamilton.

Increasing the number of transitional housing for youth aging out of care.

Developing additional urban Indigenous hubs across the province over time, using Biindigen as an example of what's possible.

## Development Spotlights: 18 Elm Street (London)

One of the 9 projects being developed as part of the CMHC portfolio deal is a \$19 million, 42-unit development in London—which will provide a mix of 1-4 bedroom affordable housing units.

The complex is being purpose built to include units for mothers taking part in the Homeward Bound Program (operated in London by the N'Amerind Friendship Centre)—which provides mothers with childcare and other supports while they go to school or take training programs. As a part of this initiative, the building will also include programming space for the Homeward Bound Program and an on-site daycare.

Construction on the development will begin in fall of 2023.



## Development Spotlights: 1001 Ninth Street North (Kenora)

Another project within the CMHC portfolio deal is the \$9.5 million, 30-unit development in Kenora.

Featuring 1-bedroom and studio units, this project made in partnership with Waasegiizhig Nanaandawe'iyewigamig (WHNHAC) will feature programming space and primary health care and preventative services, combining traditional and contemporary approaches to health and healing. Complementary programs include a residential healing program and hostel accommodations for people accessing hospital services in Kenora.

Construction to be completed by end of 2023.



*"Signing a portfolio deal with the CMHC's National Housing Co-investment Fund to build 276 units at one time is an incredible win—not only for OAHs, but for the building of affordable housing stock for urban Indigenous people in Ontario.*

*To have nine developments under construction at one time, ten including our Thunder Bay development, is a major increase from anything we've been able to do in the past. But this isn't where we stop. We want to use this as a stepping-stone to show what is possible so that we can build even more affordable housing stock for urban Indigenous people in the years to come."*

Cathy Connor,  
Director of Housing Development



## *A Vision for the Future: Building the First Urban Indigenous Hub in Ontario Biindigen Well-Being Centre*

At OAHS, we believe that it takes more than four walls to build a home. It takes a welcoming, supportive community. That's why OAHS's vision for the future includes inspirational developments like the Biindigen Well-Being Centre in Hamilton. This development will be the first of its kind in Ontario—an Urban Indigenous Hub that will bring together health, family, social and housing services, culturally relevant supports, and other services for urban Indigenous people in one location.



Biindigen Well-Being Centre concept art: subject to change

Biindigen—which means “welcome” or “come in” in Ojibway—is on its way to becoming a reality because of a dedicated circle of partners, including OAHS, De dwa da dehs nye>s Aboriginal Health Centre, Niwasa Kendaaswin Teg, McMaster University's Department of Family Medicine, and the City of Hamilton—in addition to funding from federal, provincial, and municipal governments. Every partner in the circle is highly committed to increasing the access of urban Indigenous people in Hamilton to safe and affordable housing and meaningful and culturally relevant programs and services.

What makes Biindigen truly unique is its location-centric, wraparound services model. The site will include the De dwa da dehs nye>s Aboriginal Health Centre—which will include primary care services through a collaboration with McMaster University's Department of Family Medicine, (where Urban Indigenous people can access both Traditional and Western Medicines), the Niwasa Kendaaswin Teg—which is an urban Indigenous daycare centre ( they also will operate the urban Indigenous Farm which is unique to this development), and OAHS—which will build and manage 80-100 housing units that will be a mixture of rents and unit sizes.

The overarching vision for the site includes a collaborative operations model that embraces the seven Grandfather Teachings and includes shared space and pathways connecting the different facilities that create a stronger sense of community.

When completed, Biindigen will foster and enable a highly integrated, community-based continuum of housing, health, and social services supports and services for urban Indigenous people—and act as a hub for cultural activities.



Family Medicine



Ontario  
Aboriginal  
Housing Services

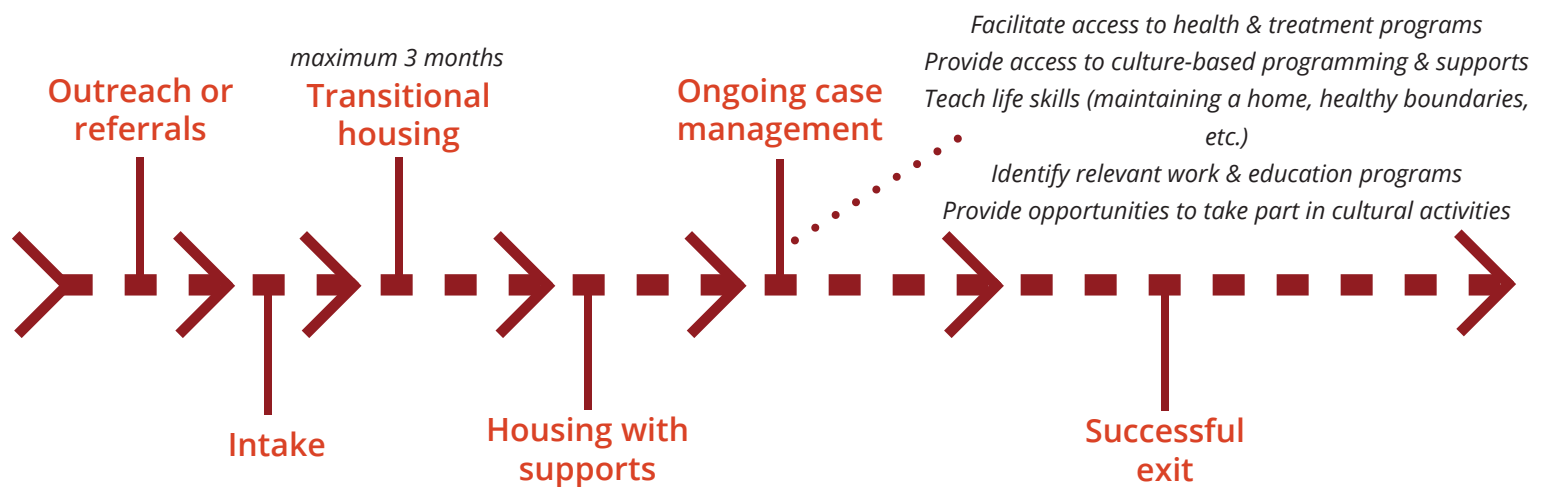


# SUPPORTIVE HOUSING SERVICES

## Overview

The Supportive Housing Services department is responsible for supporting urban Indigenous people experiencing homelessness in Sault Ste. Marie, Timmins, and Sudbury—helping them to find housing and to develop the skills they need to maintain that housing over the long-term. The department's case managers do this by working with individuals to help them successfully transition through the housing continuum, providing access to culturally appropriate programming and supports (e.g., rent supplements) as needed.

Ideally, individuals take part in the Supportive Housing program for a period of four years, with supports decreasing over time as individuals gain more experience and confidence in their ability to manage on their own.



## Supportive Housing: By the Numbers



Housed 357 Indigenous individuals experiencing chronic homelessness



Housed 44 Indigenous individuals released from a federal institution



Supported 33 Indigenous individuals to complete treatment



Supported 7 Indigenous individuals to successfully exiting our program

*"Getting treatment is extremely important for clients who want it and are ready to attend, but it is also very difficult to come by. It's nearly impossible to get quick access to treatment facilities—and the cost of treatment is not at all affordable to our clients. At the same time, it's a major enabler of success. We've had quite a bit of success with clients who have attended treatment."*



Jessica Smith,  
Acting Director of  
Supportive Housing

## Key Successes

Helped get clients into treatment and maintained aftercare supports that were meaningful.

Provided culturally relevant programming and supports to connect clients with their culture—creating a sense of identity, community, and inclusion through different activities, such as sacred fires, beading, painting, drum making, and having elders do teachings.

Stayed on budget, while also taking on additional funds and using them effectively (e.g., purchased a tipi for programming at one location, funded additional spots at a treatment facility).

## Changing Lives, Making a Difference

*"I'm very grateful for this program. It has helped me from my early recovery in drug addiction. The staff were always there for me, I was able to learn and trust again. I gained confidence along the way. I believe in myself today. This program will benefit anyone going through struggle. I have found a new way to live. I have found courage. The program helped me a lot with my sobriety and being housed. If it wasn't for the program I would be 4 years behind where I am now."*

**Jeffrey Hookimaw**, who has maintained his sobriety and joined the Mushkegowuk Fire Keepers Outreach to help others.



## Looking Towards the Future

Getting more individuals into treatment programs.

Increasing the number of successful exits into RGI housing—a difficult task given the lack of RGI housing.

Obtaining additional funding in order to help more people, provide more services, and expand the program into other areas of Ontario that need it.

**Glen Sutherland**, who was accepted into the Mining Essential training program at Northern College with opportunities for employment once completed. Glen graduated from Gwekwaadziwin Miikan - mental health and addiction treatment program.

*"If it's an addiction, alcoholism, education, or if you need help getting a job, this program is there to help."*

*"One individual who has been housed for over one year is another successful graduate of Gwekwaadziwin Miikan. He has been able to maintain his sobriety with OAHS supporting him along the way. He has also been a role model to his other siblings who suffer from addiction, with one of his brothers following in his footsteps."*

Spoken by a Supportive Housing Team member in Timmins on behalf of the individual



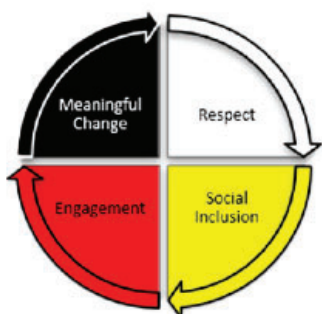
## The Ongoing Impact of COVID-19: It Isn't Over Yet



COVID-19 put an incredible amount of pressure on Supportive Housing Services, dramatically increasing the intensity of some of the supports needed by different clients. In particular, mental health and addictions issues escalated significantly over the course of the pandemic.

During 2022-2023, Supportive Housing Services found that many clients continued to need more support than may have been required prior to the pandemic. For example, whereas a case manager may have visited a client once or twice a week in the past to maintain an appropriate level of care, some clients required case managers to visit daily in order to provide necessary supports.

For many of Supportive Housing Services' clients, COVID-19 isn't over yet. A significant increase in the intensity of mental health and addictions support is needed to help give clients the level of care and support they need to successfully manage challenges initially brought on by the pandemic so that they can continue to transition through the housing continuum.





## ADMINISTRATION SERVICES

In addition to OAHS's six service departments, a number of OAHS staff work within the Administrative Services side of OAHS. Administrative Services refers to a variety of roles and functional areas that provide the backbone and critical infrastructure for OAHS's client-facing work.

In this section, we provide a brief overview of the functions and roles included within Administrative Services, put a spotlight on key successes achieved during 2022-2023, and highlight future plans and activities.

### Overview

Administration Services includes the critical back-office functions and personnel that support OAHS's vision, mission, and mandate. In particular, Administrative Services includes:



#### Executive Services Administration

The Executive Services Administration team (e.g., Executive Assistant/Office Manager, Receptionists) is responsible for supporting the Board of Directors; supporting the CEO; overseeing, updating, and tracking office expenditures (e.g., supplies, equipment), responding to telephone and in-person queries, and managing mail services.



#### IT Services

The IT Services team is responsible for managing IT and related activities for OAHS. This includes managing network infrastructure across the province; managing the internal IT Help Desk; researching, overseeing, and advising on possible deployment of new applications and system upgrades; managing IT assets; updating and sporting OAHS's Business Management System (BMS) and Central Applicant Registry (CAR); and managing the alarm and camera systems for all OAHS offices and rental properties.



#### Human Resources

The HR team is responsible for administrative activities relating to the management of people within OAHS, including recruitment, training, payroll, benefits, and compensation. HR is also responsible for developing new HR policies and procedures based on leading practices.



#### Finance

The Finance team is responsible for all cash and financial management activities within OAHS. This includes accounting and cash forecasting, conducting all banking activities, and managing third-party financing relationships.



## Key Successes

Held our first Coming Together to Learn and Share Gathering, bringing everyone together post-pandemic.

Moved everyone in the organization from hourly to salary, making them eligible for benefits programs.

Implemented a new benefits program and added all employees to the program.

Introduced a health spending account and a wellness account for employees.

Conducted a compensation review and implemented a new compensation structure.

Opened a new RRSP plan with matching based on transparent criteria.

Implemented new training programs and leadership opportunities.

Established an eight figure financing agreement with BMO.

Amalgamated with two other indigenous housing providers.

Achieved the eight-day financial close target for the majority of months during 2022-2023.

Improved year-end process, shortening time frame by more than a month.

*How are our people using their health spending and wellness accounts?*

*Vet bills  
Exercise equipment  
Sun care products  
Surfing lessons  
Gym memberships  
Prescription glasses & sunglasses  
Massage therapy  
Smoking cessation programs  
Yoga classes  
Camping fees  
Teeth whitening  
Holistic medicine*

*"Our organizational culture is very employee-focused. We try and provide everything we can to help people grow, thrive, feel valued, and achieve a strong work-life balance. We are all working towards the same goal—to help urban indigenous people in Ontario—and we can best do that by working together and supporting each other."*



Racheal Spina,  
Director  
of Human  
Resources

## Looking Towards the Future

Developing and updating standard operating procedures (SOPs).

Conducting succession planning activities.

Improving HR benchmarking in order to enhance understanding of people-based metrics.

Completing the implementation of a new performance management system.

Revising the HR policies manual.

Completing the shift from paper to digital HR records.

Finding ways to bring people together more.

Continuing to mature cash forecasting and cash management processes.

Continuing to improve our financial systems and processes.

Establishing an enterprise risk management (ERM) program for OAHS.

Continuing to amalgamate with other Indigenous housing providers.

Beginning the process to conduct ESG reporting.

## OUR PARTNERSHIPS

At OAHS, we recognize that we cannot solve the housing and homelessness crisis among urban Indigenous people in Ontario on our own. In the course of our work, we collaborate and partner with a wide range of government, public, not-for-profit, and private organizations also committed to increasing and enhancing access to safe and affordable housing and supportive housing for urban Indigenous people in Ontario.

Our partnership approach is based on expertise, education, and knowledge sharing. We are constantly looking to invite people into our circle so that we can share knowledge and learnings, foster a better understanding of the needs of urban Indigenous people in Ontario, extend the value and impact of our activities and the activities of others, and strengthen our web of partners working to make a difference in the lives and communities of urban Indigenous people.

We work with a number of different types of partners, including:

### Director Member Organizations

OAHS works hand-in-hand with our DMOs (ONWA, OFIFC, MNO) both at a policy level—coming together to help express views on the housing needs of urban Indigenous people in Ontario, and at an operational level—as partners on specific housing projects and programs.



Métis Nation  
of Ontario

### Primary Funding Partners

We work very closely with our primary funding partners (e.g., the Ontario government, CMHC, BMO, TD, Community Housing Transformation Centre) to develop, and deliver a continuum of culturally appropriate housing for urban Indigenous people across the province.



Community Housing  
Transformation Centre  
Centre de transformation  
du logement communautaire

Ontario

BMO Bank of Montreal



### Canadian and International Housing Partnerships

We work collaboratively with Canadian-based and global housing-focused associations (e.g., Aboriginal Housing Management Association, the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association, CHRA, Housing Partnership Canada, International Housing Partnership) that are focused on improving access to housing for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.



ABORIGINAL HOUSING  
MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

ONPHA  
ONTARIO NON-PROFIT  
HOUSING ASSOCIATION



International Housing Partnership

### Private Contractors and Building Services Companies

We partner with a number of private sector contractors and building services companies (e.g., CGV Builders, Taché Construction, Two Row Architect) on development and redevelopment projects.





## Non-Profit Housing Providers

We have come together with a wide range of Indigenous-led not-for-profit housing providers, such as Neech-ke-When Homes Inc., Native People of Thunder Bay Development Corp., Native People of Nippissing, in addition to other not-for-profit housing organizations (e.g., Habitat for Humanity) across Ontario in order to develop safe, affordable housing stock and to ensure that existing affordable housing stock remains available to urban Indigenous people.



## Provincial District Service Boards and Municipalities

We work closely with a range of municipalities (e.g., Sault Ste. Marie, Hamilton, Peterborough, Cochrane) and provincial district service boards (e.g., NOSDA) to both develop safe, affordable housing and to ensure necessary supports for urban Indigenous people.



## Health Organizations

We work collaboratively with Indigenous-focused health organizations (e.g., De dwa da dehs nye>s Aboriginal Health Centre, ATLoHSA Family Healing Services) to provide urban Indigenous people with the health supports they need to be able to thrive.



## Indigenous Organizations

We work with local Native Friendship Centres and other Indigenous-led organizations (e.g., First Step Women's Shelter, Waabinong Head Start Family Resource Centre Fort Erie, Native Friendship Centre, Coalition of Hamilton) to enable the development of projects and to deliver specific programs in different communities across Ontario. In particular, many of these partners provide the operational backbone that is critical for attracting funding from government partners for specific development activities.



## Partnering with BMO to Drive Growth in Safe, Affordable Housing



*"Partnerships are a critical part of the work that we do at OAHS. We're always looking to expand our network and to build new relationships with public and private sector organizations that can help us extend our reach so that we can help more urban Indigenous people and make a bigger impact in our communities."*



Ken Jones,  
Chief  
Financial  
Officer

OAHS has been working with the Bank of Montreal for over five years now. One of our first big initiatives with BMO was for the financing related to the development of a thirty-unit pre- and post-natal care centre in Sioux Lookout. Since working together on that project, we've continued to expand our relationship with the bank into a strong, positive, and forward-thinking partnership.

In 2022-2023, OAHS closed a \$50 million dollar facility with BMO—extending our credit to \$70 million. This extension is going to make a very significant difference in the size of projects and developments that we can undertake in the coming years.

Everyone at OAHS is incredibly excited about this—about the bank's confidence in our organization and the work that we do. The people we work with at BMO are also excited about the continued evolution of our work together. The bank is firmly committed to creating more Indigenous banking solutions, supporting affordable housing projects, rewarding innovative thinking, and working together with OAHS to make a bigger difference in the lives of urban indigenous people.

One of the reasons our partnership with BMO has strengthened so much over the years is the fact that everyone we work with at the bank continues to go out of their way to understand everything that OAHS does. Right from the beginning, everyone at BMO not only worked to understand the financial aspects of our operations, our cash flows, and the equity we put into each of our developments; they also took the time to learn about the business that we're in, the passion that goes into our work, the critical gaps that we are trying to fill in housing market, and why the work we do makes financial sense as an investment for the bank.

Our partnership with BMO—which also enables our broader partnerships with various levels of government, Indigenous-led organizations, and other not-for-profit housing providers—is an incredible example of how collaboration can be an amazing tool for making real, positive change happen.

## OUR POLICY ACTIVITIES

OAHS is firmly committed to working with other Indigenous organizations to foster awareness and build a better understanding among municipal, provincial, and federal government representatives to ensure the challenges of urban Indigenous people are not only heard—but acted upon.

During 2022-2023, the most impactful policy activity that OAHS was involved in was the founding of the National Indigenous Housing Collaborative Incorporated (NICHl).

### *NICHl: A National Organization to Act as a Voice for the Housing Needs of Urban Indigenous People in Canada*



Over the past decade and more, it's become clear that the diverse organizations committed to addressing the unique housing challenges of urban, rural, and northern Indigenous people in Canada required a much stronger voice at the national level in order to drive action.

In November 2022, OAHS, in collaboration with the BC-based Aboriginal Housing Management Association (AHMA) and nineteen other national and regional indigenous housing organizations, convened to discuss a For Indigenous-By Indigenous housing strategy. This led to the signing of a Declaration by attending organizations to address critical gaps in housing and related support services for the 88% of Indigenous people in Canada whose housing needs were not considered as part of the National Housing Strategy. This Declaration acted as the impetus for the registration of the National Indigenous Housing Collaborative Incorporated as a not-for-profit in December 2022.

nichi

National Indigenous  
Collaborative Housing Inc.

Logement Coopératif  
National Autochtone Inc.

NICHl's vision is to provide lasting solutions that increase access to affordable housing and end homelessness for Indigenous people living in urban, rural and northern areas through research, advocacy, partnerships and supporting housing providers in the building of homes.

NICHl's purpose includes receiving and dispersing funds for Indigenous housing projects across Canada, acting as a forum for collaboration on Indigenous housing issues, helping to shape policy and legislation related to Indigenous housing, and promoting and sharing best practices and standards of excellence for Indigenous housing and support services.







As a founding member of NICHI, OAHS was integrally involved in helping the organization transform from the seed of an idea into a fully-fledged organization.

Over the first six months of NICHI's operations, OAHS staff have dedicated a significant amount of time to the organization, providing a range of support (e.g., communications) to help the organization evolve and grow quickly. OAHS's CEO Justin Marchand was a member of NICHI's Interim Board of Directors until May 2023. At that time, OAHS's Senior Advisor Sally Ledger was appointed Treasurer on NICHI's newly established Board.

## Celebrating NICHI's Success

In June 2023—less than eight months after its inception—NICHI received **\$287.1 million in funding** from the federal government, which will be used to help address the critical need for safe and affordable urban, rural and northern Indigenous housing project across Canada. This funding is a testament to the level of work that went into establishing NICHI as a viable, credible, sound and transparent organization in a very short period of time.



*“Over the past five years, the provincial government has quadrupled OAHS's operating budget in general. These operating dollars reflect awareness of the immense need for affordable housing and support programs aimed at Indigenous people throughout Ontario—a fact that is contributing to other Indigenous organizations and health centres also getting funding for operations. NICHI shows on a larger, national scale that the federal government sees that too. But we hope this is only the beginning. So much more support is needed if we are to fully address the need for safe, affordable housing for urban Indigenous people in Ontario and the country.”*

Sally Ledger,  
Senior Advisor at OAHS and  
Board Treasurer of NICHI



## OUR FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

OAHS's commitment to excellence extends to every facet of our operations, particularly in the area of internal controls and governance over financial statements. We recognize that ongoing improvement is essential to maintaining the highest standards of accuracy and transparency. Over the past year, we have increased our efforts to enhance our internal controls and governance mechanisms, ensuring that they remain responsive to the evolving needs of our stakeholders.

### *Periodic Review & Strengthening*

One of the key elements of our approach to internal controls and governance is the periodic review and strengthening of our financial policies and procedures. We have undertaken an assessment of our existing controls to identify areas where enhancements are needed.

This evaluation has resulted in targeted improvements that bolster our ability to prevent, detect, and correct any financial discrepancies. These enhancements have been integrated into our financial reporting systems, further minimizing the risk of human error, and improving real-time monitoring of financial transactions.

### *Collaboration with External Experts*

Recognizing the value of external expertise, we have continued to collaborate closely with external auditors and industry specialists. Their insights and recommendations have been instrumental in guiding our improvement initiatives.

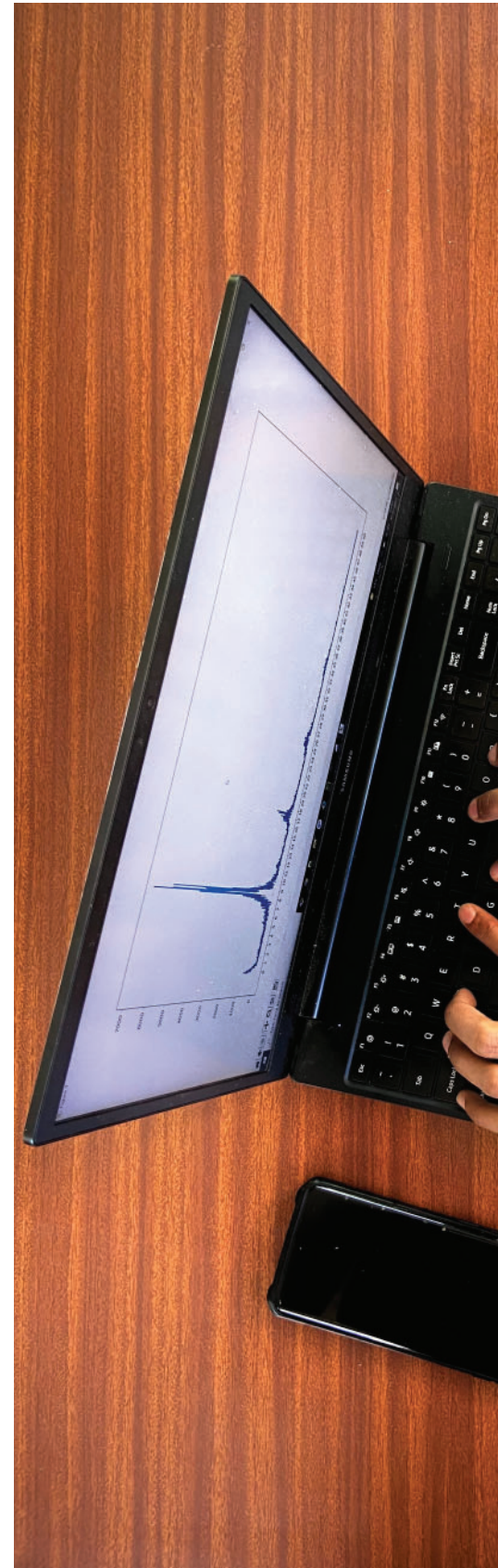
We value the independence and objectivity they bring to our governance processes, as they conduct thorough audits and assessments. Their contributions have provided valuable insights into best practices, enabling us to align our internal controls and governance with emerging industry standards.

### *Empowering Governance Through Board Oversight*

Our board of directors plays a key role in overseeing the controls and governance of our financial statements. They bear the responsibility for establishing and enforcing policies that govern financial controls, risk management, and ethical conduct. Regular interactions between our board and management provide a platform for reviewing financial performance and making strategic decisions rooted in the financial insights presented in our statements.

### *Transparency & Stakeholder Engagement*

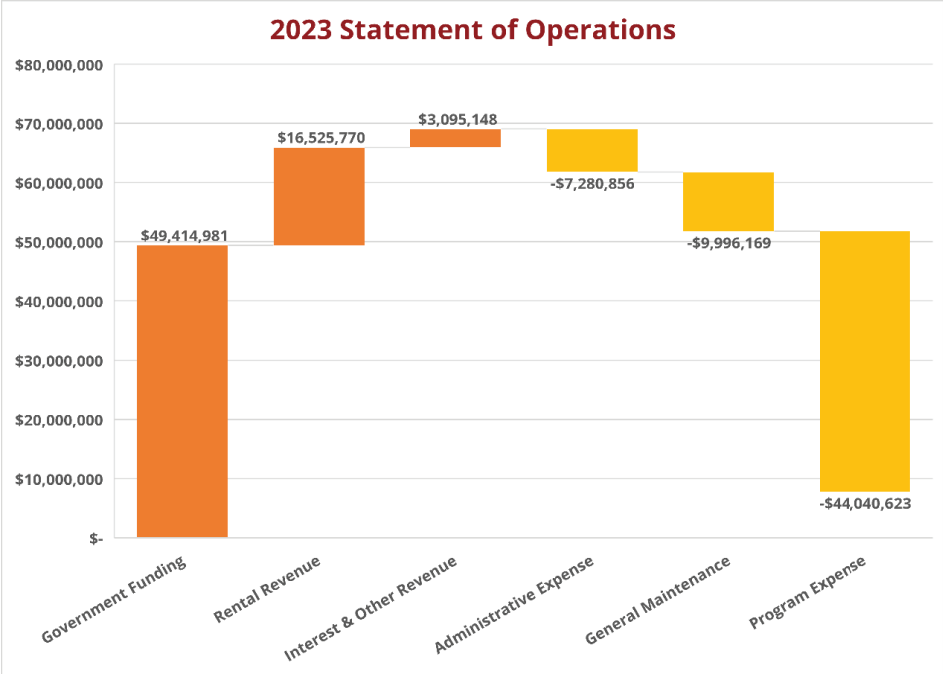
We understand that transparency is central to building trust with our stakeholders. We are committed to engaging with our stakeholders to keep them informed about our efforts to enhance internal controls and governance.



We view our annual report as an opportunity to share the progress we have made and the steps we have taken to improve. We believe that by openly communicating our dedication to excellence in this area, we reinforce our commitment to being a responsible and trustworthy organization.

Our ongoing journey to improve our financial reporting processes is a testament to our commitment to excellence. These efforts reflect our dedication to providing stakeholders with accurate and transparent financial information. As we continue to evolve and adapt to changing circumstances, we are confident that our strengthened internal controls and governance practices will meet the expectations of our stakeholders, positioning us for continued success and growth in the years ahead.

Financial Highlights from 2022-2023



*\*See Appendix A for excerpts from OAHS’s audited financial statements for the year ending March 31, 2023 (i.e., independent auditor’s report, balance sheet, notes to the financial statements).*

To help provide insights into the financial results presented in OAHS’s financial statements for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2023, we would like to highlight the following points:



Revenues

Revenues are down from the prior year primarily due to reductions in government funding related to the Social Services Relief Funding (SSRF) program. SSRF was a program implemented in March 2020 to protect the health and safety of the province’s most vulnerable during COVID-19. OAHS was aware that these revenues would diminish with the ending of the outbreak. These revenues are flow through to expenses, meaning, a decrease in revenues is also reflected in an offsetting decrease in expenses. OAHS rental revenues were strong in 2023/22, as was funding from other government programs.



Expenses

Expenses have increased year-over-year, primarily due to an increase in maintenance expenditures. This increase is a function of greatly increased material costs, in addition to a focus on improving our housing stock, ensuring the health and safety of our tenants. Administrative costs increased year-over-year which is attributable to an increase in employee benefits costs from an improved benefits plan (e.g., stronger RRSP contribution program), higher interest expense from increasing interest rates, and an increase in travel costs as OAHS emerged from COVID-19 this year and business travel resumed.



Capital Assets

OAHS is in the second year of a \$100+ million development program, financed primarily through the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC). This program will add 276 affordable units to the OAHS housing stock. In 2023/22 OAHS added \$18.1 million of Construction in Progress capital assets. Capital improvement assets were \$1.5 million as OAHS capitalizes maintenance items greater than \$10,000, that meet certain criteria. These expenditures are crucial to maintaining the useful life of our housing.



## LOOKING FORWARD

Solving the housing crisis for urban Indigenous people in Ontario is not an simple challenge. It's going to take long-term commitment, hard work, dedication, funding, and very strong partnerships and collaboration.

At OAHS, we've been working for nearly thirty years to help address the housing and housing support needs of urban Indigenous people. We've made a lot of strides over the years, growing bigger and extending our impact to more people and into more communities. We've earned the confidence of our stakeholders, from our funding partners to other Indigenous organizations. Most importantly, we've earned the trust of our tenants.



As we look forward to 2023-2024 and beyond, we're eager for all the possibilities we have to make an even bigger impact on the lives of Indigenous people. We're excited about being able to bring unique and innovative housing solutions to Ontario, such as the Biindigen Well-being Centre—which will, when finished, become the first urban Indigenous hub in Ontario. We hope it will be the first of many.

Our circle is large enough to welcome everyone that is willing to learn and who wants to help us as we work towards a future where all Indigenous people have access to safe, affordable, and culturally appropriate housing.

### *Let's work together.*

*"OAHS has a proven track record, the trust of the communities where we have developments and projects, and the trust of the government. It's amazing for an Indigenous organization like ours to have such a strong presence and reach into every part of the housing nation we live in—and it truly is a housing nation—one that spans the province and involves so many people. Our greatest success is that people trust us. They believe in OAHS, trust us, and want to be partners with us. This is incredibly empowering—and it's why our reach and impact keeps growing."*



**Ontario  
Aboriginal**  
Housing Services







***Miigwetch  
Wela'lin  
Marsee  
Merci  
Thank You***

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