

**MCC & MennoHomes Inc. Invite You To
2nd Consultation “Responding To The Need”
at Crosshill Mennonite Church*
Wednesday, April 15, '09, 7-9:00 p.m.**

+Refreshments will be served.

Building on the interest created at MennoHomes' first consultation, November '08, at Floradale Mennonite Church, a second consultation will take place at Crosshill Mennonite Church on the housing needs of local Low German speaking families.

Our second consultation, to be co-hosted by MCC Ontario and MennoHomes Inc. will focus on

“Responding To The Need”

*Directions to Crosshill Mennonite Church, Hutchison Road. Using Lobsinger Rd. drive through Heidelberg and St. Clements to Crosshill. Turn left at T intersection. Church is on left as you head to Wellesley.

MennoHomes Inc. Board of Directors

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MennoHomes Inc. is a non-profit charitable organization founded in 2001 under the sponsorship of MCC Ontario as a response to the need for affordable housing.



The Need Is Great for Affordable Rural Housing!

Waterloo Region has built 1,500 affordable rental housing units between 2003-2008. But, the waiting list for affordable rental housing is about 3500 families and individuals long. That number is on the low side, as the projected five to 10 years' waiting time means that people don't even bother to apply. Waterloo Region has announced a new goal of 500 units in five years (2008-2013) for low income families and individuals. These 500 units are targeted for those with the lowest income.

In recent months, MennoHomes has been made aware of the substandard conditions in which many rural, working poor large families, including Low German speaking newcomers are forced to live. Many of these large families, of which there are more than 1000 in Waterloo Region, are struggling to meet household expenses. Staff at Mennonite Central Committee and community support workers who advocate on behalf of large low income rural families brought concerns about substandard housing to MennoHomes' attention. The community support workers have identified health and safety concerns in a significant number of these households.

A Typical Family Story of Rural Poor

Three months ago, Abe and Tina Friesen arrived in Wellesley Township from Mexico. They have been married six years and have four children. Tina is six months pregnant. Within days of arriving Abe began work as a welder in a rural machine shop and is making \$12.50 per hour. The family is living in a small house with only two bedrooms. The living room has been converted into a bedroom with a double bed mattress on the floor for the two boys. Unfortunately, the bathroom ceiling and walls have large patches of black mould. Rent is \$700.00 per month. Being an old house, it is drafty in the winter. Refilling the oil tank costs \$600. One fill-up heats the house for approximately one month. This family would benefit greatly from living in a 4-bedroom home that is warm, healthy and affordable.

*The above composite story prepared by
Lily Hiebert Rempel
MCC Ontario Low German Program Co-ordinator*

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**Can You Help Us
Raise \$400,000?**

MennoHomes will need to raise \$640,000. The good news is that we have \$240,000 in the bank including a bequest of \$50,000. So, our fundraising goal is \$400,000.

Some suggestions for designating your \$'s:

Sponsor appliances!

Furnish a set of Energy Star-rated stove, refrigerator, washer and dryer estimated value \$2,000 for all four. Consider sponsoring one appliance for \$500.00 – or all four for \$2,000.

Sponsor a bedroom!

Each unit will have four bedrooms. You can sponsor a bedroom for \$20,000. Or, maybe pledge a gift of \$10,000 over two years.

Offer yourself, labour or Materials through “Barnraising Ideals”! Embedded in our Mennonite history is the concept of “the barnraising”. These ideals can be put into practice through the following:

- Excavation/Site Prep
- Lumber
- Concrete work
- Building materials
- Plumbing
- Framing
- Electrical
- Drywall
- Finish carpentry
- Painting
- Roofing
- Landscaping/Sod

Or contact us with your creative idea for helping MennoHomes reach \$400,000.

You can help through a one time gift or a pledge for each of the next four years.

Here is my:

Gift enclosed _____

Pledge for 2009 _____

Pledge for 2010 _____

Pledge for 2011 _____

Pledge for 2012 _____

Gift in kind _____

(such as land, house, building for conversion to housing)

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone _____

e-mail address _____

Please return pledge & donation to:

MennoHomes Inc.
50 Kent Ave.,
Kitchener, ON
N2G 3R1

For further information:
Contact: Martin Buhr 519 578-5546
Or, pama@sympatico.ca

MennoHomes is exploring a number of options in regards to addressing the need. It has applied for government support to help finance eight units through the Region of Waterloo's latest call for Expressions Of Interest (EOI). In addition MennoHomes has consulted with Canada Mortgage & Housing (CMHC) regarding its Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP). Landlords may apply to CMHC for forgivable loans of up to \$24,000 a rental unit for structural improvements related to fire, health and safety standards.

More Facts re: Large Rural Families

The Region of Waterloo in its study, *"Understanding Homelessness and Housing Stability in Waterloo Region's Rural Areas"* cited 2001 Stats Canada findings of 2,135 Low German speaking persons in Woolwich Township alone. Therefore, we are confident there are a minimum of 5,000 Low German speaking persons (adults and children) in Waterloo Region.

Intakes through the Woolwich Community Health Centre indicate an average Low German speaking household size of five but with a range of up to 12. This includes young families with only one or two children.

Over two-thirds of the Low German households in this survey had household incomes between \$15,000-\$25,000.

Why MennoHomes Felt The Need To Get Involved!

Four support workers, representing Community Action Program for Children of Waterloo Region (CAPC) and the St. Jacobs Family Support Centre, have a combined caseload of 230 Low German speaking families.

Of these cases, they reported to MennoHomes that 130 households had two serious social-economic disadvantages against them. i.e. they tend to live in unsafe conditions and they are paying more than 30% of household income for rent in these unsafe conditions.

Beyond the rent payment itself, they also pay for hydro and heating fuel.

In this case "unsafe" means living conditions in violation of fire, health and safety standards.

Based on these findings and reports from the MCC Low German Program Co-ordinator, the MennoHomes Board made a commitment to do what it can to help alleviate the plight of large rural families (chiefly Low German speaking families) in urgent need of safe and affordable housing. We are in the process of acquiring lots in Wellesley on which to build two sets of semis (four rental units). Each unit is to have at least four bedrooms.

MennoHomes Continues Its Tireless Efforts

Since its inception in 2001, MennoHomes has worked tirelessly to create new affordable rental housing stock. To date, four projects have materialized.

The Village – 16 townhouses in Kitchener for families

Stirling Ave. Refugee House in partnership with First Mennonite Church, Kitchener

Camelot – 25 affordable rental units in Waterloo for singles, in partnership with Blaze Properties who is the owner/operator

The Rockway Gardens Village – 50 one and two bedroom apartments for seniors 55+

Also, please check out our updated website thanks to Larry Shantz of Web D Zines!

www.mennohomes.com

The Rockway Gardens Village Received An Urban Design Award!

On October 6, 2008, at Kitchener City Council, the City presented its Urban Design Awards, an event held every two years. Eligible properties were constructed between January 1/06 and December 31/07. Of the three dozen or so projects nominated, the 12 finalists included institutional, multi-residential, commercial and industrial candidates. Five of the 12 finalists received Nomination Awards; another five were given Awards of Merit. There were two recipients of the highest honour, the Award of Excellence. MennoHomes Inc. was one of them! The other was Emmanuel Bible College. The award stated:

Urban Design Awards, 2008.

Award of Excellence.

Given in recognition of projects that exemplify superior site design and their contribution to high quality design and development in the City



Photo by Dave Rogalsky, first published Jan. 5, '09 Canadian Mennonite!