

# AFFORDABLE HOUSING INNOVATIONS



## STELLA BURRY REINVENTS CAREW LODGE AS SAFE, AFFORDABLE HOUSING

In 1997, Carew Lodge was a seedy boarding house awash in violence, alcohol, and drugs. Walk through Carew Lodge today, however, and you see no evidence of its troubled past. Completely renovated, the lodge now contains 14 modern self-contained singles units, each with a fridge, microwave, and private bathroom. The floors have phones and kitchens. The front door is locked. The paint is fresh. A community development worker operates from a new ground-floor office.

“Many who live in Carew Lodge have spent time in hospitals or prisons and have never been able to make the transition from an institution to living on their own,” says Jocelyn Greene, Executive Director with Stella Burry Corporation, a non-profit organization that runs supportive housing programs in St. John’s. “They often fall by the wayside because of the sense of isolation, loneliness, and lack of support. People now have that support, and that’s been critical to Carew Lodge’s success.”

Carew Lodge owes its remarkable makeover to many people, but those at Stella Burry first recognized the building’s potential. The organization saw a need to provide supportive housing for women coming out of prison with serious mental health problems. Carew Lodge—if properly renovated—would fit the bill perfectly.

Using most of its cash to pay the \$20,000 down payment, Stella Burry bought the building in 1999 for \$75,000. Rents from the 12 tenants covered the mortgage and operating costs. Now all Stella Burry needed was \$250,000 to renovate the building. The organization applied for and received \$256,000 worth of funding under the federal-provincial cost-shared RRAP initiative, a program that had been reserved for private landlords. In May 2000, the governments changed the program’s eligibility rules to meet Stella Burry’s non-profit status.

Along the way, Stella Burry discovered that some Carew Lodge tenants had lived in the building for more than 10 years. “The tenants weren’t all transients, as we had originally thought,” says Ms. Greene. “Consequently, we decided to keep the building as a residence for men and women.”

An unforeseen structural problem created a need for another \$150,000, prompting Stella Burry to prepare an urgent needs proposal for Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC). The effort paid off. In October 2000, HRDC provided the

organization with a \$543,000 grant, \$216,000 of which went to renovations and the balance to hiring a development worker and two outreach workers for three years. The City of St. John’s waived taxes, and Correctional Services Canada agreed to pay \$15,000 a year to help Stella Burry run two Carew Lodge units for troubled women coming out of prison.

With the financing in place, Stella Burry found temporary housing for the residents of Carew Lodge and started renovations in February 2001. The building re-opened in August 2001. Residents pay \$286 a month for rent, utilities, cable, and phone, which helps make Carew Lodge an ideal home for people on low incomes.

Stella Burry Corporation is a finalist in the Process and Management category of the 2002 Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) Housing Awards Program, **Affordable Housing Innovations**. The Housing Awards recognize individuals, companies and organizations that have made significant contributions to improving housing affordability in Canada.

For more information about the Stella Burry Corporation’s Carew Lodge, please contact:

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