
Operations Director Report: 1 January–31 December 2025

This is my fourth annual report for Otter Housing Association (OHA) and without the construction of a building even in sight I increasingly understand the length of time and enormous commitment it takes to bring even a modest local housing concept into fruition. However, from our research trip to the UK three years ago, we did learn that cohousing projects there usually took around seven years from concept to moving in so we should not be surprised.

In summary, this year saw the major part of the detailed design development phase completed including our initial Class C cost estimate which provided a reliable estimate of the final construction costs. This phase will be completed within the first quarter of 2026. The Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF) initiatives have been completed although two projects related to the Climate Action Plan are ongoing. However it was announced in September that the capital funding streams from the Federal Government that we were expecting to apply for have dried up leaving us without the additional and substantial capital financing necessary to start the construction phase. We are actively working on alternative funding streams.

OHA's enthusiastic Board of five community members together with our Community Project Coordinator, Olivia, came together for nine monthly meetings and the AGM during the year with an impressive attendance rate of over ninety percent. Apart from one meeting these have been held over GoogleMeet. The Board's input is essential in ensuring that the organisation meets its stated aims, acts with due diligence and financial fiduciary. After reviewing matters of governance with respect to the Board I am pleased to recommend that the current structure is maintained.

Olivia continues to ably run the organization on a day-to-day basis. She regularly reports to our five funding bodies—maintaining excellent working relationships with each one despite changes in their personnel. She deals with the accounting and administration efficiently and ensures everything runs smoothly. Olivia is like the sun in our solar system—everything rotates around her! She has had a major role in coordinating with the architects and having a significant personal role in the design phase. In the Fall she reverted back to part time employment with OHA due to the changing nature and requirements of the project. Despite some challenges her commitment to the project remains undaunted.

Personally, as a designer, working with Woodford architects and the engineering team has been a dream come true. From the overall concept design envisaged in 2024 the whole team has been engaged in honing the design into something eminently functional and beautiful within the energy and accessibility constraints imposed by our funding bodies and the practicalities of the site itself. The complex set of four main buildings have been designed around an accessible 'street' reflecting cohousing attributes of inspiring community involvement and personal space. Throughout, the design team has been clear in enabling the major construction elements to be completed by local labour using regular materials and techniques. Through careful design—in collaboration with our energy consultant—and the installation of a large photovoltaic array on the community building we have been able to achieve the low energy usage threshold required by the Green Municipal Fund's (GMF) Sustainable Affordable Housing Fund administered by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM). The design also has a low embedded carbon value meaning that it is environmentally more 'green'. The design phase has not been without other significant challenges—the main one being the need for a huge underground water tank for firefighting purposes. This is to be installed under the car park!

Working with our excellent town planning consultant we have successfully completed the first and second amendments required by our HAF funding. This means that our housing development is now fully within the town's residential boundary and the town's residents have greater flexibility in building new housing units on their property. We have made much progress with the second HAF initiative involving a Climate Action Plan. OHA is now part of FCM's Canada-wide Partners for Climate Protection (PCP) program. We have a baseline GHG inventory and emission calculation for all sectors in the town which will inform us in our efforts to aid climate mitigation within the community. Following the suggestions by our Climate Action Plan Team to involve local youth we helped set up EcoSchool Canada's Project 2050 program at our local school and another school on the Bonavista peninsula. Our participation is ongoing. We also initiated a collaboration between the Towns of Port Rexton and Trinity towards adopting a climate adaptation plan through FCM's Local Leadership for Climate Adaptation Fund.

Continuing our efforts to involve the local community we organised a Land Walk in July and regularly post updates to our website as well as organising ongoing Project Management Team meetings with representatives from the Town Council. In order to increase OHA's transparency we were delighted to post our annual financial statements following a request from a local resident.

One of my responsibilities as Operations Director is to annually evaluate the performance of the organization in achieving its mission and objectives. I can wholeheartedly assure the Board that Otter Housing Association is fulfilling its mandate and has achieved everything it set out to within this period of time.

David Ellis

14 July 2026