

You are not alone in the housing battle Seniors' voices on housing needs

Do you find your house has repair needs that you don't have the energy to do? Are your windows drafty? Are you struggling to buy food, medicine, gas, and pay for maintenance on your house? Do you wonder what will happen if you need a wheelchair or walker to get around your home? If so, according to a recent survey you are one of the many Atlantic Canadian seniors whose homes may be in need of repair and renovation.

Since 2005, the Atlantic Seniors Housing Research Alliance (ASHRA) has been working on the topic of seniors housing. ASHRA is an exciting research project that was designed to build a detailed picture of the housing needs of the aging Atlantic Canadian population, and to match that profile with options in housing choices, support services, and policies that can meet those needs.

In 2007, ASHRA researchers asked over 1700 seniors from Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Prince Edward Island about their current housing situation and future plans for housing. Not surprisingly, findings from the survey show that many seniors want to stay in their homes, but their current homes are in need of repairs and renovations to support their changing needs as they age. This includes problems with windows, entrance areas, storage space, and concerns with accessibility largely because many Atlantic Canadian seniors live in older homes. These problem areas can affect one's safety within the home; as well as their general quality of life. This is a concern in light of the fact that seniors may not have the personal ability, financial resources, or access to a support network to help them make the necessary adjustments. Especially in rural communities, seniors may have reduced access to family or paid workers, increasing the likelihood that seniors may have to live in inappropriate and unsafe surroundings.

In addition to seniors telling us about their housing repair needs, findings from

the survey show that many seniors are unaware of programs that are available to assist them in offsetting some of the costs of repairs or renovations. So if you are a senior, or a service provider involved in the care and support of seniors, you should be aware of the publicly funded programs to assist seniors with housing repairs, renovations and modifications. Some of the programs include:

- * CMHC Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Programs
- * CMHC Home Adaptation for Seniors Independence
- * Provincial-specific programs as available

It's important to assess your current home repair needs, as well as your capacity to address those needs. Also, finding out about these programs may help you to make the necessary repairs on your home that will increase safety in your home, increase your quality of life, and increase the likelihood that you will be able to live in your home and community longer.

For more information on the Atlantic Seniors Housing Research Alliance (ASHRA), visit www.ashra.ca or contact Project Manager, Yvonne daSilva 902-457-6561.