



At Home in the Hills

One more step towards affordable housing

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Housing co-op in La Pêche can now give tax receipts

Affordable housing remains scarce in La Pêche, but a housing cooperative in Wakefield has taken a fundraising leap with the ability to now offer donation receipts.

Cohabitat Wakefield does not officially have charitable status, but has entered an agreement with Philanthropie Outaouais, which will collect donations on their behalf and offer charitable tax receipts to donors.

Cohabitat Wakefield is a non-profit run by volunteers who want to see an affordable and environmentally sustainable 41-unit housing cooperative become a reality in Wakefield. Last year, the group secured 2.5 acres of land behind the fire station in the village, which was transferred by the Municipality of La Pêche. But they still need roughly \$350,000 to get their project off the ground, according to president Louise Chatelain.

Although a lot of that money could come through grants, Cohabitat Wakefield will need to secure at least some of it through fundraising, Chatelain explained. But without charitable status the group has not been able to issue tax receipts – an important incentive for donations.

That's where Philanthropie Outaouais and La Pêche have stepped in to help. Philanthropie Outaouais is a foundation that collects funds for non-profit organizations in the region, including Sentiers Wakefield Trails and Centre Wakefield La Pêche. It has entered into an agreement with Cohabitat Wakefield and the municipality to collect donations toward the housing project.

According to Chatelain, every donation made to Cohabitat Wakefield through their website goes directly to the group's fund hosted by Philanthropie Outaouais. When someone makes a donation of any amount to the fund, they

receive an official charitable tax receipt issued by Philanthropie Outaouais.

When Cohabitat Wakefield chooses to withdraw from its fund, Philanthropie Outaouais will transfer money to the municipality, which will in turn release it to Cohabitat Wakefield in the form of a grant. This last step is necessary because the municipality has charitable status, Chatelain explained, and can also issue receipts for tax purposes.

Ultimately, she said this is a positive step forward for her organization, and good timing too – Chatelain said Cohabitat Wakefield was recently promised a donation of \$10,000 if they could offer a tax receipt, which they're now able to do.

Cohabitat Wakefield has been working toward its goal of building cooperative housing in the village for the last nine years. Last January the Low Down interviewed Chatelain and fellow volunteer Francine Costa, who said they hoped to see their project completed in the next two years. This timeline now seems unrealistic, Chatelain explained, since the establishment of a new federal entity, Canada Build Homes, has replaced the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation for affordable housing programs. This change has effectively forced Cohabitat Wakefield to reapply for the funding they need to get started.

It's a setback, Chatelain admitted, but she said she's undeterred.

"We have to keep the momentum going. Sometimes it's discouraging but I'm very hopeful," she said. "The feedback we've been getting from the community is that this is a beautiful project and it's very needed here ... it would be wonderful to have cooperative housing in our community, so we are just hanging in

there," she added.

The need for affordable housing across the province is well documented. The Quebec Professional Association of Real Estate Brokers conducted a study in 2025 that showed that while single-family home prices have doubled in most regions since 2015, household incomes have increased by only 15 to 25 per cent, after taxes and adjusted for inflation. And for those in the rental market, the CMHC determined that between 2019

and 2024 national average rents increased by approximately 16 per cent for one-bedroom units, 22 per cent for two-bedroom units and 30 per cent for three-plus-bedroom units.

To donate to Cohabitat Wakefield, visit their website at cohabitat-wakefield.ca, or donate via Philanthropie Outaouais' website at philanthropieoutaouais.com/en/donate-to-a-fund by selecting "Donate to a fund" and choosing Cohabitat Wakefield.

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