



## Message from the CEO

The weather may be chilly but we have warmer temperatures and an exciting year to look forward to.



This year is the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary for GEF Seniors Housing. Thank you to the residents, tenants, employees and community partners for helping create caring communities for 60 years!

On February 27, we held a grand opening celebration for our newest building, Sakaw Terrace, in the Mill Woods community. To read more about this event and to see photos from the celebration, turn to the next page of this newsletter.

Preparations are well underway for our annual Building for Life Breakfast fundraiser in May. For the past ten years, GEF Seniors Housing has hosted this event which brings together over 300 people from various business networks, professional connections and community partners to help continue improving the quality of life for seniors living in Edmonton. By sponsoring this event, you're letting a large network of businesses and professionals know that you're invested in making your city a better place to live, grow and age. To get involved as a sponsor, contact our Communications Department at [communications@gef.org](mailto:communications@gef.org) and request your sponsorship package.

Our Community Support team continues to be a great asset to the organization. Last year, they assisted more than 430 residents facing challenges in their daily lives and this year appears they will be just as busy. Recently, two tenants were helped with their financial issues. The team assisted one resident with budgeting so she could afford her medications and another was guided through the application process to receive all the government

benefits she was entitled to. Another resident needed help with safety in her apartment and the Community Support team arranged to have grab bars and a bath chair installed to facilitate this.

In January, three students from the University of Alberta's (U of A) Community Service Learning Program began their placements with GEF. The program pairs us with U of A students from the Adult Development and Aging psychology course to build connections, contribute to the non-profit sector, and learn about the Edmonton community. Four students from the NorQuest College Social Work program also began placements in January. All students work with the Recreation Coordinator at their assigned site to assist or run day to day activities within the lodges, help plan special events or put on a program/workshop they have designed. A group of Human Ecology (HEcol) students recently wrapped up a project exploring ways to support family engagement of new residents which may result in a future pilot project at our sites. Another HEcol student developed a set of interview questions to assist with a new intergenerational program between Sakaw Terrace and St. Richard's School. The residents love interacting with the students and it is a wonderful intergenerational experience for everyone involved.

We look forward to the year ahead and to the new and innovative enhancements we can continue to make to seniors' quality of life and to the Edmonton community.

Raymond Swonek  
Chief Executive Officer



## Sakaw Terrace Grand Opening

On February 27, Sakaw Terrace, located at 5815 Millwoods Road South in Edmonton held its Grand Opening. Over 160 residents, tenants, guests and staff joined us to celebrate this very momentous occasion.

“The official opening of Sakaw Terrace is a very proud time for GEF Seniors Housing as it allows seniors living in the Mill Woods community an affordable, secure and friendly place to call home,” explained Raymond Swonek, CEO of GEF Seniors Housing.

MLA for Edmonton-McClung Lorne Dach MC'd the event and we heard wonderful speeches from the Honourable Amarjeet Sohi, Minister of Natural Resources; the Honourable Christina Gray, Minister of Labour; GEF Board Chair Karen Lynch and ASCHA's Executive Director Irene Martin- Lindsay.

The day was full of big smiles and happy hearts. Residents and tenants who have already moved in were so excited to show off their new home. After the speeches were done, a ribbon cutting to announce the official opening commenced. Cake and refreshments were followed by tours of the building. Guests who went on the tours were impressed by the 70 lodge rooms and 88 apartments, two outdoor courtyards, a communal greenhouse, a theatre room, a salon, a bistro, underground and above ground parking and much more.

Seven years from concept to occupation, on November 1, 2018, GEF opened the doors to welcome the first Sakaw Terrace residents. This carefully planned project adopted an Integrated Project Delivery (IPD) collaborative partnership approach to construction. “What this means is that everyone has some skin in the game. The IPD contract has ten parties signed on plus GEF Seniors Housing. All ten of the IPD parties have put their profits on the line for the duration of the construction, which keeps everyone invested in finding those efficiencies and keeping everything on schedule” explains Doug Kitlar, Director of Facility Management. By using this method, the project was able to be completed early and under budget!

The building is currently 90% occupied and hoping to be at 100% in the next few months. Residents and tenants are feeling at home living at Sakaw Terrace. “I just love the new building. The meals are wonderful and the sugar cookies are just delightful” said a lodge resident. An apartment tenant mentioned “it is my first time in community living and I am more than over the moon. The building, the staff, there is nothing not to like.” One other apartment resident said “I like my apartment. Everything is lovely. It’s beautiful. I like my privacy, but I never feel alone here.”

If you're interested in learning more about Sakaw Terrace or taking a tour of the building, please call us at 780-461-2449.





### GEF Story Corner

A couple of months ago, I had called Nancy\* who had been on the waitlist for a lodge room for about a year. She came in for the appointment with her son and I showed her a room. When I offered her the room, she quickly said YES and started talking about where her furniture should go. A few minutes later she suddenly stopped and sat down on the bed and started to cry. Her son asked “Mom, are you ok? Do you want to move?” Nancy replied “I do want to move. I just can’t believe this room is going to be mine!”

*\*Name has been changed for privacy purposes*

### Casino

GEF Seniors Housing held its casino event at the Yellowhead Casino on December 5 and 6. The proceeds received were more than \$77,000! Thank you to all of the incredible volunteers that came out and worked the two days, late into the evening and early morning. We couldn’t have had this success without you!



## Long Service Awards

This year's Long Service Awards were held on January 25 at the Edmonton Inn and Conference Centre. The event is a celebration of our staff and recognizes employees' five-year milestones.

Award recipients and their guests enjoyed a delicious buffet dinner with a wonderful selection of desserts before the presentations began. Tracy MacLeod, Director of Human Resources, was the MC for the evening. Following greetings from Board Chair Karen Lynch, CEO Raymond Swonek made the presentations to the 64 attendees. As each attendee came forward to be recognized, Raymond shared a heartwarming story about their work with the Foundation and presented a gift card along with a set of stemless wine glasses etched with the GEF Seniors Housing logo.

This year, two employees were recognized for 30 years of service with GEF; Elizabeth Carmichael and Aida Garma. Elizabeth Carmichael is the Manager of Queen Alexandra Place and she began her career at GEF when she was hired on the spot as a kitchen aide at Virginia Park. She went on to become a manager and has had her fingers in the management pie at many GEF lodges either as the manager or assistant manager of the site. These include McCauley, Queen Alex, Virginia Park, McQueen, Pleasantview and Kiwanis and she is now serving the residents and staff at Queen Alex once again.

Aida Garma is an Assistant Manager at McQueen Place. She started her GEF career at Kiwanis where she worked for 10 years in various roles. Aida then applied at the new McQueen lodge in 1998 and took a dining room attendant position for a couple of years before becoming the Dining Room Supervisor. In 2012, she began her latest position there as Assistant Manager.

Thank you to all staff for your long service with GEF and we look forward to working with you for many more years to come!



Elizabeth Carmichael, Queen Alexandra Place Manager and Raymond Swonek, CEO.



Aida Garma, McQueen Place Assistant Manager and Raymond Swonek, CEO.

### Connect with GEF

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