

Wood share wants to help locals keep warm

By Sarah Sobanski

A pair of community organizations are teaming up to bring the community emergency firewood.

North Hastings Community Trust (NHCT), and the Bancroft Area Forest Industry Association (BAFIA) with Freymond Lumber LTD, are working together to help those who can't afford to heat their homes this winter. Together, they're reaching out to community members, woodlot owners, and wood distributors to build up an emergency supply of firewood for the community. The program is being described as a wood-sharing initiative.

The wood-sharing program was sparked last year when program co-ordinator for NHCT Jane Kali started documenting the types and frequency of emergency requests the trust was receiving. What started as a few sticky notes soon consumed the wall behind her desk, many of them reading "wood."

It wasn't long before the idea of wood-sharing was born through members of the community collectively looking for a solution. The program draws inspiration from Heat Bank Haliburton County. The bank has wood depots in Minden, Haliburton, Stanhope and Highlands East.

"After hearing about the Haliburton Heat Bank, we thought it would be a valuable project for Bancroft and area," said Virginia deCarle, vice president of BAFIA. "It turned out that [NHCT] in Bancroft also had the same idea. So BAFIA and [NHCT] decided to partner together to get the local wood share project up and running."

"The idea is that we have enough wood in the community that no one needs to go cold," said program co-ordinator for NHCT Jane Kali.

NHCT has around \$2,000 of emergency funding for those in need a month. That money goes to area locals who are struggling to maintain their housing while also having enough money to eat.

"Wood is a necessity. People can't afford to heat their houses with electric heat or propane or oil," said Kali.

In the winter, the ante goes up. Surviving the cold winter months means having to maintain housing, affording food, and finding a way to stay warm and pay heating bills. If the heating isn't working, homeowners will have to look for a local plumbing service, similar to Mac-Vik Plumbing and Heating. You can see more information [available at Mac-Vik Plumbing and Heating's website](#).

"There is a tremendous amount of poverty in North Hastings, but there are also some incredibly generous citizens in our communities," said deCarle. "I believe if we work together we can accomplish great things, and no one should go without the necessities of life."

This Nov. the trust's emergency funding ran out in less than two weeks. The week of Nov. 6 saw seven requests for emergency firewood alone. Kali said she hoped taking wood out of the equation would help free some of the emergency funding for other emergency requests in the community.

"A lot of the people who come for emergency help want to help. They offer to stack wood, or have a chainsaw [to lend]," said Kali, explaining the wood share is all about bringing the community together to share the burden of winter heating. It is a team-oriented project needing donations to transporters to stackers.

Right now, the program is in its early stages.

BAFIA is working with its community partners to co-ordinate the donation of spare wood. Forests, need to be groomed and weeded. One idea could see the cultivation of forests donated to the wood share.

"Beginning in fall 2015, I had the opportunity to meet with Michael Sanderson from Haliburton County. I was in charge of tallying and marking 17 acres of his mixed hardwood forest that he kindly donated to the Haliburton Heat Bank," recalled deCarle. "He has also kindly donated four per cent of the firewood harvested from his land to the Bancroft Local Wood Share. Michael's land is being harvested by Freymond Lumber of Bancroft."

She added, "Lou Freymond of BAFIA, and owner of Freymond Lumber, has graciously donated a piece of land in Bancroft to store firewood. There is a great team of people involved in the planning and implementation of the local wood share, and we believe that it's something this community will greatly benefit from."

Freymond's donated land off of Hwy 62 North to store and keep the wood. The wood-sharing program will use the land to collect firewood, both for this year and for next winter.

The program is hoping to engage the Town of Bancroft as well. It will need trucks to transport the wood and volunteers to help cut, split, buck and stack donations. To date, Kali said the program isn't in the position to distribute wood. There has just been a rush to get the program up and running to help those immediately in need.

"Even looking to people with lots of trees, [we want to be able] to send in a team to get them," suggested Kali. She explained the most important focus was to get wood to people who need it before the cold sets in. "We want people to donate what they can afford so we can get it to people this year that need it."
She added, "Wood is a renewable resource here."