

\$325,000 Rogers House renovation completed for \$236,000 with Ottawa construction industry's support



STAFF WRITER
– The Ottawa Construction News

Rogers House at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO) has received a much-needed renovation with the Ottawa construction community's leadership and support.

"We estimate we were able to save Roger's House approximately \$90,000 in material and labour costs through the generosity of the contractors," said RND Construction president Roy Nandram, who co-ordinated the project. "We worked with the help of the construction community to participate in cost reduction."

The free-standing eight-bed palliative care facility for children and their families needed extra space for administrative offices and teen-age clients. The solution: Turn the unfinished basement into living and work space with a limited budget and with construction constraints required for

work in a living health-care facility.

Nandram, who co-ordinated the project, says that the initiative involved support from many others including sub-trades and suppliers who went out of their way to contribute time and materials. (Nandram is chair of the Greater Ottawa Home Builders Association (GOHBA) innovation committee.)

Rogers House is a legacy created in honour of former Ottawa Senators' coach Roger Neilson who died after a long battle with cancer. Through a partnership between the Ottawa Senators' Foundation, CHEO and the Ontario Ministries of Health and Children and Youth Services, Roger's House opened to its first guests in 2006 and is operating at beyond its originally expected capacity.

Executive director Lloyd Cowin says the hospice is usually fully occupied. "The



Rogers House

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house sits on land donated by CHEO and is landlocked in terms of expansion,” he said. Fortunately the original planners had the foresight to add a basement and this created the space we needed for this renovation.”

The home’s original common areas included a kitchen, living area and playroom designed for younger children, but nothing for teens and few administrative support spaces. “We have training programs for our volunteers and staff meetings on a regular basis which had to take place in the living spaces and interfered with the guest enjoyment of these areas. We really wanted to eliminate this and create space for the older youth who might be with us,” explains Cowin.

The basement renovation includes a recreation space for teens which will feature a pool table donated by Roger Neilson, a boardroom for training and staff meetings, a separate office for the home’s social worker so she can meet privately with families, a workshop for maintenance volunteers and roughed in space for future offices.

While at first glance this might seem a simple basement renovation, the home’s requirements for infection control and accessibility made it more complicated.

“I realized quickly this was more of a commercial fit up with the health care requirements so I approached some members of the Greater Ottawa Home Builders’ Association for support and then went outside to pull in the additional contractors and support we would require,” Nandram said.

Nandram says many of the project’s participants donated time and substantially reduced costs to bring the project in under budget. “I worked closely with the architect and engineer to find cost savings solutions and options that would work better in the environment,” he said.

For example, “we were able to access the basement for construction without disrupting the house but the initial plan for ventilation/ air conditioning involved installing air conditioning units on the roof which would have meant traffic in the house and a lot more noise,” he said.

Instead, Nandram came up with a solu-



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Rogers House

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tion to locate the units on the ground outside the home.

“Throughout the project Roy and the team were so so-operative and thoughtful,” says Cowin. “Parking is tight and they scheduled deliveries to work around our needs. When noisy work was going to happen they gave us notice so we could prepare the children who are sensitive to such issues. They even provided sound-attenuating ear muffs so one of the children wouldn’t go into seizure during the noise. Solutions like this, which kept work and traffic from disrupting common areas was so appreciated.”

Cowin says he is fully impressed with the team who completed the work on time and under budget. “We are so grateful to Roy for all the groundwork and co-ordination he did and to all of the trades who donated time and materials.”

For his part, Nandram says it is all about giving back to the community and he is pleased to be involved with such a worthwhile project.

As work wraps up on the construction side, Cowin says Roger’s House will now be looking to raise \$50,000 to furnish the space to make it functional. Cowin is hoping the community will help furnish this space. “We have a great space. Now we have to make it useable.”

For more information on Roger’s House, visit rogershouse.ca.

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