

Residential Tenancy Branch Alliance Management Office Report May 28, 2007

1. Initiative Overview

The Residential Tenancy Branch (RTB) of the Office of Housing and Construction Standards answers inquiries and resolves disputes between landlords and tenants pursuant to the B.C. *Residential Tenancy Act* and the B.C. *Manufactured Home Park Tenancy Act*. The RTB administers and supports a formal dispute resolution process where dispute resolution officers hear approximately 28,000 disputes per year. Disputes are scheduled for hearings and resolved within statutory time limits.

Prior to the 2004/05 fiscal year, the budget for the RTB was reduced significantly. The RTB project was initiated to meet public demand and increase service levels within budgetary constraints by taking advantage of private sector technology and business transformation expertise. The original business processes involved significant manual paper handling by customers and staff, and required that a client attend an RTB office or a Service BC location in person to apply for a hearing. The TELUS solution enables the RTB to keep pace with changes in information systems and web-based technologies. It also provides greater public convenience, more efficient use of staff time, and improved response to public demand for service. The TELUS contact centre software also provides modern communication technologies for faster response to inquiries.

Scope of services

The key components of the business and technical solution delivered by TELUS are:

- an improved RTB **public website** which provides:
 - information about landlords' and tenants' rights;
 - an automated Application for Arbitration form that landlords and tenants can submit over the web to request a dispute resolution hearing with the ability to pay the filing fee by credit card over the Internet;
- a **Case Management System** that automates the scheduling and tracking of cases and reduces paper processing by staff;
- an **Integrated Contact Centre Software** package which:
 - queues and prioritizes incoming phone calls, faxes and e-mails;
 - enables hearings to be held by telephone conference calls instead of in person at government offices; and
 - creates digital recordings of hearings for quality monitoring purposes;
- **training and knowledge management;** and
- **ongoing maintenance and support** of the integrated case management solution.

The RTB staff will continue to be employed by the Province. Under the agreement, TELUS will operate and enhance the solution over a ten-year period.

2. Status Update

In 2006/07, the RTB system was upgraded to remove some technical barriers to efficiency, and to improve the efficacy of the application form. The conference call system for hearings switched to a conference bridge system, greatly improving the accessibility for clients and staff alike. Further application changes are in development as 2007/08 begins, and the payment system will be streamlined as well.

3. Contract Objectives and Performance Report

Objective 1

To ensure minimal impact on personnel and business operations during the transition period

Activities (undertaken to achieve objective)	Results (Year-To-Date)
Train staff	Complete. Successful and orderly transition accomplished without service interruptions (May – August 2005)
Develop Transition Plan	
Fully test new system	

Objective 2

To improve the RTB services by making them more flexible, sophisticated and efficient than before

Activities (undertaken to achieve objective)	Results (Year-To-Date)
New service features added as part of the initial solution provide more accessible information to staff and expanded points of access to clients: integrated case management system enhanced website with credit card payment options, call centre software with call back capabilities	<p>Most features added at the time of the initial implementation (May 2005).</p> <p>Application form simplified in October 2006.</p> <p>Call back feature added in January 2007.</p>

Objective 3

To reduce costs in delivering RTB services and realize further cost reductions in the future

Activities (undertaken to achieve objective)	Results (Year-To-Date)
Implement system	<p>Significant savings realized in first 2 years of contract. Savings over funding levels before the system was introduced were \$1,500,000 (20.6%) in 2005/06, \$1,000,000 (13.7%) in 2006/07 and are projected to be approx. \$100,000 (1.4%) in 2007/08.</p> <p>However, demand for services has increased by 55% in the past year*. As most RTB costs are variable (based on demand for service), cost pressures mount and overall savings are expected to be lower in future years. When costs are expressed on a per client served basis, much more substantial savings are being realized.</p> <p><small>* There were 28,000 dispute resolution proceedings in 2006/07, compared to 18,000 in 2005/06.</small></p>
Expand range of dispute resolution services provided	<p>Traditionally, residential tenancy disputes have been resolved through arbitration. This method is both confrontational in nature and expensive. Legislative changes have made other forms of dispute resolution possible. It is too early to assess the impact on costs.</p>

Objective 4

To establish service levels and to set measurements of performance

Activities (undertaken to achieve objective)	Results (Year-To-Date)
System service levels (e.g. network availability) were established in the contract	All service levels and system availability targets have been met to date.
Increase staffing levels to address problems with phone wait times	Additional funding provided in the RTB's 2007/08 budget (\$520,000). RTB is hiring new staff in 2007/08 to address the additional demand for services.

Objective 5

To protect the privacy and personal information of clients, stakeholders and RTB employees

Activities (undertaken to achieve objective)	Results (Year-To-Date)
A Privacy Impact Assessment was completed prior to implementation of the system	No issues

Objective 6

To foster a co-management relationship which is flexible enough to allow for changes to the services provided by TELUS and to make adjustments as a result of unforeseen circumstances

Activities (undertaken to achieve objective)	Results (Year-To-Date)
Governance structure established, with regular weekly meetings and updates.	The relationship between Telus and RTB is flexible and would permit changes to services if required.

Objective 7

To introduce enhancements to the services that allow clients and stakeholders to be more self reliant

Activities (undertaken to achieve objective)	Results (Year-To-Date)
Improvements to website help function.	Website help functions are regularly updated as changes to the online application process are implemented.

Objective 8

To allow the Province to exceed clients' expectations for the delivery of the RTB services, and to continually seek improvements

Activities (undertaken to achieve objective)	Results (Year-To-Date)
Making changes to payment module to enhance clients' ability to file more quickly.	This upgrade is expected to be in place in the fall of 2007.

Objective 9

To develop new or enhanced business processes to accommodate fluctuations in the RTB service business volumes

Activities (undertaken to achieve objective)	Results (Year-To-Date)
The system provides the ability to focus resources in the areas where they are most needed.	RTB staff are now allocated to the various business functions based on volumes assessed through the computer system.

Objective 10

To have TELUS act as its source of information regarding “best practices” by having TELUS monitor and evaluate new and available technologies and services and participate in business planning processes

Activities (undertaken to achieve objective)	Results (Year-To-Date)
First stage of detailed review of call centre operations by TELUS consultants completed in March 2007.	RTB now moving to implement resulting suggestions.