

Residential Tenancy Branch Alliance Management Office Report May 28, 2008

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.

The RTB electronic integrated systems project was initiated to meet public demand and increase service levels within budgetary constraints. RTB's original business processes involved significant manual paper handling by customers and staff, and required that a landlord or tenant apply for a hearing in person at an RTB office or a Service BC location. A private-sector relationship was established to take advantage of technological solutions. The TELUS solution provides greater public convenience, more efficient use of staff time, and improved response to public demand for service.

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;
 - A web-based Application for Dispute Resolution form for landlords or tenants to request a dispute resolution hearing. The system allows credit card payment over the Internet;
- A **Case Management** system that automates and streamlines the filing, scheduling and tracking of cases and reduces paper processing by staff;
- A **Call Centre** system which:
 - Provides standardized information through a series of touch-tone menus;
 - Queues and prioritizes incoming phone calls requiring a dialogue with an Information Officer;
- A **Teleconferencing System** which:
 - Allows hearings to be conducted by conference calls;
 - Identifies parties attending a conference call hearing;
 - Is integrated with the RTB Case Management System;
- An **Internet Fax Services** which manages Applications for Dispute Resolution and additional information for dispute resolution hearings arriving via fax;
- **Training and knowledge management;** and

- **Ongoing maintenance and support** of the tools.
- For a more detailed description of the project please refer to Project Summary found at http://www.saip.gov.bc.ca/documents/RTO_project_summary_asd_final.pdf

RTB staff continue to be employed by the Province. Under the agreement, TELUS will operate and enhance the solution over a ten-year period ending in 2015.

2. Status Update

What's New:

- **Revised Application for Dispute Resolution Forms**

In 2007/08, separate Application for Dispute Resolution forms were introduced for landlords and tenants, streamlining and clarifying the application process.

- **Consistent Payment Policy**

Procedures were amended to ensure that all applicants provide their service fee at the same point in the process, regardless of the application submission method. Prior to 2007/08, in-person applicants were required to pay at the time of submission while on-line applicants paid when their application was accepted. Since hearings are scheduled upon payment, hearings for some on-line applicants were scheduled later than hearings for in-person applicants. This inequity has been eliminated.

- **Conference Call Hearing System Enhancements**

The onus of connecting to a conference call shifted from the Dispute Resolution Officer to each party to a dispute in 2007/08. The password-protected feature enabled participants to call in from any location, giving them greater flexibility.

Technological advances have also allowed a Dispute Resolution Officer to identify parties in a conference call. This has enhanced participation in conference-call hearings.

- **The Evidence Processing Streamlined**

Changes allowed material received by fax to be electronically connected to files in the Case Management System. This improved the timing for filing information related to a Dispute Resolution hearing.

- **Technological advances to phone-based services**

The call centre's prompt structure is being redesigned to provide callers with more information about landlord and tenant rights and responsibilities, and enhance management reporting capability. This project started in 2007, for completion in 2008.

Challenges:

- **Scheduling hearings**

Scheduling a dispute resolution hearing is a time-consuming, manual process. In the coming year, RTB and TELUS will work together to implement an improved and fully automated scheduling component. The expected results are a less labour-intensive and more efficient use of hearing time.

3. Contract Objectives

The Master Service Agreement signed on January 1, 2005, includes the following objectives:

- To ensure minimal impact on personnel and business operations during the initial transition period
- To make RTB services more flexible, sophisticated and efficient than before
- To reduce costs in delivering RTB services and realize further cost reductions in the future
- To establish service levels and to set measurements of performance
- To protect the privacy and personal information of clients, stakeholders and RTB employees
- 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
- To introduce enhancements to the services that allows clients and stakeholders to be more self-reliant
- To allow the Province to exceed clients' expectations for the delivery of RTB services, and to continually seek improvements
- To develop new or enhanced business processes to accommodate fluctuations in RTB service volumes
- To have TELUS offer information regarding "best practices" by monitoring and evaluating new and available technologies and services.

Collectively, the province and TELUS have delivered results that demonstrated some progress toward the identified objectives (Appendix A). Activities that support these objectives will be ongoing over the duration of the alternative service delivery

relationship.

4. Service Commitments

RTB is committed to providing timely dispute resolution services. A longstanding performance measure in its annual service plan has been to hear 92% of disputes within six weeks of receiving an application.

In 2007/08, RTB identified and prioritized disputes that were most critical to landlords and tenants. This resulted in applications for dispute resolution relating to:

- Early end to tenancy being heard within 1.5 weeks;
- Orders of possession being heard within 3 weeks; and,
- Emergency repairs, access and return of property being heard within 3.5 weeks.

RTB and TELUS continue to work together to provide the clients with a faster dispute resolution services by improving business processes and technological infrastructure.

Appendix A – Contract Objectives: Reporting on Results

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	Completed in May – August 2005. Successful and orderly transition accomplished without service interruptions.
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)
Identify areas to improve and streamline the workflow of application for dispute resolution	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Implemented two application forms – one for landlords and one for tenants – both in paper and electronic format.• Payment procedures modified to align paper and electronic applications

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>Savings over funding levels before the system was introduced were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• \$1,500,000 (20.6%) in 2005/06;• \$1,000,000 (13.7%) in 2006/07;• \$100,000 (1.4%) in 2007/08. <p>It was expected that the greatest savings would be related to the consolidation of operations in the first two years.</p> <p>As most RTB costs based on demand for service, and demand continues to grow, overall savings are expected to be lower in future years.</p>

Objective 4

To establish service levels and to set measurements of performance

Activities (undertaken to achieve objective)	Results (Year-To-Date)
<p>Service objectives were established in the contract for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hosting Services (Availability, Performance, Repair Time)• Application Trouble Resolution• Network Services (Availability)• Help Desk Services	<p>All Service Levels and System Availability targets have been met to date.</p> <p>CICA Section 5100 Audit shared with RTB</p>

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	Privacy has been protected: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No issues have been raised • No complaints have been received

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 bi-weekly “working group” and quarterly “steering committee” meetings and updates	Regular biweekly working group and quarterly steering committee meetings have been held. Ad hoc steering committee meetings were held as required.
Relationship maintained through workshops and similar initiatives to improve joint understanding.	Joint workshops held, resulting in improvements to procedures and technological solutions.

Objective 7

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

Activities (undertaken to achieve objective)	Results (Year-To-Date)
Improvements to website <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Navigation • Information Improvements to phone services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Automated messages updated • Touch-tone menu material updated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved web-based materials updated periodically • Redesign of website architecture underway • Improvements to phone-based information services underway

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)
<p>Improved flexibility in dispute resolution hearings held by conference call</p> <p>Continuous Improvement Project (CI) has been launched.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Migration to call-in process, via conference bridge, from procedure where a Dispute Resolution Officer connected the parties to a hearing • RTB staff has identified changes to procedures that will result in processing improvements. Several involve TELUS solutions.

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)
<p>The system has the ability to allow RTB to allocate resources where they are most needed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RTB manages phone queue and call-back systems.

Objective 10

To have TELUS offer information regarding "best practices" by monitoring and evaluating new and available technologies and services.

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