

Interest makes great things happen

Every REALTOR® that receives money in trust with respect to a transaction in real estate generates income for the Foundation. Front-line employees in almost every bank branch in Alberta have real estate brokers as clients who deposit public money in pooled trust accounts. That money comes from real estate brokers' clients as deposits placed on the offer to purchase a property.

These pooled trust accounts are tagged and interest is automatically paid when it is due. That money goes to the Alberta Real Estate Foundation (the Foundation), providing the revenue to fulfill its legislated responsibilities, which include supporting projects that fall under the following priorities:

- Education and Research
- Housing Affordability
- Land Stewardship and Environment
- Industry Leadership

Gael MacLeod, Executive Director of the Foundation, cites an example of land stewardship and environment, the \$50,000 grant the Foundation provided Green Calgary (formerly Clean Calgary) to support in-depth home visits to 400 Calgary households to assess their "health" and to take action to improve indoor air quality and reduce resource use.

In the education and research portfolio, MacLeod talks about the \$62,572 for the continued support of the important work of the Residential Tenancies Legal Information Program. Funds will be used to broaden the scope of materials available to consumers in the areas of condominiums, low income housing and housing options for seniors.

In the housing affordability arena, a 2008 grant for \$75,000 towards the partnership of the Medicine Hat Real Estate Board Charitable Foundation with the Medicine Hat Community Housing Society saw completion of the Southland development of 50 transitional units in Medicine Hat in October 2009.

During 2009 the average balance of the trust accounts held by banks for real estate brokers was \$108,761,112, but due to the historically low interest rates the Foundation only received \$518,751 in revenue, a decrease of 77% from 2008.

"In an effort to ensure we are able to continue to invest in the people and communities of Alberta we will continue to focus on working with financial institutions to implement minimum interest rates on trust accounts. This will allow the Foundation to continue funding these genuinely helpful projects in conjunction with the real estate transactions and hard work from Alberta REALTORS®," MacLeod concludes.