

Straw house a perfect fit

Melissa Hancock

Published on Feb 19, 2008

It was a perfect fit for the first straw bales stacked to insulate the walls of the Grand House Student Co-op. At 14 inches thick, the walls of the student housing project will be sturdy and packed tight with straw. Some people may wonder if the house will be a fire hazard, with dry straw filling the walls.

"It's like trying to burn a closed book" and the bales will be coated with a cement-lime plaster once they're all in place, said Chantal Cornu, executive director of the co-op.

It will take 750 bales to insulate the entire house.

Grand House co-op members held a press conference at the student residence's Roseview Avenue location last Friday to stack the first bales and kick off their 2008 Buy-A-Bale fundraising campaign. So far, the co-op has raised \$370,000 - they need \$180,000 more to reach their goal.

After the recent installation of the Grand House roof, Cornu said getting the straw bales in place, and kicking off the fundraising campaign, is the "next big step" for the co-op.

Laird Herbert, Grand House media liaison, said the co-op aims to have students living in the house by mid-May this year. Finishing touches like landscaping and a timber framing bridge are expected to be complete by September, he noted. The bridge will allow for wheelchair access to the student residence. A bridge made following a timber framing technique will have no nails or screws. And it, along with joining pieces, will be made entirely of wood.

Mayor Doug Craig was onsite Friday - along with Rick Haldenby, director of the architecture school - to tour the framed structure.

The residence, a project created, designed and taken on by University of Waterloo School of Architecture grads and undergrads, will be complete with 12 bedrooms, two kitchens, and four bathrooms. The bales of straw are being used, along with aspects like a rain water

collection system, in an effort to stick with a sustainable and environmentally-friendly theme.

Cornu told a small crowd last week that students who will soon occupy the house will probably be architecture grads and undergrads.

And who will get the first pick of bedrooms?

"It starts off with the people that put in the most elbow grease," Cornu said with a laugh while talking with local media outlets.

For more information about the Grand House Student Co-op, or about the 2008 Buy-A-Bale campaign, visit www.grandhouse.wacsa.org. Co-op members can be reached by e-mail at ghcoop@gmail.com.



Last Friday, Chantal Cornu (left), executive director of the Grand House Student Co-op, and promotions co-ordinator Earl Beadle place the first straw bales inside the wall frames of the student housing project.



With the frame and roof in place, builders measured, kept the roof clear of snow and began installing insulation.

CAMBRIDGE TIMES

<http://www.cambridgetimes.ca/news/article/117625>



© Copyright 2008 Metroland Media Group Ltd. All rights reserved. The reproduction, modification, distribution, transmission or republication of any material from this Metroland West Media Group website is strictly prohibited without the prior written permission of Metroland Media Group Ltd.

