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New Update Policy for Housing Applicants

York Region recently approved a new policy designed to prevent applicants from unreasonably losing their place on the waiting list. Under the *Social Housing Reform Act (SHRA)*, an applicant must notify the Housing Access Centre within ten days of any change in the information provided on or with their application. Applicants who miss the ten day deadline lose their eligibility and have to reapply. Fortunately, the *SHRA* allows Service Managers to implement local rules in this area.

The key elements of the new policy are:

- ▶ Applicants will be encouraged to keep their applications up to date, but they will not lose eligibility for failing to report changes between annual updates.
- ▶ Applicants will be removed from the waiting list if they do not return a completed annual update form.
- ▶ Applicants who contact the Housing Access Unit (HAU) within twelve months of being removed from the waiting list will be reinstated if they complete an update form and the HAU is satisfied that they had a legitimate reason for not completing the form on time.

Web Site

The Community Services and Housing Department's web site has recently been updated. A new page has been added for housing providers. You can now download program instructions or forms, and find links to other resources. You will find the web page at www.region.york.on.ca/Services/Housing/Information+for+Social+Housing+Providers.htm ❖

Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA)

Housing providers collect a lot of personal information from applicants and tenants/members. This information is now protected by a federal law that took effect on January 1, 2004. The *Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA)* sets a number of new requirements for housing providers.

Generally speaking, *PIPEDA* requires housing providers to:

- ▶ tell applicants and tenants/members why their personal information is being collected, how the information will be used, and with whom it will be shared.
- ▶ share personal information only if the applicant or tenant/member has given their consent.
- ▶ have a process that allows applicants and tenants/members to view their personal information and correct any errors.

You need to update your confidentiality policies to comply with *PIPEDA*. Both ONPHA and CHF have developed resources to help you respond to the new legislation. For more information, you can also visit the Privacy Commissioner of Canada's web site, at www.privcom.gc.ca. ❖

York Region Housing Provider Reference Group

Since the program transfer, housing providers have participated in two advisory groups: the Transition Reference Group (TRG) and the Co-ordinated Access Advisory Committee (CAAC). The TRG was designed to provide advice on housing provider issues related to the program transfer from the Province to the Region. The CAAC focused on waiting list management issues. Last fall, both groups discussed the prospect of uniting to form one group to consult with Regional Staff.

It was agreed that the new reference group meetings will be open to all interested housing providers. However, to ensure effective consultation, the reference group will also have a core membership that is representative of all housing providers. The new reference group will have members representing:

- Seniors Housing
- Partners In Community Housing
- Unilateral Federal Housing
- Housing York Inc.
- Co-operative Housing
- Supportive Housing
- Non-Profit Family Housing
- Board Members

The reference group's initial membership is composed of the representatives who served on the TRG and CAAC. The Region thanks Joan Holman, Heather Janes, Dayle Yardley, Janet States, Nargis Bardai, Linda Osborne, Harold Speck and Ally Esmail for their willingness to continue to serve as housing provider representatives. Due to other commitments, Kim Weiman elected not to continue as a representative. Kim was an original member of the TRG, where her insights and knowledge of housing provider concerns were invaluable. Thank you Kim! ❖

Preventative Maintenance Workshop

On December 4, York Region contracted with the Institute of Housing Management to provide a Preventative Maintenance Workshop. The workshop was presented by Terry Novosad, who has worked in the field for over 20 years. The workshop covered construction types and the related approaches to extending the life span of many major building components.

A summary of the comments indicates 95.3 % of participants rated the training content, presentation and relevance as good to excellent. We would like to thank the people who attended the workshop and hope to provide more sessions in the future.

Those who were unable to attend or want further information on this topic can visit the ONPHA web site for times and dates for similar courses. ❖

Roof Anchors

Housing providers with multi-story buildings must pay particular attention to the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*. There is a specific Window Cleaning Regulation (reg. 859/90) which sets out the rules that apply to window cleaners and other workers who in the course of their work could fall from a height of three metres or more. There are a number of specific procedures housing providers must follow to ensure worker safety.

Most non-profit apartment buildings have roof anchors designed to support window cleaning equipment. Housing providers must ensure that roof anchors are properly installed, annually inspected and load tested every five years. For more information, please see ONPHA's recently published "Info On: Roof Anchors" or visit e-laws at www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/DBLaws/Regs/English/900859e.htm for the complete regulation. ❖

Increases to Minimum Wage

After a nine year freeze, the Provincial government is increasing minimum wage rates. The adult minimum wage will increase gradually over the next three years to reach \$8.00 in February 2007. Over the same period the student minimum wage (which applies to students under 18 years of age who work 28 hours a week or less when school is in session, or students employed during a school break or summer holidays) will increase to \$7.50 per hour. The increase schedule is provided below. ❖

Effective Date	Jan. 1995	Feb. 1, 2004	Feb. 1, 2005	Feb. 1, 2006	Feb. 1, 2007
General Minimum Wage	\$6.85	\$7.15	\$7.45	\$7.75	\$8.00
Student Minimum Wage	\$6.40	\$6.70	\$6.95	\$7.25	\$7.50

Operational Reviews

Operational reviews are an important tool to ensure housing providers understand and follow legislative and program requirements.

The areas assessed during a review are similar for all housing providers. We ask the same questions, examine the same documentation, and conduct the same type of inspections at all sites. All housing providers are measured against the same criteria.

The review usually takes 2-3 days to complete and housing providers usually receive at least one month's advance notice of the review. The Program Co-ordinator and the accounting and property services staff carry out the review. Once the review is complete, a report is prepared and forwarded to the Board of Directors. This report explains the various criteria measured and outlines any follow-up requirements or recommendations.

The items identified as "requirements" are mandatory. Requirements are based on Regional Program Instructions, the *Social Housing Reform Act* and other legislation. The items identified as "recommendations" are best business practices that the Board should consider adopting. As part of the operational review process the Board is required to provide a response to each of the requirements. The response should briefly say what, how, and when the requirement will be met. The Region provides a template to assist your group with its response.

Regional staff meet with the Board to discuss the review findings and to respond to any questions or concerns. The meetings held in 2003 were extremely productive. We appreciate the level of interest, commitment, and expertise evident in housing provider boards across York Region.

In 2003, housing program staff completed twenty-one reviews of Provincial non-profits, Provincial co-operatives and Federal non-profit housing providers. The results have generally been very positive. We plan to conduct more operational reviews in 2004, beginning in April. Regional staff look forward to visiting your site and working with you. If you have any questions about the operational review process, please contact your Program Co-ordinator. ❖

Statistical Reporting: Household Income Limits

Thank you to all those providers who submitted their reports on time! The information you provided is used to complete the Service Manager Annual Information Return (SMAIR). Every year the Region must report to the Province on the number of RGI households receiving assistance. The Province in turn uses the information from the SMAIR to report to the Federal government through Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC). Without this information, CMHC can withhold federal funding. ❖

Staff Changes

Last fall York Region said good-bye to Irwin Peters, Manager of Housing Operations, and wished him well in his new position in Waterloo.

Housing York Inc. (HYI) is pleased to announce their new manager. Doug Manson has accepted the position of Manager, Housing York Inc. Doug moved into his new office on March 1.

Effective March 17, Kerry Hobbs will be the new Manager of Housing Programs. ❖

Program Instructions

Please check your binder to be sure you have copies of all of the following 2004 program instructions.

Your Program Co-ordinator can provide you with any program instructions you may be missing.

Instruction Number	Topic
2004-04	Occupancy Standards: Largest & Smallest Unit Eligibility
2004-03	Age Requirements for Seniors' Housing
2004-02	Senior Citizens Government Pension Income
2004-01	Rent-Geared-to-Income Eligibility Reviews by an Eligibility Review Officer (ERO)



SOCIAL HOUSING YORK

Housing Provider On-Line Waiting List Access

The Housing Access Unit's waiting list software can facilitate internet access for housing providers. We are working with a pilot team of four housing providers who will test the system and provide us with feedback.

Our goal is to make relevant waiting list information available on-line to each housing provider with internet capability. With on-line access, you will have up-to-date information regarding applicants on your waiting list.

Over the next few months, we will be contacting you by fax to ask you for some specifics about your computer equipment. We will then set up your security profiles and look at training sessions.

If you have any questions, please contact Helen Aston, Supervisor, Co-ordinated Access. ❖

The Housing Access Unit is Moving!

Effective March 29, 2004, our new address will be:

55 Eagle Street West
Newmarket ON L3Y 8W5

The main telephone and fax numbers will stay the same but refer to the contact list on the right for updated telephone extensions.

Telephone: 905-830-4444 or 1-877-464-9675
Fax: 905-830-5023

Our office will be located near the corner of Yonge Street and Eagle Street, beside the Children's Aid Society building (across from the Court House). The new location will be much more convenient for our clients. We are just minutes away from public transportation on Yonge Street. ❖

c o n t a c t s

The following is a list of our program contacts. They can be reached by calling 905-830-4444 or toll free at 1-877-464-9675.

FOR OVERALL PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION:

- Wendy Ford,**
Administrative Clerk/Secretary **ext: 2119**
- Heather Simpson,** Program Co-ordinator **ext: 2142**
- Christine Zarebski,** Program Co-ordinator **ext: 2035**
- Margarita Christensen,**
Tenant Service Co-ordinator **ext: 2029**
- Terry McErlean,**
Supervisor, Housing Programs **ext: 2157**
- Kerry Hobbs,**
Manager, Housing Programs **ext: 2071**

FOR PROGRAM FUNDING:

- Kevin Jennett,** Accounting Clerk **ext: 2139**
- Alice Arnold,** Financial Analyst **ext: 2153**
- Christine Terry,**
Manager, Housing Subsidies **ext: 2137**
- Bernadette Doiron,** Administrative Clerk **ext. 2081**

FOR CO-ORDINATED ACCESS:

- Sharon Lanteigne,**
Applicant Service Representative
Aurora\Newmarket\Georgina **ext: 5771**
- Diane McCrodden-Kovacs,**
Applicant Service Representative
King\Markham\Whitchurch-Stouffville **ext. 5772**
- Marta Zerenyi,**
Applicant Service Representative
Richmond Hill\Vaughan **ext: 5773**
- Eileen Caranci,**
Applicant Service Representative **ext: 5774**
- Emily Vatisas,** Administrative Clerk **ext: 5775**
- Helen Aston,**
Supervisor, Co-ordinated Access **ext: 5770**