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21 York Region Social Housing Residents Receive Bursaries

It is a pleasure to announce that in York Region, 21 applicants to the Dr. Albert Rose Bursary Program have been awarded bursaries up to \$2,740.00 to put towards furthering their education.

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing offers province-wide, educational bursaries to students residing in social housing. Bursaries like these help many people to achieve their goals.

Some of the programs, which the successful applicants will be participating in are Social Services, Auto Body Repair, Architecture Technology, Nursing, Communications Arts and Law.

We wish all of them success and look forward to providing information on next year's program.

A thank you is in order for the efforts of York Region housing providers who distributed bursary information to all households.

Habitat for Humanity in York Region

On August 18, the keys to York Region's first "Habitat for Humanity" (HFH) home, located in Newmarket, were turned over to the happy new owners. Less than 18 months after the first public information meeting in York Region that introduced the idea of establishing an HFH affiliate in the area, the incredibly hard-working volunteers have completed the first "build" and have secured three more building lots for future development.

Habitat for Humanity is an international movement that provides modest homes for purchase by qualified, low-income families. Applicants have to agree to contribute "sweat equity" and be able to pay the monthly expense of owning a house. Because materials and labour are donated, HFH builds houses far below the cost of similar market units, which means mortgage costs are also kept low. ❖

To become a Habitat volunteer or to apply for a future Habitat home, call HFH York Region at 905-713-2245.

Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI) Workshops

Over the past couple of months, Program Co-ordinators, Heather Simpson and Terry McErlean, have visited all the housing providers to review a sample of their RGI calculations. They would like to thank everyone for their time and for being so accommodating. During their visits, a repeated question was asked: "When will York Region be providing RGI calculation workshops?"

In response to this interest we developed two workshops for RGI calculations. The first was a basic workshop which covered topics such as using the (OW) charts, utility scales, work allowances and notices. The second workshop was more advanced and dealt with changes to calculations as a result of the SHRA and regulations, as well as more complex issues that can be encountered while performing rent calculations.

There was a strong attendance at both workshops. Attendees came prepared with many RGI calculation questions, which made the sessions more beneficial for all.

This was York Region's first opportunity to provide RGI training. The experience proved to be very helpful for us.

To further support housing providers, we are developing standard income testing forms. The forms will ensure consistency and will include requirements from the new program legislation. We plan to have the new forms out to housing providers by the end of the year. ❖

*Thank you for your feedback.
We look forward to seeing
everyone at future workshops!*

Centralized Waiting List

The centralized waiting list, now administered by York Region, took a big step forward in June. At that time, the old provincial software program, which held the waiting list application data for York Region, was replaced by a new software program to specifically meet the needs of non-profit housing. Some sections of the software program are still being improved.

The new software, known as Voyager, gives the Housing Access Unit (HAU) staff more detail, better access to information and greater flexibility in providing information than ever before. The software is web enabled, can sort lists by various pieces of data and is able to allow multiple locations and application dates to be maintained and tracked.

As with any major software changeover there have been some minor glitches, but overall, with the hard work and perseverance of the HAU staff, the conversion has gone very smoothly.

With the centralized waiting list in place all applications for rent-geared-to-income housing must be sent directly to York Region's Housing Access Unit, located at the Tannery Office in Newmarket. Once an applicant has been confirmed as eligible, they will be added to the subsidiary waiting lists of the providers they selected and for which they qualified. Housing providers will be issued up-to-date subsidiary waiting lists for their projects on a regular basis.

The near future holds a few more changes in the way housing providers gain access to their waiting lists. We anticipate that by late fall housing providers will be able to access their waiting list electronically via the Internet. Those with Internet access will be able to view an up-to-the-minute list of people waiting for housing in their housing community. ❖

Social Housing Reform Act Consultations

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing will be holding consultations with Service Managers on the Social Housing Reform Act. They have requested that Service Manager submissions be made to the Ministry by October 15th. Since the Social Housing Reform Act and regulations were released, Service Managers and housing providers have had a chance to deal with the day-to-day issues that have arisen as a result of the changes. Many providers, as well as the Region, have questions and have experienced some difficulties resulting from the changes.

We would like all providers, who have issues arising from the act and regulations, to forward them to Doug Manson. The Region will then address these and the Region's own issues with the Ministry. We hope these consultations will lead to improvements in the framework under which we are currently working.

As well as written submissions, providers have already participated in September 6th and 19th provider meetings to discuss their concerns. ❖

The Transitional Reference Group Needs You!!!!

Recently, a few of the members of the Transitional Reference Group (TRG) have taken on new roles or are now focusing their attention in other areas. We would like to thank Kerry Hobbs, John Wilkinson and Jim Dalgleish for their contributions to the group. Their efforts and dedication during this transition period have been greatly appreciated. We wish each of them the best in their future endeavours.

To date, the Transition Reference Group's advice and input on local policy decisions and the needs of housing providers have been extremely valuable. We expect that this relationship will continue into the foreseeable future.

The group is made up of a cross section of housing providers, including both staff and board members. We would like you to consider volunteering especially if you represent one of the following groups:

1. **Co-operative** - board member representative
2. **Federal Non-Profit** - board member representative
3. **Provincial Reform Non-Profit** - staff representative

The TRG group meets once a month (typically on the fourth Monday), from 9:00 - 11:00 am.

If you are an interested staff or board member, fax a letter indicating interest, including your name, contact number and name of the housing corporation you represent, to Doug Manson at (905) 895-2189. ❖

Internal Reviews

The Social Housing Reform Act outlines a process to allow residents to appeal some decisions made by housing providers. This very important requirement is a major change from the way appeals were dealt with in the past. The process is outlined in Program Instruction 2002-05 and allows residents to ask the Community Services and Housing Department to review certain decisions.

There are 6 "reviewable" decisions:

1. The household is not eligible for rent-geared-to-income assistance
2. The household is not eligible for special needs housing
3. The type of accommodation in which the household may live
4. The category into which the household has been placed on the waiting list
5. The amount of geared-to-income rent the household pays
6. The deferral of the rent-geared-to-income that the household pays

Anytime a provider makes a decision in one of these areas, they must ensure the household is aware of their right to an appeal. Should the household request a review, the Community Services and Housing Department will review and respond to the housing provider who will then contact the household with the final decision.

Please be aware that this policy is in effect and must be adhered to at all times for the following programs:

Public Housing
Provincial Reform
Rent Supplement - commercial
Rent Supplement - OCHAP & CSHP
Rent Supplement - Homeless

Should you require further information, please contact your Program Co-ordinator. ❖

Leaky Co-op Fund

Recently, the Co-op Housing Federation distributed a newsletter requesting donations to the "leaky co-op fund". This money will help housing co-ops in British Columbia finance some repairs. The leaks have stemmed from poor construction of some of the buildings.

While we understand the difficulty these co-operatives are experiencing, the funding model does not permit donations of any type, despite numerous worthy causes.

If your organization would like to help these co-ops in need, funds must come from other fundraising sources and not your budget. ❖

Program Instructions

Since February of this year, York Region has been issuing program instructions to providers. Please check your binder to be sure you have copies of all of the following program instructions.

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

Instruction Number	Topic
2002-01	Imputed rate of return for non-income producing assets
2002-02	Household Service Level Standards
2002-03	Senior Citizen's Government Pensions
2002-04	Opportunity to Comment
2002-05	Internal Review
2002-06	Interim Application Process Establishment of the Centralized Waiting List
2002-07	Rent Increase of Less than \$10
2002-08	Reasonable Efforts to Pursue Specified Income
2002-09	Changes to 2002 Household Service Level Standards
2002-10	Senior Citizens Government Pension

New Seniors Housing Community

York Region has moved forward on what we hope will be the first of several new affordable rental housing projects over the next few years. Construction will begin this month on 58 new apartment units to be created out of the two east wings of the Newmarket Health Centre on Eagle Street in Newmarket.

The one- and two-bedroom units will be earmarked for frail elderly and residents with disabilities, who may benefit from the amenities and services available through the adjoining long-term care facility. All of the apartments will be fully or partially modified, keeping in mind the needs of seniors as they age. Rent subsidies will be available for tenants who need them, making this truly affordable housing.

This project has been made possible by the funding support of CMHC's Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP), the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, and York Region. The Town of Newmarket showed its support by waiving a portion of the normal fees and charges associated with obtaining a building permit. Close partnerships have developed between several York Region Departments, notably Community Services and Housing and Health Services, as they take on new roles mandated by the provincial devolution of responsibility. ❖

Property Tax Re-assessment Increases

Property tax is being re-assessed throughout the Region. Please closely review the invoice for your property tax when you receive it. While property taxes may increase from year to year, providers should ensure that the increases are reasonable and consistent with other similar properties. When re-assessments result in large increases, we encourage providers to check with other housing providers in their area to compare tax charges. It is your responsibility to review and take appropriate measures to ensure that your property is assessed correctly. ❖

contacts

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:

Shereen Day, Administrative Clerk/Secretary	ext: 2119
Terry McErlean, Program Co-ordinator	ext: 2157
Heather Simpson, Program Co-ordinator	ext: 2142
Doug Manson, Manager, Housing Programs	ext: 2071

FOR PROGRAM FUNDING:

Alice Arnold, Accounting Clerk	ext: 2153
Christine Terry, Manager, Housing Subsidies	ext: 2137
Deborah Porter, Administrative Clerk	ext. 2081

FOR CO-ORDINATED ACCESS:

Sharon Lanteigne, Applicant Service Representative <i>Aurora\Newmarket\Georgina</i>	ext: 2708
Diane McCrodden-Kovacs, Applicant Service Representative <i>King\Markham\Whitechurch Stouffville</i>	ext.2733
Norma Kaszper, Applicant Service Representative <i>Richmond Hill\Vaughan</i>	ext: 2716
Helen Aston, Supervisor, Co-ordinated Access	ext: 2724