



Community and Health Services Department
Housing York Inc.

Memorandum

To: Members of the Housing York Inc. Board

From: Rick Farrell
General Manager

Date: June 15, 2017

Re: **Housing York Inc. Monthly Activity Report**

This update highlights Housing York activities and recent provincial housing announcements for April and May 2017.

Provincial Housing Announcements

Ontario's Fair Housing Plan, 2017

In April 2017, the provincial government introduced Ontario's *Fair Housing Plan* (the Plan). The Plan consists of 16 measures which aim to: improve affordability; protect buyers and renters; and bring stability to the housing market. A number of measures introduced in the Plan may impact current operations of Housing York and future development. Highlights include:

Strengthening the *Residential Tenancies Act* to protect tenants and ensure predictability for landlords

The recently passed *Rental Fairness Act* will expand rent control to all private rental units in Ontario, including those built after 1991. Annual tenant rent increases will be capped at a maximum of 2.5 per cent for existing tenants. Landlords can continue to increase rents above the rent control guideline for new tenants.

- While social housing providers are largely exempt from rent controls, this measure restricts Housing York's ability to increase rents in new developments.

Standard lease with explanatory information available in multiple languages

- Although a response to the private sector rental market, the Province has indicated they are considering looking at a standard lease for social housing providers. If implemented, existing tenants would retain their original lease and new tenants would be required to sign a standard lease designed by the Province.

Increasing Rental Supply

The Province will create a new program to leverage the value of surplus provincial land assets to develop a mix of market and affordable housing

- The Housing Branch is working with Property Services to identify provincial land assets that may be suitable for residential use.

The Province has dedicated \$125 million to a five-year program to encourage new rental construction by rebating a portion of development charges

- The Region may be eligible for a rebate of local municipal development charges on future construction projects. At this time, there is no information available about which municipalities in Ontario will be eligible for the rebate, or how that need would be assessed.

Housing Services staff are working with Regional Planning staff to monitor implementation of all Fair Housing Plan actions for opportunities that may support Housing York's future growth and ability to respond to need.

Tenant Engagement

360°Kids after-school program extended through the summer

Through the Social Services Branch, York Region funds a successful after-school program benefitting Housing York youth. The program, called "YOUTHrive," is delivered by 360°Kids and has been promoting healthy and active lifestyles since 2015. YOUTHrive offers free activities such as homework support, animal therapy, cooking lessons, resume writing assistance and interview tips. Last year, 126 young people between the ages of 7 and 17 participated in the YOUTHrive program. Council approved the after-school program pilot in March 2015 at four social housing sites: two Housing York sites, Mulock Village and Brayfield Manors in Newmarket, and two community non-profit housing provider locations.

For the first time, YOUTHrive will now run through the summer months at the two Housing York locations in Newmarket. The program will provide organized daily activities for students who may be home alone over the summer break.

Keeping tenants safe from fires

Keeping tenants' homes safe is very important to Housing York. Staff engage in a number of activities throughout the year to identify potential hazards and act proactively to protect our tenants.

Some of these activities include:

- Conducting annual unit inspections of all units in the Housing York portfolio to ensure proper functioning of smoke detectors, carbon monoxide-detectors and window restrictive devices along with inspection of unsafe practices such as hoarding, overloading electrical sockets and fire code violations
- Partnering with fire protection services to provide frequent fire safety talks at all sites and conduct fire drills as required by the fire code
- Recently providing fire safety information in multiple languages
- Implementing the smoke-free building policy with all new tenancies – almost 700 units in the portfolio are smoke-free
- Installing fire safety elements on stoves based on tenant needs; in 2016, Housing York purchased and installed over 100 stoves with fire safety elements
- Partnering with community agencies, such as CHATS, to assist tenants who require supports to live independently

If concerns are identified, staff follow-up with tenants to provide information and, when necessary, connect tenants with supports.

Welcoming 2017 summer students

For the past several years, Housing York has hired college and university students to continue to keep properties beautiful over the summer. For 2017, Housing York has ten post-secondary summer students working to provide landscape and maintenance work across all Housing York properties.

Following a successful pilot in 2016, Housing York is also continuing to offer its high school student program. The program gives high school students, living in Housing York communities, the opportunity for paid employment over the summer. Four high school students living at Brayfield Manors and Mulock Village have been hired under this program. The high school students will work alongside post-secondary students in June and July to gain valuable work experience.

Cutting energy costs in partnership with Housing Services Corporation

Many of the capital projects planned for Housing York properties include technical improvements such as LED lighting and high efficiency heating system upgrades to reduce energy costs. However, installing energy efficient equipment is just one part of the energy savings equation – the people who live in Housing York buildings play an important role in achieving utility savings.

Housing York has partnered with the Housing Services Corporation (HSC) in its Community Champion Program. The program includes four workshops spread over one or two years where HSC staff engage tenants to participate in energy conservation measures. Tenants are provided information about energy consumption specific to their building and then work together to develop no cost or low cost ways to reduce consumption. Three Community Champion sessions were held in May 2017.

The Community Champion Program is being offered at Pineview Terrace in Georgina, Oxford Village in East Gwillimbury, and Orchard Heights Place in Aurora. At Pineview Terrace, analysis of before and after energy consumption data has already shown significant cost savings due to reduced energy use. Since the start of the program, electricity consumption at Pineview Terrace has dropped by 12%, resulting in approximately \$2,500 a year in cost savings.

Site Activities

Window and door replacement planned for Trinity Square

A public tender has been issued for replacement of windows and exterior doors at Trinity Square in Markham. The work will include removing existing windows and doors and installing new vinyl windows, patio doors and metal entrance doors and frames. The current windows and doors are 25 years old and have reached the end of their useful life.

Work is expected to commence in July and is scheduled for completion by the end of 2017. The window and door replacement work will provide greater energy efficiencies which will assist tenants who pay for their utilities.

Developing a Mission and Vision Statement for Housing York

The May 4, 2017 workshop for Board members provided guidance to support development of Housing York's vision and mission statements. Board members unable to attend the workshop also had the opportunity to provide their input. In total, nine Board members participated in the exercise.

Consultations will take place with staff and community partners over the summer. Feedback from all consultations will be consolidated to inform the draft mission and vision statements which will be presented to the Board in the fall.

Financial Update

Yardi Property Management Software Upgrade

Housing York uses Yardi software to manage tenant accounts and property maintenance. Housing York will be upgrading this software to address gaps in their business system that were identified in a 2016 review. This upgrade is currently being tested with full implementation planned for October 2017.

The 2017 Business Plan and Budget includes costs for additional features that can be added after the software has been upgraded. These additional features will:

- Improve service by giving tenants a portal to manage their accounts, pay their rent, request maintenance work and communicate with staff
- Improve processing of work orders by providing a vendor portal to issue purchase orders, receive invoices and process payments
- Improve data quality and reporting
- Provide mobile access via laptops, tablets and smartphones

Housing York will be required to enter into a new contract with Yardi for the additional software features. A report will be prepared recommending Board approval of the new contract later in the year.

Housing York has assessed privacy and security capabilities of the new software and additional features, which include “cloud” data storage, to ensure tenant information is protected. York Region’s Privacy and Information Management Team, Corporate IT Security Team, and Business Intelligence and Solutions Team worked with the Yardi vendor to review its third-party security and privacy audit and to ensure appropriate safeguards are in place.

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