



Community and Health Services  
Housing York Inc.

## Memorandum

To: Members of the Housing York Inc. Board  
From: Rick Farrell, General Manager  
Date: September 6, 2018  
Re: **Housing Operations Activity Update**

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This Housing Operations update highlights Housing York Inc. (Housing York) activities that have taken place over the summer months.

### Resident Engagement Updates

HYI Alerts – leveraging new technology to provide information to residents when they need it most

With Housing York’s portfolio growing to more than 2,600 units in nearly 40 buildings, staff needed a new solution to communicate important information quickly to many residents at once.

A new mass notification service is being made available to all Housing York residents, and will go live this fall. HYI Alerts will allow Housing York to provide important building information to a specific building, one floor of a building, or to the entire portfolio at the click of a button.

HYI Alerts will be used to provide timely information to residents so that residents are kept up-to-date with building services. For example, if hot water services are disrupted, Housing York can notify tenants of the expected duration of the outage. In the event of an after-hours emergency, HYI Alerts can be used to notify tenants that Housing York is aware of and responding to the problem.

Residents can choose to receive alerts through a phone call on their home phone or cell phone, text message or email. Residents also have the option to designate a family member who can receive the alerts on the resident’s behalf.

This year's Housing York summer student program focused on promoting HYI Alerts. Staff worked with the student team to offer information sessions in resident common rooms and during various resident events explaining the benefits of HYI Alerts and assisting residents with registration. Residents were able to see sample HYI Alert text messages, emails and to hear recorded HYI Alert messages.

The student team is made up of one university student and three high school students, all of whom live in Housing York communities. The student team is multilingual, conversing with tenants in Russian, Arabic, Cantonese, Mandarin and French. Residents were happy to receive HYI Alerts information in a variety of languages and were delighted to engage with youth who were able maintain part of their cultural heritage through language.

By the end of July, with the students' assistance, almost 500 residents had registered to receive HYI Alerts.

### Resident Appreciation Events

Throughout the year, Housing York holds events and meetings to share information with residents and provides opportunities for residents to connect with their neighbours and Housing York staff. Resident appreciation barbeques is one of several ways that Housing York promotes resident engagement and information awareness in a relaxed setting.

Housing York hosted a resident education and appreciation event at the Richmond Hill Hub on July 20. Over 170 residents were in attendance. The event began with the quarterly fire alarm test and fire safety talk with Richmond Hill Fire. York Regional Police also participated in the event. After the fire drill, residents enjoyed a barbeque and dessert.

Resident appreciation barbeques were also held at Lakeside Residences and Keswick Gardens in the Town of Georgina. Both events were well attended by residents.

### Nature's Classroom for Housing York seniors

Earlier this year, the Region's Environmental Services team received a Seniors Community Grant from the Ministry of Seniors and Accessibility. The grant program supports initiatives that help seniors stay involved and active in their communities, find volunteer opportunities and engage in continuous learning. With the grant, Environmental Services was able to extend one of its programs, Nature's Classroom, to Housing York's residents. The program was offered free of charge to approximately 75 seniors living in Housing York communities.

Nature's Classroom is a program that encourages residents to experience nature and learn more about the forest ecosystem and its importance in York Region. The program takes place at the Bill Fisch Forest Stewardship and Education Centre. The one day

program includes transportation to and from the Bill Fisch Forest Stewardship and Education Centre, a lunch and a forest walk on a fully accessible trail. Participants learn about the importance of physical activity, healthy eating, fall prevention and about services available for seniors.

## Site Activities

### Keeping residents safe from fires

Keeping residents' homes safe is very important to Housing York. Staff organize a number of activities throughout the year to identify potential hazards and act proactively to ensure resident safety.

Summer fire safety activities include:

- Inspecting all units across the Housing York portfolio to ensure proper functioning of smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors and window restrictive devices along with identification of safety concerns such as hoarding or overloading electrical sockets. If concerns are identified, staff follow up with residents to provide information and, when necessary, connect residents with supports
- Partnering with local fire protection services to provide fire safety information sessions and to conduct fire drills

Another way Housing York helps keep its properties safe from fire is through the installation of Safe-T-Elements® or SmartBurners™. These devices replace traditional stovetop electric coil heating elements to help reduce the risk of fire. A controller within the element regulates the element temperature so that the temperature is hot enough to boil water but not hot enough to ignite most household items. Housing York is able to receive property insurance reductions for each property where all units have the safety elements installed.

Earlier this year, SmartBurners™ were installed in all new stoves as part of the kitchen upgrade at Keswick Gardens. Residents have raised concerns with the new burner technology and have expressed that the new elements take longer to cook on and take a longer time to cool down. Housing York arranged for one-on-one support with the building residents and the SmartBurners™ representatives to help address resident concerns about the new technology.

### Partnering with first responders

Central York Fire and York Region's Paramedic Services partner with Housing York to train their first responders in multi-residential settings. On August 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>, Founder's Place in the Town of Newmarket was used to train first responders to rappel from the roof of the nine storey building. This type of training exercise helps first

responders practice for critical event response, such as the rescue of a person trapped in a high-rise apartment.

In July, York Regional Police used empty units awaiting renovations (Glenwood Mews in the Town of Georgina and Mulock Village in the Town of Newmarket) for warrant entry training. The training does not delay the renting of units to new households and units are not damaged during the training process.

During training events, first responders provide signage to inform neighbours and people passing by that a training exercise is in progress. Housing York receives positive feedback from residents when training takes place in their communities. Residents are proud their communities contribute to first responders' training and enjoy watching the training activities.

## Capital Updates

Armitage Gardens – three makeup air unit replacements

Construction to replace three makeup air units at Armitage Gardens in the Town of Newmarket was completed in July 2018. The existing units that serviced 58 senior apartments had experienced extensive repairs over the last several years and it was determined that the units had reached the end of their service life and were no longer reliable. The scope of work included removal and decommissioning of the existing units and the complete installation of new air units. The addition of cooling to common areas was a welcome addition to tenants this year.

Northview Court and Tom Taylor Place – roof replacements

Construction to replace the flat roof system at Northview Court in the Town of Georgina and Tom Taylor Place in the Town of Newmarket began in August 2018, and is planned to be completed in November 2018.

Tenant information sessions were held to provide tenants with a project overview including timelines, construction activities and schedules. Overhead protection will be provided to allow tenants to safely access the building at all entrances during the construction phase.

Elmwood Gardens, Springbrook Gardens, Mulock Village and Brayfield Manors - window and door replacements

Window and door replacements are planned to begin this fall at Elmwood Gardens in the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville, Springbrook Gardens in the Town of Richmond Hill, and Mulock Village and Brayfield Manors in the Town of Newmarket.

Elmwood Gardens is a two storey 50 unit senior's apartment building. Springbrook Gardens, Mulock Village and Brayfield Manors are all family townhouses with a combined total of 278 units. Construction at each property is anticipated to begin in the fall of 2018 and will continue until the spring of 2019. The scope of work will include installation of new energy efficient windows, front doors, patio doors, and new door hardware. Construction schedules and installation timelines are pre-planned to minimize the duration of each window and door replacement. Arrangements will be made to assist tenants with moving furniture away from the window areas. As well, common areas will be available to provide a warm environment for tenants during the time it will take to replace the windows in each unit. The new energy efficient windows and doors will improve the comfort level for tenants and reduce energy cost.

Richmond Hill Hub and Belinda's Place - registration of securities for the Investment in Affordable Housing program

The Investment in Affordable Housing program provided federal and provincial funding of \$23,317,852 towards development of the Richmond Hill Hub, and \$1,350,000 for Belinda's Place. During the process of applying for the final 10 per cent holdback payment for each building, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing notified Regional staff that a change on interpretation of the program guidelines had occurred. Previously, Ministry staff allowed payments to be processed in projects that were secured through the existence of a contribution agreement. The Ministry now requires that this funding be secured by registration of security interests on title to these buildings before final payment can be released. This requires various security documents, including a mortgage, general assignment of rents and a general security agreement be registered on title for both properties.

There is \$391,884 in outstanding payments and holdbacks from the Ministry for these two projects. The Ministry has advised that the remaining funds cannot be released to the Region until the security documents are registered on title for both projects. In order to register security documents on title for the Richmond Hill Hub and Belinda's Place properties, approval by the Region is required under the Amended and Restated Shareholder Direction for Housing York Inc. This request went before Regional Council for consideration on September 20, 2018. In addition, an agreement between the Region, Housing York and the Town of Newmarket will be required to facilitate the registration of the security interests on title to the leased Belinda's Place property which is anticipated to be completed by the end of the year.

5676 Main Street, Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville - potential acquisition of land

After a comprehensive property search focused on the priority areas of the Town of Aurora, Town of East Gwillimbury and the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville, the Region found a 3.7 acre site at 5676 Main Street in the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville. In June, Council authorized acquisition of the site for an affordable housing development. Due

diligence on the property is underway. Should due diligence be satisfactory to the Region and all conditions met, the property would close in January 2019. Following that, staff would begin community engagement including Public Information Centres and establish a Community Liaison Committee which would remain in place throughout the duration of the project.

Currently, only the funding for the land acquisition is approved. Capital costs for the development will be requested through the Region's capital budget process. The Region has \$4.1 million in federal and provincial funding that can be allocated to the construction of this project, which would require approvals to be achieved by March 2020.

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