



Community and Health Services
Housing York Inc.

Memorandum

To: Members of the Housing York Inc. Board
From: Rick Farrell, General Manager
Date: May 3, 2018
Re: **Housing Operations – Monthly Activity Update**

This Housing Operations update highlights February through April activities.

Site Activities

Housing Branch Hosts Thinker in Residence Program

Housing Partnership Canada is a collaboration of Canada's housing leaders that operate as a peer network for senior housing practitioners providing opportunities to share business ideas. On March 14th and 15th, York Region hosted Housing Partnership Canada's annual "Thinker in Residence" program where program participants share experiences and best practices that impact day-to-day housing operations. The two-day event drew housing experts from the Provinces of British Columbia, Alberta, and Ontario.

Out of province participants provided an overview of their respective housing organizations, operational highlights, community engagement programs and plans for future growth. York Region housing staff shared social housing wait list management strategies, provided an overview of rent subsidy models, and explained Access York's role in supporting housing referrals and new housing applications. Staff also provided an overview of housing developments currently under construction and hosted tours of social and affordable housing communities including Armitage Gardens (Town of Newmarket), Richmond Hill Hub and Mackenzie Green (Town of Richmond Hill) and Crescent Village, a non-profit housing provider's community in the City of Markham.

GreenON Social Housing Program

Several Housing York Board members, Housing staff and residents of Hadley Grange in the Town of Aurora, joined Chris Ballard, Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, Peter Milczyn, Minister of Housing, and Parminder Sandhu, Chair and Interim CEO of the Green Ontario Fund, to announce the launch of the GreenON Social Housing Program. The Ministers talked about changing weather conditions and the importance of taking action today for a better environment for future generations. Residents engaged with the guest speakers and asked questions about environmental protection and urban growth.

The GreenON Social Housing program, funded by the Government of Ontario, is a \$25 million investment over the next three years to improve energy efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions in social housing apartment buildings with less than 100 units. GreenON funding may be used for building and system upgrades such as energy-efficient heating and cooling systems, windows, lighting and insulation. York Region's allocation of GreenON funding is expected to be announced in May 2018.



GreenON Social Housing Program announcement at Hadley Grange in Town of Aurora

Free Income Tax Clinics at Two Richmond Hill Properties

Each year, residents receiving a housing subsidy are required to verify their subsidy eligibility. As part of the review, residents are asked to provide a copy of their income tax notice of assessment. To help residents file their taxes, Housing York participates in Canada Revenue Agency's Community Volunteer Income Tax program. Professional accountants or tax preparers volunteer their time to help complete tax returns for eligible individuals. The program was available for eligible individuals who have a modest income and a simple tax situation. Interested residents were invited to book a 30 minute meeting with a volunteer from the program for a free tax preparation meeting and to complete an income tax return. A total of 16 hours of free services were available for

Housing York residents in Springbrook Gardens (Town of Richmond Hill) and the Richmond Hill Hub throughout March and April. The two sites were chosen based on Canada Revenue Agency's Community Volunteer Income Tax program volunteer availability. For other properties, staff refer residents to other community tax clinics.

Residents Celebrate the Richmond Hill Hub's Building Anniversary

On February 16th, a resident led group at the Richmond Hill Hub hosted a social event to celebrate the second anniversary of the Richmond Hill Hub building opening. Because of the building's Yonge Street address, the event also recognized the 222nd anniversary of Yonge Street. Nearly 30 residents attended the event in the resident lounge. Residents mingled over a healthy lunch while organizers provided facts and photos documenting Yonge Street's history.

Legalization of Cannabis – Monitoring Implications on Housing York's Smoke-Free Building Policy

The Housing York Board of Directors approved a Smoke-Free Policy in [June 2014](#). All residents and their guests are prohibited from smoking within five metres of windows, doors or vents. New residents sign leases that prohibit smoking in the unit and adjacent exterior spaces, including balconies and townhouse unit yards.

Residents with existing leases cannot be prevented from smoking in their units as the *Residential Tenancies Act, 2006* prohibits landlords from revising lease agreements without the resident's agreement. Since the Smoke-Free Policy was implemented, more than 800 smoke-free leases have been signed. Housing York will be offering residents opportunities to sign a smoke-free addendum.

In consultation with the Region's legal services team, Housing York has been monitoring federal and provincial legislation to legalize recreational cannabis. Housing York's Smoke-Free policy contemplated the potential legalization of cannabis. The policy is purposely broad to enable enforcement where necessary for cannabis use.

Consistent with the current *Smoke-Free Ontario Act, 2006*, and the forthcoming *Smoke-Free Ontario Act, 2017* residents who use medical marijuana are exempt from the Smoke-Free Policy if they provide the necessary documents from Health Canada.

Regardless of which lease a resident signs, the enforcement mechanism for smoking related issues is an application to the Landlord and Tenant Board (the Board) for interfering with either the Landlord's rights or another tenant's reasonable enjoyment of the property. Success at the Board is more likely if a non-smoking lease is in place. However, Housing York can always apply to the Landlord and Tenant Board if a resident's behaviour, including smoking of tobacco or cannabis, is substantially interfering with the reasonable enjoyment of another resident. For example, Housing

York could apply to the Board if a heavy smoker lived next door to a resident with an allergy to tobacco smoke. As part of the application, Housing York would be required to demonstrate that it had taken all reasonable steps to mitigate the issue by preventing air flow between the units.

Residents with non-smoking leases will be prohibited from smoking cannabis as well as tobacco in their units. The five metre provision would apply to tenants smoking cannabis outdoors in the same manner it currently applies to those smoking tobacco. Enforcement will follow the same procedures that are used now when tenants smoke tobacco in their units. Staff will continue to monitor this issue as legalization proceeds.

Capital Works Updates

In May 2018, balcony railing painting will begin at Founders Place in the Town of Newmarket and Dunlop Pines in the Town of Richmond Hill, and is expected to be completed by June 2018.

There are a total of 100 seniors units at Founders Place and 133 seniors units at Dunlop Pines. Work includes cleaning and preparation of metal and repairs to the railings. The railings will receive a primer and fresh coat of paint. The new paint provides a protective barrier against further rusting and the paint finish adds a new look to the railings.

Work is confined to the balcony and the total time to complete the work is two to three days. Each tenant received notice prior to any work starting at their unit. Regular project updates are provided to tenants as the project is completed.

Rick Farrell
General Manager

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