



Community and Health Services Department  
Housing York Inc.

## Memorandum

To: Members of the Housing York Inc. Board of Directors

From: Rick Farrell  
General Manager

Date: May 4, 2017

Re: **Housing York Inc. – Monthly Activity Update**

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This update provides highlights of Housing York activities for March and April 2017.

### Site Activities

#### **Partnering with First Responders – Paramedic and Seniors Services**

Housing York and the Region's Paramedic and Seniors Services branch have partnered to assist paramedics responding to emergency calls at Housing York properties. When a tenant calls 911, paramedics need access to the building before they can get to the tenant's apartment. If the tenant is unable to manage the building entry system, paramedics are dependent on neighbours to open the door, resulting in response delays, particularly for late night calls.

Dedicated lock boxes, containing a building entrance key, have been installed in apartment building entry areas. The lock box code has been provided to Paramedic and Seniors Services and can also be obtained through the Housing York after hours emergency dispatch service. This initiative provides paramedics with timely access into buildings when responding to emergency calls.

#### **Partnering with First Responders – York Regional Police Emergency Response Unit**

The decommissioned building at 275 Woodbridge Avenue in Vaughan offers a unique opportunity to partner with the York Regional Police's Emergency Response Unit.

The Emergency Response Unit, which includes Critical Incident Management, Emergency Response and Explosives Disposal Units, has been using the unoccupied building for training exercises. Officers in these units respond to situations that go beyond the normal training and equipment limits of a frontline police officer. The vacant building allows police to train for critical events, such as the rescue of a person held against their will by an armed person. Since the building is slated for demolition, the training exercises can include destructive activities that would otherwise not be feasible in a training environment. York Regional Police provides signage to inform neighbours and passers-by that a training exercise is in progress.



### **Woodbridge Lane Redevelopment and Tenant Relocation Update**

Housing York has successfully relocated all tenants from the existing Woodbridge buildings. The seniors' building was vacated gradually over a two-year period, with most tenants being transferred to other Housing York seniors' buildings in the Vaughan area.

It was more difficult however to relocate the family tenants from 64 Abell Avenue as Housing York has no other family properties in Vaughan and there are no other non-profit housing options available. Four of the fourteen Abell Avenue units were vacated through normal turnover processes and three households were willing to move to Housing York properties in other municipalities. The remaining seven tenants have been accommodated in private sector rental units until the new building opens.

The relocation process has been difficult for the tenants, some of whom have lived at 64 Abell Avenue since before Housing York acquired the property in 2005. Housing York acknowledges the disruption caused to tenants that are being displaced by the redevelopment process. Staff has spent a great deal of time working with them to ensure: their move went as smoothly as possible; they were involved in the process of

finding suitable alternative housing; and they are able to maintain connections in the community, including work, school and support services as needed.

Staff supported tenants through the process by arranging for them to tour potential rental properties, meet landlords and explore the community around them. Throughout this successful relocation process, Housing York has kept tenants involved and has assured them they will have the opportunity to return to the new building, once complete.

With tenants safely relocated in their new homes, the redevelopment process can now begin. Housing York has salvaged building artifacts and reusable building assets and has closed out all utility accounts and service contracts. Turnover of the properties to the contractor, VanMar Constructors Inc. took place April 19, 2017 and demolition of the buildings has begun. Active construction will begin in June 2017. The demolition permits for all three existing buildings, issued by the City of Vaughan in January 2017, are sufficient to secure the \$10 million of federal and provincial Investment in Affordable Housing, Social Infrastructure Funding under Program Guidelines from the Province. Building Permits for the new building are anticipated to be received in the next few weeks.

## Tenant Engagement

### Tenant Fire Safety Information in Multiple Languages

Ensuring all tenants are safe and know what to do in the case of a fire emergency is of utmost importance. Tenants participate regularly in fire drills and are encouraged to attend fire safety talks conducted by fire services. Housing York has prepared new fire safety information sheets in multiple languages so that safety messages are well understood by everyone. The sheets have been produced in Chinese (Cantonese and Mandarin), English, Farsi, French, Italian, Korean, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog, Tamil, and Urdu. Fire safety sheets are provided to tenants when they first move in and are distributed in common areas so that tenants are continually reminded of the best actions to take in case of a fire.

## Capital Updates

### **Trinity Square – Energy Retrofits**

In 2016, Housing York was allocated approximately \$40,000 through the provincial Social Housing Electricity Efficiency Program (SHEEP) to retrofit single family dwellings to increase energy efficiency. Eligibility was based on specific criteria requiring the provider to continue to provide affordable housing for 10 years from the date the SHEEP money was received. These dwellings must be heated by electricity and must be in the tenant's name. Of the entire Housing York portfolio, only 10 units at Trinity Square were eligible for funding. Energy efficient upgrades were completed in the first quarter and included: replacement of existing electric baseboard heaters with newer more efficient heaters with programmable thermostats; new LED lighting; insulated

blankets for hot water tanks; increased attic insulation; and new bathroom fans. Energy audits were completed before the work began and will be completed again after a year of operation.

### **Belinda's Place Enhancements**

Renovations have begun in the lower level of Belinda's Place. The work will transform an unfinished space into a new storage area, a flexible community program space, and a small kitchenette. During the renovations a temporary storage container will be provided on-site. Finishing this space will allow a variety of programs to be delivered to both the women temporarily living at Belinda's Place and for drop-in service clients. Renovations are expected to be completed in approximately three months.

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General Manager

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