



Community and Health Services  
Office of the Commissioner

## Memorandum

TO: Members of Committee of the Whole

FROM: Adelina Urbanski  
Commissioner of Community and Health Services

DATE: May 7, 2015

RE: **Provincial Domiciliary Hostel Changes and Impacts on  
York Region's Standards of Care**

---

This memo provides Committee of the Whole with an update on provincial changes to the Domiciliary Hostel Program and the implications for York Region.

### Background

In July 2012, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing introduced the new Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI) which is part of the Province's Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy. CHPI consolidated funding for emergency shelters, the Consolidated Homelessness Prevention Program, Rent Bank, Emergency Energy Fund and the Domiciliary Hostel Program as well as partial funding from the former Social Assistance Community Start-up and Maintenance Benefit, into a single homelessness funding agreement for Municipal Service Managers effective January 1, 2013.

Under the CHPI funding, Service Managers have greater flexibility to use homelessness funds to reflect local needs and priorities. Service Managers can use CHPI funding in four service categories:

1. Emergency Shelter Solutions
2. Housing and Related Supports
3. Services and Supports
4. Homelessness Prevention

Programs and services must meet two program outcomes: people who are homeless obtain and retain housing, and people who are at risk of homelessness remain housed.

Among several other responsibilities related to homelessness, York Region, as the local Service Manager, licenses and administers funding agreements for domiciliary hostels. These are privately owned and operated homes that provide permanent housing for

single individuals aged 18 and over who require supervision in the activities of daily living.

There are currently 19 domiciliary hostel operators in York Region; they provide 564 beds in 23 homes licensed under the York Region Lodging Houses Bylaw and/or the provincial *Homes for Special Care Act*. Residents must have a mental health issue, a developmental or physical disability, or be frail/elderly to be eligible to reside in a domiciliary hostel.

The Region enters into funding agreements with operators to provide a fee subsidy, on a per diem basis, for individuals who would not otherwise be able to afford this type of housing. York Region funds approximately 400 beds on a monthly basis. The Region also has dedicated staff, including a Licensing and Compliance Officer who monitors adherence to York Region's Standards of Care for Domiciliary Hostels, and a team of Social Assistance Case Coordinators in the Homelessness Community Programs Unit who determine eligibility for fee subsidy and offer case management and wrap-around supports to domiciliary hostel residents.

Operators who have a funding agreement with the Region are required to be in compliance with York Region's Standards of Care for Domiciliary Hostels, which were established in 2006 to meet provincial requirements. However, when CHPI came into effect in 2012, it was understood that the province would issue new guidelines for Service Managers to establish new local standards.

### **Provincial categories for standards of care**

The new provincial guidelines were communicated in August 2014, when the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing released a Standard Framework for Housing with Related Supports. Service Managers who use their CHPI funding to support residents in homes that were formerly funded under the Domiciliary Hostel Program were required to update and enhance local standards, using the following eight categories:

1. **Eligibility** – Service Managers must establish standards that define the eligibility criteria and the intake process.
2. **Staffing** – Service Managers must establish standards for the minimum qualifications of staff and volunteers, staffing/volunteer levels, staff/volunteer conduct and staff/volunteer training.
3. **Insurance and Monitoring** - Service Managers must establish standards for insurance and regular monitoring of the housing provider to ensure compliance with local standards.
4. **Conflict Resolution, Complaints Process and Reporting** – Service Managers must establish standards for internal/in-house conflict resolution and complaint processes, and for the reporting of serious incidents.
5. **Rights and Responsibilities** - Service Managers must establish standards for tenant and landlord rights and responsibilities, including tenancy agreements,

tenant confidentiality and privacy, and management of tenant files and other documentation.

6. **Physical Safety, Health and Well-being of Tenants** – Service Managers must establish standards for tenants' physical health, safety and well-being, including medication storage and/or management.
7. **Provision of or Access to Activities and Support Services** – Service Managers must establish standards for the provision of or access to activities and support services for tenants, both within the residence and the community.
8. **Monthly Allowance for Personal Use** – Service Managers must establish standards for the payment and management of the monthly allowance for personal use for tenants.

Service Managers were required to submit a copy of their updated new standards to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing prior to implementation. The date to have these standards completed and submitted to the Province was April 1, 2015.

### **York Region's standards development process and outcomes**

York Region was well-positioned to meet requirements of the new Provincial Standards Framework. The Region has existing Standards of Care for Domiciliary Hostels, as well as a Lodging Houses Bylaw, approved by Council in September 2014, dedicated Regional staff to monitor compliance, and a Council-approved Quality of Life Program for the domiciliary hostels. All of these provided a strong foundation for meeting provincial requirements for Regional Standards of Care. To ensure that the new Regional Standards of Care were properly aligned, the Region engaged in a consultation process to:

- Identify gaps in the existing Standards of Care and opportunities to enhance resident wellbeing
- Identify how operators in York Region may be impacted by changes in the standards and opportunities for the Region to mitigate the impacts where possible
- Obtain feedback on the potential time and resources that would be required to implement changes
- Identify strategies for the operators to implement the new Regional Standards of Care, including opportunities for York Region to provide assistance

Key changes in the new standards to ensure the Region meets provincial requirements include:

- Adopting a new program name, the *York Region Housing with Supports Program*. The new program name was required because there is no longer a separate provincial Domiciliary Hostel Program and reflects the "made in York Region" approach to this housing option.

- A more transparent and consistent intake process that will increase the Region's capacity to monitor demand for housing with supports.
- Strengthened expectations around staff and volunteer training, including health and safety training.
- Strengthened language regarding the requirements for staffing levels in each home.
- Enhanced requirements for operators to document their policies and procedures (e.g. move-in processes; training, orientation, supervision and conduct for staff and volunteers; the collection, use, disclosure and storage of residents' personal information; and resident internet access).
- Updating the standards to outline the operators' key obligations as employers under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (the Act) and provide greater clarity regarding the actions operators must take to comply with the Act.
- Mandatory participation in the Region's Quality of Life Program, which provides additional funding to operators to deliver a wide range of recreational and life skills activities for residents. Currently all operators are participating in the Program.

### **Implications for York Region, operators and residents**

While several changes have been made in the new Standards of Care for Housing with Supports, many of these changes simply formalize existing practices and Regional expectations. The majority of operators have already established some or all of the procedures and policies that are required under the new standards. Others will need to document their existing procedures and some will need to develop new policies/procedures and provide enhanced training to their staff. Most changes are expected to have only short-term costs or resource implications for operators. For example, there may be costs to operators to comply with legislative requirements under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* that have been made more explicit in the new standards such as staff training on Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System and Workplace Violence and Harassment.

Where changes to existing practices are required, the Region will work with operators and when possible provide tools and resources to support the implementation of the new Standards of Care for Housing with Supports. For example, the Region currently provides First Aid/CPR training for emergency housing staff in order to ensure standard practices within the Region's emergency housing system. The Region will open spaces to Housing with Supports operators for staff training as well. This will not have a cost impact for the Region in 2015, but may have a cost impact to the Region in 2016 if additional training sessions are required.

The Region will be reviewing the per diem rate for Housing with Supports for the 2016 budget year to reflect operators' overall increased operating costs, which are due to increases in the cost of living as well as potential impacts that may arise from implementation of the new standards (e.g. staff training costs, increased operator documentation and administration).

These new standards may also have an impact on the cost of York Region's licensing and compliance as there will be additional documentation required on an ongoing basis, but provide a greater level of accountability for the program. In addition, Homelessness Community Programs staff will have intake applications to review for fee subsidy and/or referrals to make for those who may not be eligible for the Housing with Supports Program. However, this will enable York Region to continuously assess the demand for this type of housing, and make more appropriate housing referrals.

The new standards will be incorporated into new funding agreements for 2016. These will be in place by December 31, 2015.

Overall, the institution of new standards is an important, positive development. York Region has worked to provide standards that balance the needs of operators, meet provincial requirements, support residents, and support the interests and standards of the Region. The new Standards of Care for Housing with Supports will increase consistent service in the homes across the region and enhance the quality of life and wellbeing of the residents. In addition, the new standards will create opportunities to improve service delivery.

---

Adelina Urbanski  
Commissioner of Community and Health Services

NL/CA/kn

#6004654