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SOCIAL HOUSING ADVISORY GROUP MINUTES OF MEETING

Meeting Date: Wednesday, October 21, 2020
Meeting Start Time and End Time: 9:00 a.m. to 10:10 a.m.
Meeting Location: Microsoft Teams

In Attendance (34)

| | |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| Beverly Kueper | Region of Durham |
| Brynn Harlock | Region of Durham |
| Eleanor MacDonald | Region of Durham |
| Jessica Ross | Region of Durham |
| Julie Robertson | Region of Durham |
| Julie Roza | Region of Durham |
| Justin Linton | Region of Durham |
| Laura Lavoy | Region of Durham |
| Lori Barber | Region of Durham |
| Megan Hueser-Shields | Region of Durham |
| Renee Stayner | Region of Durham |
| Roberta Jagoe | Region of Durham |
| Heather Quantrill | Region of Durham |
| Alyssa Skan | Cornerstone |
| Amona Bissoon | Inter-Organization |
| Arthur Smith | Manning Mews |
| Christine McGee | Cornerstone |
| Corina Stavre | Unity Village |
| Debbie Craig | Durham Non-Profit |
| Jody Baker | Inter Faith |
| Kathy Andreopoulos | Unity Village |
| Kevin Bradley | Ajax Municipal |
| Lillian Igel | Sunrise Seniors |
| Lisa Roy | Durham County |
| Lovelyn Valdez | Borelia Co-op |
| Monica French | Legion Manor |
| Narrah Thuraingam | Ajax Municipal |
| Natalia Gunawan | Sunrise Seniors |
| Sandra Thompson | Inter-Organization |
| Saroj Yadav | Borelia Co-op |
| Stacey Leadbetter | Otter Creek |
| Tony Astilla | Prisma Non-Profit |

Valerie Mackie
Vera Bala

New Hope
YWCA

Regrets (1)

Sherril Belille

Region of Durham

Discussion Items

1. Welcome

2. Business arising from previous minutes

- None

3. Housing staff updates

- Megan Hueser-Shields replaced Marie Nesbitt in the role of Eligibility Assistant in July 2020. She provides support to Rent Supplement Programs.
- Jessica Ross replaced Valerie Cook in the role of Eligibility Review Officer in September 2020. Please contact Jessica if you have any fraud related questions at Jessica.Ross@durham.ca.
- Rebecca Phillips replaced Diane Tan in the role of Housing Program Co-ordinator in October 2020. Rebecca and Brynn Harlock will work together with community housing providers.

4. Bill 204 – Rent Freeze

- Bill 204, The Helping Tenants and Small Businesses Act, 2020, received Royal Assent on October 1, 2020. It amends the Residential Tenancies Act to set the rent increase guideline at 0 per cent and introduces a rent freeze period for most tenancies in Ontario. The rent freeze period is from January 1, 2021 to December 31, 2021.
- The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) will be bringing forward changes to the Housing Services Act (HSA) regulations to support the rent freeze as it pertains to RGI.
- Community housing providers will not be able to increase rent for 2021 for all RGI and market rent tenancies. RGI increases cannot be implemented in 2021 – including increases as a result of RGI ineligibility. Providers may give notice of increase in 2021 for increases that are effective after December 31, 2021.
- Annual reviews and in-year reviews will continue, but any resulting RGI increase cannot be implemented until January 2022.

- The rent freeze does not apply to housing co-op members who pay housing market charges but does apply to RGI increases. Housing co-ops may increase their market housing charges in line with their by-laws.
- Annual subsidy estimates should be completed using the market rent indices previously provided. The Region will provide an update if market rent indices are affected by the change to the rent increase guideline, and housing providers may update their subsidy estimates at that time, if necessary.
- Housing Services will provide direction and letter templates to support implementation of the rent freeze provision once MMAH has issued changes to the HSA regulations.
- For more information, please review the Q&As for MMAH's Municipal Services Offices and Services Managers on Residential Rent Freeze for 2021.

5. RGI Simplification – Online Tools

- Housing providers are encouraged to use the excel based RGI Tool that was emailed in July 2020.
- The [RGI Guide](#) and [RGI Simplification Cheat Sheets](#) can be found on the Region's website under [Resources for Community Housing Providers](#).
- Please reach out to Brynn Harlock at Brynn.Harlock@durham.ca or Rebecca Phillips at Rebecca.Phillips@durham.ca if you have any questions.

6. Canada-Ontario Community Housing Initiative (COCHI) Update

- Projects that were selected to receive Year 2 funding are currently in the process of finalizing their Contribution Agreements.
- The Region anticipates that the application process for next year's funding allocation will begin in April 2021.

7. Update on Regional Reviews

- Eligibility Review Officer, Jessica Ross, has been appointed to Chair all Regional Reviews.
- The [Regional Review Process](#) was updated in December 2019 to allow for expedited reviews without a hearing.
- Since the pandemic, Regional Reviews have been conducted exclusively through teleconference or Microsoft Teams. This process will continue when the Region reopens to the public.

- The Region asks that you submit your Regional Review Summary package electronically to Cindy McCreight at Cindy.McCreight@durham.ca whenever possible.
 - The Regional Review Summary package should be clear and precise. It should only contain supporting documentation that pertains to the decision itself.
 - Housing providers are reminded to select the type of review they are requesting (e.g. Regional Review Hearing, Expedited Review, Review not recommended) when submitting the Regional Review Summary Form.

8. COVID-19 – General Discussion

- There have been some challenges with tenants/members not following social distancing rules.
- Some housing providers have found success by hiring cleaners to disinfect areas throughout their building while other housing providers have made information posters, gloves, wipes, masks and hand sanitizer stations available to their tenants/members and visitors.
- Housing providers are required to have a policy in place regarding mandatory mask usage in residential apartment settings. Please visit the [Region's Public Health Department](#) website to review the [COVID-19 Class Order Fact Sheet](#).
- Discussion surrounding if there will be financial relief available related to COVID-19 expenses.
 - At this time, there is no funding available related to COVID-19 expenses endured by housing providers.

9. Standing Items

- Landlord and Tenant Board Cases
 - Housing providers are still experiencing slow responses for decisions and long wait times for cases to be rescheduled due to the pandemic.
- Community Housing Renewal Strategy
 - No new update.

10. New Business

- Think Forward: RGI Training is being held virtually for a full day session on Tuesday, October 27, 2020 through Microsoft Teams. The session will include the basics of RGI and will also focus on the new RGI simplification rules and how to apply them. The session is geared to all community housing providers in Durham Region who are new to RGI calculations and those who want to refresh their skills.

11. Next Meeting

- Wednesday, January 20, 2021 at 9:00 a.m. through [Microsoft Teams](#).