



# HOUSING PROVIDER NEWS

A publication for housing providers in Niagara region

www.nrh.ca

Issue 6 December 2006

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- NRH's New Location
- Housing Allowance/Rent Supplement Program
- Annual Information Return 2006
- NRH Notices
- Operating Budgets 2007
- Co-operative Workshop
- Occupational Health & Safety Act
- NRH Seeks Development of 110 New Units
- La Residence Joie de vivre Annual Picnic
- Housing Provider Forum
- NRH Operational Review Process
- Capital Reserve Strategy

***The Social Housing in Niagara (SHIN) has been renamed "Housing Provider News"***

## NRH's New Location



Niagara Regional Housing has moved to the  
 Campbell East  
 Regional Administration Building  
 2201 St. David's Road  
 Thorold, Ontario  
 effective  
**Monday, November 13, 2006.**  
 Mailing address:  
 P.O. Box 344  
 Thorold, ON L2V 3Z3

For all inquiries call 905-682-9201  
 1-800-232-3292 (Grimsby or outside  
 Niagara region)  
 Fax: 905-687-4844

Housing Programs Division staff extensions are:

Karen Drake	3914
Paula Silta	3917
Deborah Firmin	3918
Mira Fearnside	3926
Larry Huibers	3931
Margaret Smith	3932

## Housing Allowance/Rent Supplement Program

As part of the Affordable Housing Program, the Housing Allowance/Rent Supplement (HA/RS) Program allocates \$80 Million to Service Managers to subsidize 5,000 rental units across the province of Ontario, including 500 units dedicated specifically to victims of domestic violence. Niagara Regional Housing has been allocated 153 HA/RS units and 17 units for victims of domestic violence. The HA/RS program is a temporary program and will be available for a maximum of 5 years.

### Program Details

The program provides households, who are currently on the centralized waiting list, an opportunity to move into a private landlord/housing provider's vacant market unit with a housing allowance. A housing allowance is a payment made by NRH directly to private landlords/housing providers, on behalf of the household and will range between \$250 and \$300 per month. Applicants who are estimated to have a wait time of approximately 3-5 years on the centralized waiting list have been targeted for this program. The program is intended to make rents/housing charges more affordable. At the end of the term of the agreement, NRH anticipates that these households will be moved to permanent subsidized accommodation.



### Eligible Units

Vacant market units in non-profits and co-operatives can be used for the delivery of the program. In-situ tenants are not eligible for the program. Social housing rent-geared-to-income (RGI) units are also not eligible.

This program would benefit housing providers who are under their market target and are having difficulty filling their market units.

### Housing Provider Process

Housing providers should review their targets. If a housing provider is under its market target and has difficulty filling market units, the following process should be followed:

- Housing provider board to adopt a resolution to participate in the HA/RS program.
- Housing provider to contact Mira Fearnside at (905) 682-9201 ext. 3926 to request participation in the program and to provide actual RGI and market household information.
- A HA/RS agreement is signed with the housing provider.
- Market units that are currently vacant (or will become vacant in the near future) are identified and added to the agreement.

continued on page 3

continued from page 2

- NRH identifies applicants from the centralized waiting list. An initial income testing is completed by NRH to determine the amount of housing allowance available to the household.
- The applicant is provided with housing provider's contact person/number to view the unit. The applicant views the unit and accepts/declines the unit.
- If accepted, a tenant agreement is signed with NRH.
- The applicant signs a standard lease/occupancy agreement with the housing provider (copy to be forwarded to NRH), as well as a tenant agreement with NRH
- NRH completes a Schedule "B" which is sent to the housing provider to be attached to the provider's standard lease/occupancy agreement, identifying the amount of housing allowance to be provided directly to the housing provider.
- NRH pays the housing allowance directly to the housing provider on a monthly basis for the term of the agreement.
- Income testing is performed by NRH on an annual basis to verify continued eligibility in the program.
- The housing provider treats the unit as a market unit in all reporting requirements and in its relationship with the household.

For further information on the HA/RS program, please contact Mira Fearnside, Housing Administrator, at 905-682-9201, ext. 326 or by email at [mira.fearnside@regional.niagara.on.ca](mailto:mira.fearnside@regional.niagara.on.ca).

### Annual Information Return—2006

Housing Providers will soon be receiving a revised annual information return package for fiscal 2006. The new return package follows the benchmark funding formula.

Housing Providers are required to complete the revised AIR and forward it to NRH together with their audited financial statements within 5 months of their year end.

Depending on interest, NRH may arrange various working sessions on how to complete the annual information return package.

Stay tuned for further details.



### NRH Notices

The following NRH Notices have been issued since the last issue:

- NRH Notice 06-02 Fire Code—New Requirement
- NRH Notice 06-03 Housing Provider Insurance Liability
- NRH Notice 06-04 Clarification on Minimum Rent/Housing Charge
- NRH Notice 06-05 Transitional & Housing Support Program
- NRH Notice 06-07 Service Agreement (Revised)
- NRH Notice 06-08 Fluctuating Income Procedure & Time Frame
- NRH Notice 06-09 Social Housing Investment Fund
- NRH Notice 06-10 New Child Care Benefit Program
- NRH Notice 06-11 Annual Information Return 2006
- NRH Notice 06-12 2007 Market Rent Index
- NRH Notice 06-13 Imputed Rate of Return
- NRH Notice 06-14 Minimum Market Rent for MNPs

## Operating Budget—2007

Housing Providers should obtain a template for developing their operating budgets for fiscal 2007 according to the benchmark funding formula. Both ONPHA and CHF have templates available on their websites. The template automatically calculates the mandatory payment and operating subsidies. NRH also has available a template for calculating the 2007 operating subsidies. Our recently-issued Notice 06-12 provides the 2007 market rent index for housing providers in Niagara region.

If sufficient interest exists, NRH will hold a brief working session on the budget process and how to use the template in developing your budget. If you are interested in this type of working session, please contact Paula Silta at (905) 682-9201 ext. 3917 or email [paula.silta@regional.niagara.on.ca](mailto:paula.silta@regional.niagara.on.ca).

If you would like to receive an electronic copy of NRH's budget template for your use, please contact [jennifer.yarnell@regional.niagara.on.ca](mailto:jennifer.yarnell@regional.niagara.on.ca).

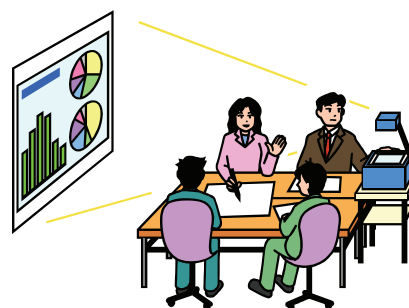
As a reminder, operating budgets are due to NRH three months prior to the start of your fiscal year.

## Co-op Workshop - Managing Arrears & Board Governance

On October 18, 2006, the City of Hamilton and Niagara Regional Housing collaborated in sponsoring a co-op training workshop, and engaged CHF & GH-CHF to conduct a joint Hamilton/Niagara session for board members and staff. Workshop topics included managing arrears, board governance and the SHRA 2000. A total of 45 co-operatives were represented. Participant feedback was very positive. Overall, 95% of participants found the training session to be *good to excellent*.

Based on the feedback received, there is interest in further co-op educational and training workshops in the following areas:

- Member relations committees
- Co-op participation
- Board information sessions
- Benchmarks for board members
- Marketing
- Rent geared-to-income calculations
- How to deal with conflict
- Maintenance
- Relationship between board and staff
- Running a successful meeting
- Eviction
- Director accountability
- Budgeting



Look for more collaborative workshops in the future!

## Occupational Health & Safety Act (OHSA)

The results of our operational reviews indicate that some housing providers may not consider occupational health and safety issues as a concern for small housing providers with five or fewer employees.

The purpose of the *Occupational Health & Safety Act, RSO 1990 (OHSA)* is to protect employees against health and safety hazards on the job. The OHSA applies to all providers and their employees, including workers who are considered self-employed contractors.

Regardless of the number of employees, every housing provider must do everything reasonable under the circumstances for the protection of employees.

Housing providers have the responsibility under OHSA to ensure the following requirements are in place:

### Equipment

- Equipment, materials and protective devices are provided, used and maintained in good condition.
- Load bearing supports are capable of supporting all loads as set out under the Building Code.
- 

### Human Resources

- Employees are provided with information, instruction and supervision to protect their health and safety.
- Property manager is competent in their capacity to supervise work.
- Employees are acquainted with hazards in the workplace.
- 

### Information

- Copy of OHSA and Regulations is posted or available, along with a written health and safety policy (if one exists).
- Information including confidential information be given to a medical practitioner for the purpose of diagnosis or treatment in a medical emergency.
- 

### Hazards

- Employees are acquainted with any hazard in the workplace and in handling, storage, use, disposal and transport of any article, device, equipment or (biological, chemical or physical) agent.
- Accurate records of handling, storage, use and disposal of and exposure to biological, chemical or physical agents are kept and maintained.
- Project tendering includes information on any designated hazardous substance on site.

As well as the OHAS, there are two regulations which are relevant to housing providers:

**Workplace Hazardous Material Regulation—WHMIS** (RRO 1990, Reg. 860 as amended by O.Reg.36/93)

- WHMIS has 3 basic components: a) material safety data sheet (MSDS) on hazardous substances provides details, safety information, proper handling, health effects of overexposure and emergency procedures; b) proper labeling of flammable and other deadly substances (suppliers are responsible for supplying labels and MSDS for their products; c) employees must be trained on handling hazardous substances that they will be working with, including emergency procedures.



continued on page 6

continued from page 5

### **Window Cleaning Regulation** (RRO 1990, Reg. 859 as amended by O.Reg. 523/92)

- The responsibility for window cleaning falls to the window cleaning company. However, the housing provider has responsibilities to ensure that roof anchors are regularly inspected and inspection log books are maintained.

NRH recommends that all providers develop a health and safety policy and program. ONPHA has developed a sample health and safety policy and it is available on their website.

For further information on health and safety issues, please visit:

[www.iapa.on.ca](http://www.iapa.on.ca) (Industrial Accident Prevention Association)

[www.csao.org](http://www.csao.org) (Construction Safety Association of Ontario)

[onpha.on.ca](http://onpha.on.ca) (Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association)



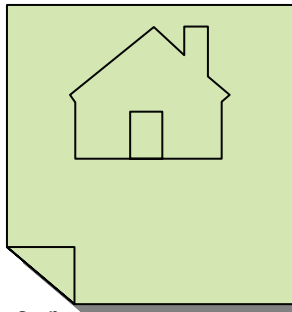
### **NRH Seeks Development of 110 New Affordable Rental Units**

On October 18 2006, Niagara Regional Housing released a Request For Proposals (RFP) for the delivery of 110 new affordable housing units, through \$7.7M of funding from the Canada-Ontario Affordable Housing Program.

New units under this program will provide a market rent at 80% of the local CMHC average. It is anticipated that this level of rent will allow 110 households to find affordable accommodation in Niagara.



Niagara Regional Housing's priority is the creation of one-bedroom units to address the greatest need across Niagara, based on the current wait list statistics for affordable housing.



Copies of the RFP are available from Niagara Regional Housing. The deadline for submission is December 20 2006. Review of the proposals will occur in January with an anticipated construction start of spring/summer of 2007. All units must be completed and ready for occupancy by December 2010.

For more information on this program, please contact Larry Huibers, Housing Administrator, Niagara Regional Housing at 905-682-9201 x 3931 or email at [larry.huibers@regional.niagara.on.ca](mailto:larry.huibers@regional.niagara.on.ca).

### La Residence Joie de vivre— Annual Picnic



La Residence Joie de vivre held their annual picnic on August 30, 2006. The Board of Directors and les Aines de la Residence would like to thank all those who attended their annual celebration, including Karen Drake and Paula Silta of Niagara Regional Housing.



Absalon Gignac a été honoré pour ses 20 années de bénévolat.

This year was a special occasion as Absalon Gignac was presented with a plaque and certificate for his 20 years of volunteer work as Treasurer of the board of La Residence Joie de vivre. Food and refreshments were served and everyone had a good time.



Les membres ont joué au miniputt au cours de l'après-midi.

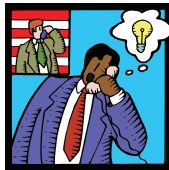
## Housing Provider Forum



NRH is gearing up for our annual **Housing Provider Forum** to be held in March/April 2007.

Please let your Housing Administrator know if you have any suggested topics or specific areas of interest.

Watch for further details in the near future!



## NRH Operational Review Process

NRH has completed a full cycle of operational reviews. Full and interim operational reviews have been completed on the majority of housing providers over the last 4 years, as per established policies.

We are currently evaluating and revising our operational review process to better meet the needs of housing providers and to provide clear evaluation criteria and remedies.

Changes may include a Housing Provider Rating System and revising the number of reviews required over a certain period of time. It is anticipated that our revised operational review process will be finalized in 2007.

## Capital Reserve Strategy

For the last year NRH has been actively collecting, compiling and analyzing Reserve Fund data for housing providers. Over 70% of Niagara's housing providers now have their Building Condition Assessments and Reserve Fund Studies entered into the *SHSC Capital Forecasting Software*. This program allows housing providers to update, run various scenarios, and print reports and charts. This ability to print board reports at the touch of a button provides the board with important information to make capital planning an integral part of the budgeting and planning process.

Some housing providers are currently in the process of having their Reserve Fund Study completed. All consultants should be requested to input your Building Condition Assessment into the *SHSC Capital Forecasting Software* as part of the report. Please provide NRH with a copy of your Study as soon as possible as this allows us to keep the NRH database current and work with you on any capital concerns.

In September 2006, forty-four (44) people representing thirty-seven (37) housing providers received *Using your Capital Reserve Fund* training. All who attended felt the information they received was very useful.

Some of the highlights were:

- Updating the data in the *SHSC Capital Forecasting Tool Software*
- Printing reports and graphs for board discussion and planning

continued on page 9

continued from page 9

- Setting replacement standards
- Energy conservation measures
- Role of preventive maintenance in capital planning

At the Using your Capital Reserve Fund training, feedback from providers indicated that they would like to see:

- A list of consultants and contractors to draw from;
- NRH to provide advice concerning which type of consultant/contractor should be invited to quote;
- Training concerning the tendering process;
- General specifications that can be adapted to write a specific scope of work;
- To participate in joint tendering;
- Preventive maintenance training/resources, and;
- Emergency response training.

Mitigation strategies under consideration by NRH are:

- Urging senior levels of government to provide additional funding;
- Investigating alternative funding options (i.e., loans, grants, emergency funding);
- Allowing providers to redirect year end surpluses to capital reserve funds;
- Establishing provider training and resources;
- Optimizing joint-tendering opportunities;
- Establishing an energy conservation strategy;
- Undertaking physical building inspections of providers' properties, and;
- Maintaining, tracking and analyzing capital reserve data.

More information will be available through NRH Notices, *Housing Provider News*, NRH website, Housing Provider Forum and other training sessions as NRH works with you to s-t-r-e-t-c-h your capital reserve dollars.



**Happy Holidays From All The Staff at NRH**