



# SHIN Newsletter

**Social Housing In Niagara**

September 2002 Issue

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Questions? Comments? Contact Mira Fearnside, Editor for SHIN at 905-682-9201 ext. 326

### Welcome to the first edition of the revised SHIN Newsletter!

Welcome to the first edition of the *revised SHIN* (social housing in Niagara) newsletter for all social housing providers in the Niagara Region. *SHIN* is designed to keep you and your tenants/members informed on the current issues related to social housing as well as provide articles of interest.

*SHIN* will be issued quarterly – September, December, March and June ■

### NRH Board Changes

Since the last issue of *SHiN* News in March 2002, there has been a change in the Board of Directors. Tim Siemens replaced Doug Smith, as a stakeholder representative. Tim Siemens, a resident of St. Catharines, is an Administrator with Pleasant Manor Retirement Village located in Niagara-on-the-Lake. ■

### Housing Access & Community Programs (formerly CHAN)

The responsibility for managing the centralized waiting list in the Niagara region falls under Housing Access & Community Programs, a division of Niagara Regional Housing (NRH). This division is responsible for the assessment of eligibility for all social housing applicants, manages the centralized waiting list, provides tenant placement services for NRH units and

Community Program support for NRH tenants and communities.

Housing Access & Community Programs has now achieved a significant goal. As of August 1, 2002, all mandated Niagara social housing providers are participating in the Centralized Waiting List and are able to access their waiting list online utilizing the Lotus Notes Waiting List Management System. In Niagara this was a sizeable achievement as the centralized waiting list represents over 180 subsidiary waiting lists with a wide continuum of social housing options covering twelve municipalities.

In consultation with Niagara social housing providers, NRH has now approved two priority groups. The Health and Safety and the Homeless Priority groups are in addition to the Provincial Special Priority Group for Victims of Violence.

In order to better meet the needs of our customers, Housing Access & Community Programs will be holding an information session for service agencies on October 3, 2002. Topics of discussion will include an introduction to social housing applicants and waiting list process, priority groups and the new documentation and verification requirements. For further information, please call:

General Line 905-935-7645  
Toll Free 800-391-4644  
Fax 905-935-0476

Housing Access & Community Programs staff:

Maryellen MacLellan, Manager  
Cherie Bousquet, Administrative Assistant  
Kathy Fraser, Eligibility Assessment Representative  
Diane Beres, Intake Representative  
Jeanette McKay, Housing Support Co-ordinator  
Michelle Parfitt, Tenant Placement Co-ordinator  
Jenny Stewart, Tenant Placement Co-ordinator  
Deborah Firmin, Community Programs Co-ordinator  
Melissa Spyker, Community Programs Co-ordinator

## Transfer Checklist

The *Social Housing Reform Act* (SHRA) 2000 and its associated regulations stipulate new requirements that must be met by housing providers at the point of transfer (April 1, 2002). The following is a checklist of new requirements to be implemented:

- ensure that information concerning types and sizes of units, policies and procedures for internal transfers/ internal reviews are made available to the public.

**(see next article for internal transfer policy requirements).**

- establish procedures to advise Housing Access & Community Programs within 10 days after a household advises the provider of its decision to accept/refuse an RGI unit.
- provide written notice to households within 10 days of offering a unit to another household.

- all tenants/occupants aged 16 and older must sign lease/occupancy agreement.
- ensure capital reserves are renewed for a term of less than 1 year.
- minimum rent /occupancy charge increase from \$32 to \$85.

All providers (except Federal projects) are required to develop policies on or implement the new requirements. NRH will be reviewing these specific areas as part of our upcoming compliance reviews ■

## Internal Transfer Policy and Procedures

The *Social Housing Reform Act 2000* defines internal transfers as being:

- the transfer of a household from one RGI unit to another RGI unit in the same or another housing site of the housing provider, or
- the transfer of a household from one special needs housing unit to another special needs housing unit in the same or another housing site of the housing provider.

Every housing provider (except Federal) must establish policies and procedures for internal transfers and provide a copy of the policy to NRH. Housing providers must also establish and maintain a waiting list for internal transfers in accordance with the policies and procedures for internal transfers (O.Reg. 339/01, s 11). These transfer policies and procedures must be available to the public, who should be allowed to make copies of the information at their own expense (O.Reg. 339/01, s 9).

Internal transfer policies & procedures should include a definition of overhoused and what the next steps are for households who are overhoused. Households living in a larger unit than required will need to move to a smaller unit. If the housing provider does not have a smaller unit, the household must apply to the centralized waiting list for an appropriate sized unit in order to continue receiving RGI assistance. Where a provider has the appropriate sized unit, the household will be placed on the provider's internal waiting list for one year. If the household is still overhoused one year

later, the provider must notify Housing Access & Community Programs so that the household can be added to the centralized waiting list. Your internal transfer policy should also include overhoused households ranked higher on the internal waiting list than other households who have requested internal transfers. ■

## Directives

In July 2002, NRH issued its first directive (#02-01) on the application process. All applicants for RGI housing in Niagara are required to complete a common application form and be placed on the centralized waiting list managed by Housing Access & Community Programs. Individual housing providers are no longer allowed to maintain their own external waiting list (except for special needs housing, alternative housing providers and Federal projects with no provincial funding).

Directive #02-01 stipulates that all former tenant/member arrears are to be reported to Housing Access & Community Programs as soon as the tenant/member has vacated the unit.

**Please note that maintenance arrears are to be included in the total arrears reported to Housing Access & Community Programs (consisting of monies owing as a result of unit damage).**

Please contact your Housing Administrator for more information or to obtain a copy of this directive ■

## Compliance Reviews

NRH has started a cycle of compliance reviews. An average of 3 housing providers will be reviewed each month. Each non profit/co-op housing provider, including Federal projects will be reviewed on a 2 year cyclical basis and we anticipate that all housing providers will have their first site review completed by Summer 2004.

Your housing administrator will contact you when your site is scheduled for review

## Consultation – Areas of Flexibility

NRH has recently provided each housing provider with the results of the latest consultation session held in July 2002. Discussion topics included:

- access to modified units without supports
- excluded income/assets
- RGI ineligibility period
- 10 day reporting rule
- absence from units
- rent reimbursement
- RGI increases of less than \$10



NRH will be developing policies regarding these areas of flexibility, taking into consideration the recommendations of the consultation group. Look for these policies in the next few months. If you haven't received the report on the consultation session, please contact your Housing Administrator.

Policy information on establishing local access priorities, setting occupancy standards and asset/income limits (discussed at a previous consultation session) will be issued in the near future.

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## Housing Provider Profile

In each issue of SHIN, we will profile one of the social housing providers in the Niagara region. In this issue, we look at Shriner's Creek Co-operative Homes Inc.

### Profile – Shriner's Creek Co-op



**Name:** Shriner's Creek Co-operative Homes Inc  
60 units – located in two buildings  
3 storey walk up apartments

**Address:** 7887 Thorold Stone Road, Niagara Falls, Ontario

**Demographics:** **Mix of family households/some seniors**  
7 – one bedroom units      2 - four bedroom units  
30 – two bedroom units      2 – one bedroom modified units  
18 – three bedroom units      1 – two bedroom modified unit

Shriner's Creek Co-op is located on Thorold Stone Road in Niagara Falls, close to bus routes and within walking distance of grocery and retail stores. The project is situated next to parkland.

The majority of the Board of Directors was recently elected in



Doreen Levair, Co-ordinator

May 2002. The Co-op has several active committees, such as property management, housekeeping and finance.

Although turnover is low, the Co-ordinator is actively searching for an appropriate household to fill their vacant 2 bedroom modified unit.



## Conflict of Interest – Reporting Requirements

The new regulations require private non profits and co-ops (except Federal) to notify NRH in writing of any potential or actual conflict of interest. The Board must resolve the conflict to the satisfaction of NRH.

Please contact your Housing Administrator if you have any questions or concerns regarding these reporting requirements. ■

## Landlord Checks – Transfers From Other Social Housing Providers

It is important to remember that RGI households who move into your units directly from other social housing

providers, should be subject to a landlord check (prior to move in) to ensure that the household is not in arrears. This also applies to households who move into your units from a rent supplement unit.



If a landlord check reveals arrears owing, the applicant would be ineligible for RGI assistance.

Keep in mind that Housing Access & Community Programs would not be advised of any arrears owing until the household actually moves out and the appropriate information is submitted to them by the provider. ■

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