



NRH SHIN



Social Housing in Niagara

Issue 5

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Inside this Issue:

- Benchmark Update
- NRH Staff Announcement
- 2004 Annual Report
- NRH Notices Update
- ONPHA Conference
- Access to Waiting List
- Housing Provider Forum
- Opening Doors Together
Program Update
- Service Agreement
- Capital Reserve Strategy
- Provider Advisory Group
- Nutrition Tours
- Transitional & Housing
Support Program
- Housing Development Forum
- In the News: Bethlehem Projects

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Benchmark Update

On June 20, 2005, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing issued the final benchmarks to housing providers in the Niagara Region. The approved benchmarks are based on the business case submitted by Niagara Regional Housing in consultation with providers. Providers will have an opportunity to appeal the final benchmarks directly to the Ministry.

Benchmarks will be effective with housing providers' fiscal year starting in 2006. Providers should review their benchmark information and implement appropriate rent/housing charge increases to ensure that their 2006 revenues are, at minimum, at the market rent/housing charge level indicated in the benchmarks. Internal operating budgets should be developed in accordance with the benchmark operating costs. Prior to the start of providers' 2006 fiscal year, NRH will forward an approved operating budget/subsidy calculation as in the past.

The Annual Information Return (AIR) package will be revised to reflect the year end reconciliation process according to the new funding formula. All providers will receive a revised AIR package prior to December 31, 2006.

If you have any concerns or questions regarding the benchmarks, please contact your Housing Administrator.

NRH Staff Announcement



NRH is pleased to announce that Denise Papaiz has recently joined our staff as Housing Initiatives Coordinator.

Denise will be involved in increasing awareness of housing needs and issues across Niagara. She will be developing communications projects and fine-tuning policies as they relate to NRH's goals and objectives. Denise brings to the position 20 years of experience working as a communications specialist in the health care sector and public affairs for both provincial and municipal governments.

2004 Annual Report

Providers should have received the NRH 2004 Annual Report in the mail. The report, "It's About People" highlights the local demand for affordable housing, new affordable housing developments and key achievements of the past year.



For additional copies or to comment on the report, please contact Denise Papaiz at (905) 682-9201 ext. 337 or email her at: denise.papaiz@regional.niagara.on.ca

NRH Notices Update

The following NRH Notices have been issued since the last edition of the SHIN Newsletter:

- 04-14 Market to Rent-Geared-to-Income Policy
- 04-15 Winter Warmth Fund
- 05-01 Hot Water Tanks – Anti-Scalding Valve
- 05-02 Asbestos – Potential Health Risk due to Asbestos in Loose Fill Vermiculite Insulation
- 05-03 2005 Dr. Albert Rose Bursary Program
- 05-04 Social Housing Investment Funds

NRH Notices are also available on our website at www.nrh.ca

Access to Waiting List

This is a reminder that housing providers should immediately advise Housing Access & Community Programs (HA&CP) when there is a change of property management staff.

When there is staff turnover, HA&CP will change the password for access into the provider's waiting list. This will ensure that the access system remains secure and not available to former staff members.

ONPHA Conference

2005 ONPHA Conference
November 4-6, 2005
Niagara Falls



Early bird discounts are available and the early bird registration deadline is September 9, 2005

Housing Provider Forum

Mark your calendars now!

The Housing Provider Forum will be held in November 2005. Details will be provided in the near future.



Do you have any suggestions for topics or comments about the format? Please let us know by contacting Paula Silta at (905) 682-9201 ext. 317 or email paula.silta@regional.niagara.on.ca

Opening Doors Together Program Update

Construction will soon begin on some of the 8 approved affordable housing developments located in Thorold, Welland and St. Catharines. Occupancy is anticipated as early as Oct/Nov 2005 for the Thorold and St. Catharines projects. NRH will support the proponents of this program during the construction process and look forward to seeing more people housed in affordable rental housing!

We are also eagerly awaiting news from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs & Housing on program details for any new affordable housing funding that may be available in the near future. With details anticipated this fall, any new Request for Proposal calls for development would probably be issued by NRH early in the new year.

Service Agreement



NRH has revised the Service Agreement to make it easier to read and understand.

The housing forum held in 2004 identified the need to include households that require special needs units on the centralized waiting list. Providers agreed that it was more convenient and efficient to include these applicants on the centralized waiting list. This issue is formalized in the amended agreement.

Look for the revised service agreement to be delivered to you shortly.

Capital Reserve Strategy



It is no secret that service managers and housing providers throughout Ontario are concerned with the adequacy of capital reserves. NRH is no exception. We are working on a capital reserve strategy that will roll out over the next few years. Our strategy will focus on the following:

- 1) Funding:
 - how to maximize providers' funds; obtain grants, loans, and/or refinancing when funds are inadequate
- 2) Data:
 - develop a database that will forecast long-term needs for this Region
- 3) Providers:
 - sharing best practices; preventive maintenance programs; energy conservation measures; and joint tendering/bulk purchasing

Housing providers should forward a copy of their building condition assessment/ reserve fund study to NRH if they haven't already done so. We will use the information contained in these studies as a starting point in our overall strategy. It is vital, therefore, that all housing providers prepare a capital reserve plan.

NRH is looking at the possibility of preparing a joint tender on a cost pass-through basis for providers who have not yet obtained an external consultant to do the study. Over the next month or so, NRH will be contacting providers who have not completed a study to determine their interest in participating in a joint tender. *For further information, please contact Deborah Firmin, Housing Administrator at (905) 682-9201 ext. 318 or email deborah.firmin@regional.niagara.on.ca*

Transitional and Housing Support Program



At the Housing Forum in November 2004 housing providers expressed concern that tenants/members who are housed with Special Priority Status (victims of family violence) do not have the support they require. We are pleased to announce that, through the Ministry of Community and Social Services, Niagara has received funding for six and a half (6.5) transitional and housing support workers. These workers are able to provide education, training and support for special priority tenants/members.

Community Partners, including Niagara Regional Housing and housing providers, are meeting to develop a referral agreement that will establish protocols and confirm the role and responsibility of all parties including housing providers. Look for a draft agreement at the NRH Housing Forum in November 2005.

The following agencies in Niagara have transitional and housing support workers. If you require assistance or further information please call:

Bethlehem Second Stage Housing	St. Catharines	905-641-1660
West Niagara Second Stage Housing	Beamsville & area	905-309-1477
Women's Place	St. Catharines	905-684-4000
Women's Place	South Niagara	905-732-4632
Centre de Sante du Communautaire du Niagara		905-734-1141

Housing Development Forum

NRH, in partnership with CMHC and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs & Housing, will be hosting a Housing Development Forum on **October 21, 2005**. If you are currently developing, considering development opportunities or interested in receiving information on the services, programs and individuals involved in housing development then this forum is for you.

Guest Speakers and award winning development projects from across Ontario will be highlighted, as well as our own "Opening Doors Together" projects. Join other interested developers, regional and municipal staff, and local politicians for an information-packed day ending with a wine and cheese social networking opportunity.

Provider Advisory Group (PAG)

The Provider Advisory Group meets four times a year to discuss and provide input on policy decisions that affect housing providers. Some of the issues discussed are current NRH Notices and future directions. Agenda items come from the group and NRH staff and/or Board of Directors.



Members of PAG also take their turn hearing appeals as part of the NRH Appeals Committee. Current members are:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Representing</u>	<u>Term End Date</u>
Catherine Jolliffe, Chair	NRH Board	June 2006
Carol Koch	Co-operative	June 2006
Ken Goka	Co-operative	June 2008
Joe Tonnos	Non-profit	June 2006
Judy Crawford	Non-profit	June 2008
Julie Denis	Non-profit	June 2007
Mark Saltarelli	Community	June 2007
John Oszypko	Supportive Housing	June 2007
Kelly Kendrick	Aboriginal	June 2008

Meetings are open to housing providers. If you would like more information or to attend a meeting, please call Deborah Firmin, Housing Administrator at (905) 682-9201 ext. 318 or email deborah.firmin@regional.niagara.on.ca

Nutrition Tours

The Public Health Department, Region of Niagara offers grocery store tours and group presentations to help residents make healthy food choices. Dietitians teach residents to make healthy food choices to prevent nutrition-related chronic disease, help residents to understand food labels, assist in navigation through the grocery store and to help parents choose fun and healthy snacks for young children.



For more information on grocery store tours and group presentations or to receive a listing of food assistance services in the Niagara region, please call the Public Health Department at (905) 688-3762 or 1-800-263-7248.

In the News:
Bethlehem Projects—March 2005

Bethlehem Projects held their bi-annual Fashion in Bloom show and fundraiser at the Canadian Polish Society Hall recently. Local merchants displayed their spring fashions for the 400 guests, who helped raise over \$10,000 for the Niagara organization. Photo right: Volunteer model Sandy Summers walks among the guests.



From left are master of ceremonies Carolyn Culliton, event chair Grace-Ann Cambray, and volunteer models Lisa North and Brittany Rosenfeld.

STAFF PHOTOS BY BOB TYMCZYSZYN