

**REPORT TO HOSPITALS AND HOUSING COMMITTEE
MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 07, 2020**

SUBJECT Applicant Eligibility Policy Update

ISSUE SUMMARY

To revise the Applicant Eligibility Policy to ensure rent subsidies are maximized.

BACKGROUND

The Housing Registry was created in order to provide a single point of entry for individuals in British Columbia applying for Rent Geared to Income (RGI) housing. Since its inception, the Capital Region Housing Corporation (CRHC) has been obligated to select all RGI tenants through the Housing Registry for Umbrella Operating Agreement (UOA) properties. The Housing Registry is managed through the BC Housing Management Corporation (BC Housing) and is governed by an elected Board of Directors made up of housing providers. CRHC currently holds a position on the Housing Registry Board of Directors.

CRHC is obligated to ensure that applicants chosen for RGI units meet the required eligibility criteria outlined in our operating agreements with BC Housing (eligible groups, residency, asset and income requirements, live independently, factors for exclusion). In addition CRHC must adhere to the *National Housing Act*, the *Residential Tenancy Act* and the Human Rights Code.

The CRHC's primary mandate is to provide affordable housing to those persons and families living in low income that meet the eligibility requirements as determined through our operating agreements with BC Housing. These include families, seniors and persons living with disabilities. It is the CRHC's obligation to choose tenants for our rent geared to income households from the Housing Registry. It is the CRHC's responsibility to develop a method of selection that is fair, consistent and transparent.

In 2014, the Applicant Eligibility Policy 2.10 was amended so that 90% of applicants would be chosen chronologically to meet the primary mandate of providing affordable housing and 10% of applicants chosen identified as being in urgent housing need off of the Housing Registry.

In 2016, amendments to the Applicant Eligibility Policy 2.10 were approved (Appendix A, marked copy with recommended changes). 80% of applicants are chosen chronologically through the Housing Registry. 20% of applicants for individuals and families are identified through targeted partnerships that will assist in creating a more streamlined housing system. Individuals and households are transferred from transitional housing into CRHC housing to ensure that these households do not fall into homelessness after participating in services to support stabilization. The partners, tenants and CRHC enter into a three way agreement, Supports in Social Housing Agreement (SSH). CRHC currently transitions individuals and families from the Cridge Centre for the Family, Island Health, Victoria Women's Transition Society, Community Living Victoria and Margaret Laurence House.

Coordinated Access and Assessment

Tenants for the 20% of units rented at social assistance rates for the Regional Housing First Programs (RHFP) units are chosen through the Coordinated Access and Assessment (CAA)

(CAA Terms of Reference, Appendix B) through the Supportive Housing Registry. This approach addresses the needs of those individuals currently in supportive housing programs to transition to more independent housing options and create positive flow in the system. This allows people with more complex mental health and substance use needs to access the support they need through backfilling units in supportive housing programs better resourced to help individuals attain improved mental and physical health. The RHFP was modelled after the CRHC SSH process.

To ensure consistency and improve transparency, staff are recommending that the 20% of units currently being placed through SSH Agreement partnerships into CRHC RGI units be chosen through the CAA rather than through existing SSH Agreement partnerships. This will allow for more transparency, and enable the partners to meet the intended goals of creating flow in the system.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1

The Hospitals and Housing Committee recommends to the Capital Region Housing Corporation Board:

That the amended Applicant Eligibility Policy 2.10, attached as Appendix A, be approved.

Alternative 2

The Hospitals and Housing Committee recommends to the Capital Region Housing Corporation Board:

That the amended Applicant Eligibility Policy 2.10 be referred back to staff to determine an alternative selection criteria.

IMPLICATIONS

Choosing 80% of applicants chronologically through the Housing Registry has created a more transparent and consistent process.

For the remaining 20% of units, working with limited partners does not allow for the same consistency and transparency that is achieved through flowing tenants through the CAA. It does not allow for equal access to these units for individuals in our community who may live with other housing providers. By choosing individuals and families through the CAA, the CRHC will generate a more consistent and transparent process. Please see Appendix A for proposed changes to the policy.

The current agencies that have signed Supports in Social Housing Agreements with the CRHC will receive 60 days' notice that the contract is terminated. This will not impact current CRHC tenants under these agreements, only that CRHC will not accept any new tenants. CRHC will advise partners that the CRHC still values the partnership and that new tenants will still be able to access 20% of CRHC units through the Supportive Housing Registry via the CAA.

BC Housing has advised CRHC that these proposed changes to the Applicant Eligibility Policy meet the criteria as set out in the Operating Agreements.

CONCLUSION

The CRHC's primary mandate is to provide affordable housing to those persons and families living in low income that meet the household requirements as determined through the UOA with BC Housing. These include families, seniors and persons living with disabilities. It is the CRHC's obligation to choose tenants for our rent geared to income households from the Housing Registry. It is the CRHC's responsibility to develop a method of selection that is fair, consistent and transparent.

The Amended Applicant Eligibility Policy 2.10 (Appendix A) recommends that 80% of those applicants would continue to be chosen chronologically to meet our primary mandate of providing affordable housing and 20% of applicants would be identified through the CAA. This would fulfill a social benefit of supporting our community to resolve critical social problems through a coordinated, community-led process.

By blending the selection based on both chronological and critical need, it allows the CRHC to meet its primary mandate of providing affordable housing while ensuring appropriate access to individuals who are able to live independently with supports. The updated policy proposes an 80/20% split to address this.

RECOMMENDATION

The Hospitals and Housing Committee recommends to the Capital Region Housing Corporation Board:

That the amended Applicant Eligibility Policy 2.10, attached as Appendix A, be approved.

Submitted by:	Christine Culham, Senior Manager, Regional Housing
Concurrence:	Kevin Lorette, P. Eng., MBA, General Manager, Planning & Protective Services
Concurrence:	Robert Lapham, MCIP, RPP, Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENT(S):

Appendix A: Amended Applicant Eligibility Policy 2.10

Appendix B: Coordinated Access and Assessment Terms of Reference