



Report To:	Program Planning Committee
From:	Donna Moroso, Director of Integrated Social Services and Rhonda McCauley, Social Housing Program Supervisor
Date:	June 22, 2016
Re:	Social Housing - Policy Updates Issue Report

REPORT

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide the Board with information on upcoming Housing Services Program changes and the benefits of said changes to client services.

Background

As part of the DSB's objective to support our communities as indicated in our [10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan](#), and enhanced with recently announced amendments to the [Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy \(LTAHS\) regulations](#).

The ability to provide our municipalities with the means to support seniors, individuals and families in obtaining and maintaining affordable housing in their communities is very important.

Many of the current policies were specific to the Regulations in place for a housing system that is transforming. In light of a more people-centered approach and innovative alternatives to standard vision, changes to policies were required to better suit the need and support the transformation of the housing system.

Objectives

The objectives of these policy changes will breathe new strategies to our organization to better meet the needs of our communities. To help residents who struggle with affordability in their housing to remain in place, in their neighbourhoods, schools and close to supports and family.

The following policies will be changed:

- 2.3 - Centralized Waiting List and Tenant Selection
- 2.4 - Eligibility Rules
- 10.3 - Direct Shelter Subsidy

The following changes are being proposed to the above named policies;

1. Reevaluate waiting list priorities:

- Retain Victims of Family Violence as top priority (per Regulations); introduce Homelessness as next priority, and then Seniors.
- Move away from a chronological-based housing system to a ranking system to service more “in-need” households. Apply ranking based on priority, income and assets.

2. Expand the Direct Shelter Subsidy (DSS) Program to other groups in need including ODSP recipients and low income households.

- This will decrease the number of people who are on the waitlist and will provide them with a portable housing benefit where they are currently living. The LTAHS document speaks about ‘creating a framework for a portable housing benefit that would give people who receive housing assistance the flexibility to choose where they want to live’. We are in line with that framework.
- The DSB will offer this subsidy to families who are currently on the wait list and living in areas of our DSB where no housing is available.
- The Direct Shelter Subsidy provided will be calculated by determining the difference between the rent geared to income calculation or affordable housing calculation and the actual market rent of the unit.
- The benefit will be portable to allow greater flexibility and responsiveness to their changing needs and the choice of location, school districts and employment opportunities, without being tied to a specific unit within the DSB catchment area.
- Where the difference between RGI calculation and the actual market rent or the affordable rent is greater than \$300, these applicants will not be considered for a Direct Shelter Subsidy but will remain on the centralized waiting list for an RGI unit. The maximum amount eligible under the DSS program is \$200/month.

- The Direct Shelter Subsidy will provide greater access to a variety of housing options and ultimately assist more people and house people faster, potentially reducing the DSB's waitlist.
 - Applicants qualifying for the program are deemed to be placed once in receipt of a Direct Shelter Subsidy. Recipients of the Direct Shelter Subsidy may ask to have their names remain on the Social Housing Centralized Waiting List.
3. Allow a healthy mix of Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI), Affordable, and Market Rent Units in each building to ensure financial viability throughout the portfolio, while ensuring that Community Needs are supported.
 - Consideration will be given to the waiting list at the time the vacancy occurs to ensure that the ratio is conducive to the Community needs and also to determine the best mix for the building based on the existing waiting list.
 4. Re-rank applicants on the waiting list when an offer for accommodations is refused to alleviate re-offer of multiple units to the same applicant.
 - The new waitlist system will re-rank the applicant at each refusal. An applicant refusal will result in an adjustment of ranking to the application that will result in applicants not receiving consecutive offers. The number of refusals will not be limited to three however each refusal will result in a re-ranking of the applicant on the waiting list.
 5. Provide the non-profit housing providers with the next applicant on the waiting list rather than the full list and allow applicants to apply for non-profit housing only.
 - Applicants who are applying for the Non-Profit Buildings in Espanola, Little Current and Gore Bay will be given the option to be placed on the waiting list for the non-profit housing building ONLY or all buildings in the community.
 - The Manitoulin-Sudbury DSB will provide each Housing Provider with the next eligible tenant on the waiting list when an RGI unit becomes available in the non-profit provider building.
 - The Non-Profit Housing Providers will maintain their own waiting list for market rent tenants.
 - The DSB is working towards the LTAHS framework with all of the proposed changes to their social housing policies.

6. The following policies are being revoked as they are no longer required or have been included in the revised policies above:

- [2.2 - Applicant Processing & Tenant Selection](#)
- [2.6 - Affordable Housing Policy](#)
- [3.2 - Special Priority Policy](#)

Conclusion

We recognize that these changes to Policy and Procedure represent a vast change to current practice. However, these proposed amendments represent a means of providing the residents of our communities stable housing supports. These changes are being mirrored in the LTAHS framework, as the transformation to the housing program begins. Better means to provide assistance to needy families, seniors and singles in our communities that do not have conventional Social Housing Buildings will allow our residents to remain in place, stopping the migration to larger centers. This forward thinking will allow our communities the opportunity to reach out and help more people who truly need our support to afford to stay in their homes, and in their communities.