

THE REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF YORK

Housing York Inc.
May 11, 2011
Report of the
General Manager

TENANT ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Board receive this report for information.

2. PURPOSE

This report summarizes the various initiatives designed to engage Housing York Inc. (Housing York) tenants in the formation of operational policies, service delivery practices and community service enhancements.

3. BACKGROUND

Housing York recognizes the importance of engaging tenants to be an active part of their community

Historically, Housing York has maintained a strong sense of tenant engagement. Fundamentally, tenants are customers and need to influence the design and operation of our building services and features.

Effective design and operation of housing communities requires knowledge of tenant needs and challenges. Changing building science technology, demographics, urbanization, service expectations, and community priorities influence the design of new buildings, the retrofitting of existing buildings and the delivery of services.

Increasingly, Housing York has refined its tenant engagement opportunities and this will continue to evolve. To be effective, tenant engagement opportunities need to be broad-based and cover:

- Property specific issues and broader issues
- Take place in informal and formal settings
- Provide for individual and group feedback
- Reflect tenant diversity needs
- Be convenient, timely and responsive

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

Broad range of tenant engagement opportunities designed to include all tenants

Housing York employs numerous methods to encourage tenant engagement in all aspects of operational practices and policies, service delivery and performance. Tenant feedback is received relating to a wide range of property matters from apartment specific interests such as lighting, flooring, accessibility features, to the larger issues of building design, communication and service delivery methods.

The following is a list of the tenant engagement opportunities:

1. Tenant Reference Group
2. Community meetings
3. Community-based tenant groups
4. Recognition and feedback forums
5. Continuous improvement surveys
6. Newsletter, notices and website

1. Tenant Reference Group

The formation of a Tenant Reference Group emerged from a customer service survey and a desire to establish a more regular relationship with a representative group of tenants. The concept was to create a group of 10 to 15 tenants from a cross-section of our communities for the purpose of guiding operational policies and service delivery practices.

In September 2008, the inaugural meeting of the Tenant Reference Group was held. This initial group consisted of 10 tenant representatives selected because of their past demonstration of leadership and community interest.

Terms of Reference were established and meetings held on a quarterly basis. Senior Housing Operations staff meet with the Tenant Reference Group to discuss items and issues such as:

- Tenant transfer policy
- Guest policy
- Communication standards
- Tenant insurance program
- Maintenance service standards
- Industry bed bug reduction strategies
- Resident handbook
- Move-in package
- Energy saving programs

2. Community meetings

Each year, property managers host tenant meetings across the 33 rental properties. Throughout the year approximately 60 meetings are held. Community meetings provide residents a convenient forum to talk with staff. Meeting times are scheduled based upon residents' preference, typically the afternoon for seniors and evenings for family households and focus on issues specific to that building.

The meetings provide an opportunity for open discussion on various topics including:

- Upcoming retrofit activities such as bathroom renovations, parking lot surfacing
- Service changes such as laundry concessionaire
- Neighbourhood concerns
- Community services such as transit

Generally, participation levels at community meetings in our seniors' communities are high at approximately 40%. Participation at our family properties is often much lower at approximately 15%. Community meeting frequency is dictated by the level of activity within each property; however, a meeting is held at least once each year in every property.

3. Community-based tenant groups

Many of the Housing York properties are represented by a locally formed tenant group who will meet with staff regarding property specific issues. This type of tenant group also organizes social activities within the community.

Housing York encourages the formation of these types of tenant groups because they help to foster positive neighbour links, reduce social isolation and build neighbourhood cohesion. Groups will invite staff to attend to discuss issues as needed.

4. Recognition and feedback forums

Upon the completion of a significant upgrade activity, such as the Kingview expansion or Rose Town parking lot resurfacing, an event is hosted by Housing York to both thank tenants for their support and to provide tenants with a feedback opportunity. The information gathered is used to improve the execution of future projects.

5. Continuous improvement surveys

Housing York increasingly makes use of surveys to solicit tenant opinions on their housing experience. Surveys are used to collect general customer service information, maintenance repair satisfaction and comments from tenants leaving a Housing York community.

In 2006, Housing York launched its first comprehensive customer service survey. Tenant response rate was exceptionally high at 48% and overall tenants were "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with their housing (83%). The survey led to further focus group-style tenant meetings and resulted in the development of a communications strategy with numerous

initiatives including enhanced and standardized communications, new training opportunities for staff and the formation of the Tenant Reference Group.

Recently, as part of a pilot quality assurance exercise, surveys have been sent to a random sample of tenants to gather feedback on their recent maintenance service experience. In addition, on an ongoing basis, tenants have access to Resident Service Reply cards to provide comments on services received. Door hanger comment cards are left behind when repairs are completed without the tenant at home. (see *Attachment 1*).

Also, each tenant moving out of a Housing York building receives an Exit Survey designed to gather further feedback on their housing experience.

6. Newsletters, notices and website

Quarterly, a newsletter/bulletin is distributed to all residents providing information about community activities, seasonal tips, important dates, safety articles and staff contact information. (see *Attachment 2*). A feedback form for tenants to make suggestions is included within each newsletter.

To ensure tenants know staff contact information, each property has a conveniently located notice board and notices providing staff contact information and a brief description of role. Notice titles are multilingual, colour-coded and make use of symbols and plain language for easier comprehension. The notice board information improves tenant awareness and staff accessibility.

For tenants that prefer to use the internet, Housing York's website provides all service information and an opportunity to comment. Tenants have indicated that this material is well received and helpful for keeping tenants informed and knowing who to contact. The website and internet opportunities are considered areas for further development.

Future initiatives for tenant engagement

The following is a list of future planned initiatives to engage with tenants:

- Tenant Reference Group will be consulted regarding the design and content for the new version of the Tenant's Handbook, planned for printing in 2012.
- Tenants who recently move into a Housing York building will be contacted to gather their feedback and level of satisfaction during the move-in process.
- Research will be conducted into the development of a formal service concern process for tenants.
- More tenant profiles and articles will be featured in "Community News", the tenant newsletter.

It is envisioned that the Housing York strategic planning in 2011 will include discussion regarding the enhancement of the Board/tenant engagement.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The costs associated with tenant engagement practices are a budgeted operational expense with the majority of costs being associated with staff time.

The ancillary costs outside of staff time is estimated at \$1,000 per year.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Housing York provides affordable housing in all nine local municipalities in York Region. Successful tenant engagement leads to a stronger sense of community and better service delivery.

7. CONCLUSION

Housing York's wide range of tenant engagement activities ensures that tenants have the opportunity to choose the method and occasion they find the most comfortable and convenient to share their views with staff. Consistently high levels of participation have been demonstrated by tenants. Housing York staff continue to look for new opportunities to engage with tenants and to incorporate tenant feedback into business strategies.

Experience has shown that successful tenant engagement leads to services that reflect the needs of customers and embraces a philosophy of continuous improvement.

For more information on this report, please contact Sylvia Patterson, Assistant General Manager at Ext. 2091.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

Recommended by:

Approved for Submission:

Sylvia Patterson
Assistant General Manager

Adelina Urbanski
General Manager

April 20, 2011
Attachments - 2

/Jf
Edocs #: 3300369

Report Wizard v.1.2010

Community News

Produced for Housing York Tenants by the
Community and Health Services Department



SPRING/SUMMER 2011

Welcome Thornhill Green

Thornhill Green Co-operative Homes Inc. (Thornhill Green) is a mature community of townhouses located near Royal Orchard Boulevard and Yonge Street in Markham, close to the Highway 407 connection.

Originally a privately owned rental property, this large social housing community has operated as a Cooperative Corporation since 1993. In 2011, ownership of Thornhill Green was transferred to Housing York.

A meeting was held with residents in January to introduce the new property management team, to share information, and to provide opportunities for questions and feedback. At the meeting, staff confirmed Housing York's commitment to well-maintained and safe homes for all Thornhill Green residents.

"We want residents to continue to enjoy their homes as they have in the past. Addressing urgent repairs, planning for future renovation projects and building positive relations are our focus. We look forward to working together over the months ahead to make the transition a success." Doug Manson, Director of Housing York.

Please join Housing York in welcoming the Thornhill Green community.

Thornhill Green features:

- 101 townhouses situated on 6.4 acres of land
- Three-bedroom and four-bedroom homes
- Built in 1966
- Mix of subsidized and market rent units
- Family and senior tenants



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Tenant Insurance Offers Protection, Peace of Mind

Nick Savino, Manager, Operations, Housing York

If you followed the news coverage of the large apartment fire that occurred in downtown Toronto late in 2010, you will have heard that many tenants still have not returned home. This reminds us of the impact of a fire of this magnitude and the importance of being prepared for an emergency.

Housing York has also experienced fires and floods within its communities over the years. Tenants often believe that the landlord's insurance will look after the entire loss, including tenant's belongings. Unfortunately, this is not the case. When unforeseen accidents and problems arise, items such as furniture, clothing and emergency accommodations become the tenant's responsibility. Without insurance, tenants must depend on family, friends or local charities for a place to stay, to supply living essentials and to replace belongings.

Tenant insurance generally costs about 40 cents a day or \$13 a month to protect you and your family in the case of fire, water damage or theft. We encourage you to consider tenant insurance. There are many insurance options and providers, including SoHo Insurance, a group insurance plan designed for tenants of social housing.

If you are interested in receiving information about the group insurance plan for tenants of social housing, call SoHo Insurance at 1-866-440-2492 or visit www.sohoinsurance.ca.

NOTABLE 2011 DATES

Friday,
April 22, 2011
Good Friday

Monday,
April 25, 2011
Easter Monday

Monday,
May 23, 2011
Victoria Day

Friday, July 1, 2011
Canada Day

Monday,
August 1, 2011
Civic Day

Monday,
September 5, 2011
Labour Day

REMINDERS

- The Housing York office is closed on statutory holidays.
- Worldwide celebrations for Earth Hour take place on Saturday, March 26, 2011. Tenants can take action against climate change by turning off lights at home from 8:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.
- Earth Day 2011 is on Friday, April 22. Show your support by joining a community clean-up day or taking a walk in York Regional Forest.

Milestones

These buildings are turning 20 in 2011!



Trinity Square,
Markham

Springbrook
Gardens,
Richmond Hill



Building Improvements

Kevin McCann, Manager, Technical Services Housing & Long Term Care

Every year, Housing York sets aside funds to perform major work on its buildings. This ensures that buildings continue to be well maintained, keep up with changing codes and regulations and use less energy.

In 2010, the federal and provincial governments provided some additional capital funding to social housing providers in an effort to stimulate the economy. The extra funding allowed us to undertake additional jobs that may otherwise have waited for several years to complete.

Staff members strived to keep everyone informed and to minimize the inconvenience brought on by major work but sometimes issues arose that could not be avoided. We would like to thank all tenants for their patience and understanding during the course of the work that took place.

In 2011, we will be returning to a regular schedule of renovation and repairs. A list of the work planned for your building will be posted in the weeks ahead.



Getting Organized this Spring

Carmela Volkmann, Social Worker, Housing and Long Term Care

Spring is in the air and with it comes the task of annual spring cleaning. Spring cleaning is a tradition that allows us to refresh our homes and get a head start on the active spring and summer seasons. Here are some tips in reducing all the extra “stuff” that may be piling up in the corners of your rooms and closets.



Find four boxes and label them as follows:

- 1. Trash/Recycling** - This box should include any items that you do not need and that you cannot sell or donate. Damaged and broken items should be included as well as junk mail, newspapers and old magazines.
- 2. Give Away/Sell** - Be generous with this box. Think about the uses someone else might get out of the items. Consider the financial benefits of selling your items.
- 3. Storage** - Put items in storage that you cannot throw out and do not need on a regular basis. A good way to clean out closets is to store out of season clothing. Storing larger items with friends or family also helps to keep your space clutter free.
- 4. Keep** - This should be your smallest box. These are items that you use regularly so they need to be on hand. Continually review these items to see if you really need them.

Work slowly from room to room, sorting items into the appropriate boxes. When doing this task, please check that:

- Electrical outlets are free and clear of items
- Extension cords do not create a trip hazard
- Flammable items are not stored near heating and cooking devices
- There is a clear path to the fuse panel box
- Traffic areas are clear for safety reasons and there is access to exits at all times

If you find this task overwhelming or you need some support through this process, please contact me for help. Carmela at 1-877-464-9675 Ext. 2729.



Staff Announcement

Welcome Cristian Cupen, CGA

Housing York is pleased to announce the appointment of Cristian Cupen as Finance Program Manager.

Cristian brings several years of financial management experience to the housing team. Cristian has a Bachelor of Commerce and a Certified General Accountant designation.



2011
Youth

Adventure

Overnight Camp

Activities include:

rock climbing
outdoor games
Swimming
HIGH ROPES
CAMPFIRES
and more outdoor activities!

WHO:
Youth aged 11-17 years old from a household located in the following communities:

- Housing York Inc. or
- York Region non-profit Housing or
- Co-operative Housing Community in York Region

WHERE:
Three different camp locations throughout Ontario

- Accredited through the Ontario Camping Association
- Bus transportation from Newmarket to the camp will be provided

WHEN:
Overnight camp for six days and five nights during the summer months

HOW:
To register a youth and order a registration package please call:
Local: 905-898-1007 Ext. 2729
Toll Free: 1-877-464-9675 Ext. 2729

FREE CAMP PACK
All registered campers will be given a **FREE Camp Pack** that includes:

- knapsack
- sunscreen
- towel
- sleeping bag
- water bottle
- bug repellent

* Flashlight with batteries included

Community and Health Services Department

2011

FREE Summer Camp

For children of York Region residents participating in Ontario Works (OW) or paying Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI)

NATURE
SWIMMING
CRAFTS
FRIENDS
SPORTS
ART
FUN

WHO:
Children – six to 13 years old

WHEN:
July until the first week of September

- Depending on your eligibility.

HOW:
OW PARTICIPANTS:
Contact your Social Assistance Case Coordinator for a referral.
RENT-GEARED-TO-INCOME (RGI):
Call the Kidsline: 1-888-703-KIDS (5437) **PRESS 5**
Limited funding. First come, first served.

OTHER:

- Children must bring their own lunch, drinks and snacks for each day of camp.
- Instruction is provided by trained and qualified recreation staff.
- Extended Day Camp may be available.
- 1 to 1 support funding is available for children with special needs.

FREE CAMP PACK
Each registered child will receive a **FREE Camp Pack** that includes:

- a knapsack
- sunscreen
- a sun hat
- a lunch bag
- a water bottle

Camp packs will be available for pick-up in June at your OW office.

Community and Health Services Department

A Voice for All Tenants

Housing York Tenant Reference Group

Housing York established the Tenant Reference Group in 2009, recognizing that its services could improve with the advice received from tenants.

The Tenant Reference Group has representatives from Housing York communities across York Region. The group meets with staff members throughout the year to review services, policies and practices that will affect all tenants.

These past months, members have shared experiences and provided valuable input into tenant communications, maintenance and repair services, energy management, as well as future plans and new developments.



*Pictured in the front row: Kristine Carbis, Edward Davis and Terri O'Reilly:
Back row: Tom Pearson, Fran Davis and Thelma Lam.*

Artist Brightens Kingview Court

Tenant Spotlight: Ruth Craig

At the suggestion of her son, Ruth Craig bought her first canvas and joined a group of local artists. Ruth painted with the same group for more than twenty years. Her inspiration reaches across all themes ranging from vibrant flowers and landscapes to captivating nautical and agricultural scenes.

Tenants and visitors to Ruth's building take pleasure in the artwork displayed. Ruth also enjoys exhibiting her paintings at local art shows. In September, Ruth won three prizes. She has donated one of winning pieces to the Kingview Court expansion opening later this year. Her tip for anyone who is drawn to painting, "just give it a try!" she says.



Energy Management Program Highlights

- Housing York has achieved a 20 per cent reduction in overall energy consumption and related green house gas emissions in just three years.
- The Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association presented Housing York with the 2010 Going Green Award.
- Tom Taylor Place and Leeder Place received Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification from the Canada Green Building Council.
- Five buildings will undergo major energy retrofits in 2011: Brayfield Manors, Fairly Lake Gardens (474), Keswick Gardens, Kingview Court, and Nobleview Pines.
- Solar walls will be installed at Evergreen Terrace, Fairy Lake Gardens (474) and Keswick Gardens. A solar hot water system will be installed at Rose Town.

Thank you to all tenants for making this important work possible!

Annual Unit Inspections

Anne Aqui, Property Manager

Every year Housing York completes an annual unit inspection at your home. Why do we do these inspections?

- To make sure safety standards are met. We test your smoke detector, check that window restrictive devices are in place, test your GFI (ground fault interrupter) outlet and make sure your door closure is working properly.
- To review the overall wear and tear of your home including the condition of the flooring, drywall and plumbing.
- To identify any accidental damage, such as burn marks or holes in drywall.

You can help us out in keeping your home safe and in good condition – don't wait for the annual unit inspection to report maintenance concerns. Fill out a maintenance request form whenever you notice something that needs fixing. If you have an urgent repair such as a faulty smoke detector, fill out a maintenance request form and then call us immediately for the repair.

Golden Anniversary Celebration

Tenant Spotlight: Gary and Jacqueline Norton

Friday, September 24, 2010 was a day of celebration at Kingview Court. Friends united to express congratulations to Gary and Jacqueline Norton on fifty years of marriage.



Pictured left to right: John Meikle, Anne Williams, Gunter Stelzer, Edna MacKenzie, Fran Millard, Jenifer Merritt, Sharon Ireland, Cliff Kettlewell, Ruth Craig, Gary Sloan, Jacqueline and Gary Norton

Jackie's Gardening Tips

Winning gardening tips from the 2010 Housing York Flower Garden Event:

- Know exactly how much sun the garden will receive. Then do some research to find out which types of flowers will grow well. This saves time and costs by planting the right flowers the first time. Disease-resistant plants are a good option.
- Healthy soil gives flowers the nutrients they need from the start. The right mix of soil is an investment that lasts for many years. Fertilizing is also important.
- Shop early in the season. The best plants are often gone by the end of May. There's no need to buy a lot of different types, instead look for something special and of good quality.
- Mulch reduces the need to water, prevents weeds and keeps the roots of plants cool; the finer the mulch the better. When watering, do it in the morning before the sun is too hot.
- Annuals provide colourful flowers all summer long, and clean-up in the fall is fast and easy.

Announcing the Housing York Inc.

2011 flower garden EVENT

Prizes will be awarded at each family townhouse site:

1st Prize: \$100 2nd Prize: \$75 3rd Prize: \$50

Judging will occur in mid-July 2011 and will be based on the following criteria:

- * front yard floral displays
- * creativity of display
- * neatness of yard and gardens
- * overall appearance of outside property



Hosted by Regional Municipality of York's Community and Health Services Department and Housing York Inc.

Reminder about cash payments

Putting cash in your site drop box is not recommended. A cheque or money order is a better way to make a payment. If a cash payment is your only option, please bring it to the Housing York office at 1091 Gorham Street, Newmarket during business hours.



Property Managers and Tenant Services Coordinators

**Office: 905-898-1007 or
1-877-464-9675 ext. 2700**

Property Manager: Anne-Marie Cheung ext. 2701
Tenant Services Coordinator: Leanna Graham ext. 2714

- Armitage Gardens, Newmarket
- Brayfield Manors, Newmarket
- Elmwood Gardens, Whitchurch-Stouffville
- Fairy Lake Gardens, Newmarket
- Founders Place, Newmarket
- Oxford Village, Holland Landing

Property Manager: Anne Aquí, ext. 2762
Tenant Services Coordinators: Christina Bonham ext. 2705,
Leanna Graham ext. 2714

- Hadley Grange, Aurora
- Heritage East, Newmarket
- Orchard Heights, Aurora
- Tom Taylor Place, Newmarket

Property Manager: Angela Lippensky ext. 2718
Tenant Services Coordinator: Christina Bonham ext. 2705

- Blue Willow Terrace, Vaughan
- Kingview Court, King City
- Mulock Village, Newmarket
- Nobleview Pines, Nobleton
- Springbook Gardens, Richmond Hill
- Woodbridge Lane, Vaughan
- 275 Woodbridge Ave, Woodbridge

Property Manager: Collette Valliear ext. 2725
Tenant Services Coordinator: Savitri Singh ext. 2706

- Dunlop Pines, Richmond Hill
- Evergreen Terrace, Richmond Hill
- Maplewood Place, Richmond Hill
- Rose Town, Richmond Hill
- Thornhill Green, Markham
- Trinity Square, Markham

Property Manager: Kerri Klywak ext. 2717
Tenant Services Coordinators: Savitri Singh ext. 2706,
Christina Bonham ext. 2705

- East Court, Sutton
- Glenwood Mews, Keswick
- Keswick Gardens, Keswick
- Northview Court, Sutton
- Pineview Terrace, Keswick

211

New helpline launches in York Region

211 is a three-digit phone number, 2-1-1, and website, www.211ontario.ca, that provides personalized information about community, social, health and government services in your community.

The helpline is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for free and confidential information about community programs and services. 211 is also available in 170 languages.

**Community News
is your newsletter.
Send us your news,
stories and photos.**

Housing York Inc.

1091 Gorham Street, Suite #104
Newmarket, Ontario L3Y 8X7

Tel: 905-898-1007

Toll Free: 1-877-464-9675 Ext. 2700

