



Registry *insites*



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message from the chair

Gerald Rougeau, BC Kinsmen Housing Network

Well, time certainly flies: income tax deadlines have passed and before you know it we will be thinking about Christmas.

However, before we get too far ahead of ourselves, I would like to welcome you to the May 2009 issue of *Registry Insites*. As stated in the February issue, communication with membership is a priority for the council this year and *Registry Insites* will be published quarterly.

Through this newsletter we will keep you informed on the activities of the council, provide tips and tools for members to assist them with getting the most out of their membership and may even throw in the odd article that, while not directly related to The Housing Registry or registry services, may be of interest to members. In this vein, we have included an article on Green Cleaning Products which may be of interest to housing provider members.

The time for the 2009 council elections is drawing near. Please see the article in this newsletter for more details. I encourage all members to consider if you would like to participate on council, working with a great team. Watch for the call for nominations that will be mailed to all registry members in June 2009.

If you have any comments or questions about The Housing Registry and/or *Registry Insites*, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,
Gerald
604-530-2100



An applicant's perspective

Contributor: Bev Bailey, Greater Victoria Housing Society

“Words cannot express my appreciation for your thoughtfulness in finding me a place back on the island. Thank you so very much.” – Betty (*name has been changed to protect her identity*)

Betty was pleasantly surprised when she received a call from Greater Victoria Housing Society late last year. She had applied to The Housing Registry on the advice of family and friends when she found herself unexpectedly widowed, and with a significantly reduced income.

She had to give up her home on the island, put her things in storage and had moved in to a friend's place in Vancouver to house sit. She had become one of our “hidden homeless” and had been hoping desperately for an opportunity to return to the island where two of her sons currently reside.

Betty completed an application form and sent it in to the Victoria office of The Housing Registry. When completing the application, Betty elected to simply specify the communities she was familiar with in the Victoria area. By doing so, Betty was added to the lists for 19 developments managed by seven different housing providers.

She was skeptical of the process at the time but, upon receiving my call, realized what a valuable and important tool the registry had been for her. Betty is now residing in a development managed by Greater Victoria Housing Society in an area where she had spent much of her time raising her family. She is settled in and, while continuing to recover from her loss, is looking forward to whatever the future has in store.

In the absence of the registry database, Betty would have had to contact each of the seven housing providers individually and worked to keep in touch with each to keep her file up to date. Betty is an example of why The Housing Registry works. Greater Victoria Housing Society had no prior knowledge of Betty and first became aware of her situation when running an applicant list from the registry database. If the society was not part of the registry, Betty may have never come to our attention.

Housing Registry surveys

The Housing Registry Council believes The Housing Registry provides efficiencies and cost savings for housing providers as well as streamlining a complicated process for households in need of housing.

In June 2009, the council will be conducting two surveys related to The Housing Registry.

The first survey will be sent to non-profit housing providers who do not currently take advantage of efficiencies available through membership in The Housing Registry. Through

this survey we hope to better understand barriers to membership in the registry, what we can do differently to promote membership, and enhancements that could be made to registry services that would support different providers and encourage membership.

The second survey will be sent to all existing housing registry members. The goal of this survey is to better understand what is working well and where improvements can be made. In addition, we will gather information to assist us in identifying and prioritizing potential business and system changes for the future.

Please watch for the survey in the mail. It can be completed on paper or on-line. Through the generosity and support of the BC Non-Profit Housing Association and BC Housing, providers that respond to the survey will be entered into a draw for a registration package for the November BC Non-Profit Housing Association Conference.

Challenges of a shared database - continued

In the February 2009 issue of *Registry Insights*, we included examples of some of the challenges of working with a shared database and provided tips on how we can all work together to ensure the database is kept as up to date and useful as possible for all users. In this and subsequent issues of *Registry Insights*, we will be featuring a series of case studies developed around some of the challenges that we have heard from Registry members and staff.

Situation

I can see from the comments in this applicant file that ABC Housing Society received proof of income just last month. Why can I not find the proof in the attachments?

Background

When a housing provider receives proof of income (or any other supporting information from an applicant) they are responsible for forwarding that information to The Housing Registry. Once received, the registry will scan and attach the electronic applicant file.

When updating applicant income, the system user can specify what documentation they received as proof of income. A user clicks the “add document” link on the income screen.

A user selects this link and specifies the type of document received. Registry staff are notified of the pending arrival of the documents. If not received within 10 days, staff will follow up with the user who entered the document type to remind them that the information needs to be forwarded.

Cause

The most common cause is the user has not forwarded the document to the registry office in a timely manner. Once a document is received in the registry office, it is generally available in the electronic applicant file within three to four business days.

In addition, if the user did not utilize the “add document” link and simply entered a comment, there would have been no automated follow up created for registry staff. Please remember that registry staff do not monitor or review comments made by registry members.

Solution

Always forward documents received on applicant files to the registry in a timely manner. In addition, when a document is received for an applicant, please use the “add document” link. This way even if you get busy and forget to send the document, registry staff will contact you with a reminder.

Documents can be submitted by mail, fax or can be scanned and e-mailed.

Exceptions to document submissions:

If income verification was received during the process of placing an applicant in an available unit, there is no need to forward the proof to the registry office if they are accepting and moving into the unit. However, the income proof will need to be retained in the tenant (or member) file.

If the offer does not proceed and the applicant will not be moving into the available unit, please forward the income proof for inclusion in the applicant file.

Don't forget Freedom of Information and the Protection of Privacy Act:

If submitting documents by fax or email, please ensure that the copy you have is disposed of, or stored, in a secure manner.

Remember if an applicant submits a request for their file under FOI and they submitted documents to The Housing Registry via your organization, they have every right to expect those documents to be in their file. If they are not, we would be contacting you for an explanation and asking you to conduct a search in your files/office to try and locate the document.

Conclusion

It is important that everyone who uses the database is aware that they have a role to play in keeping it up to date. Each step that is missed on an applicant file can result in lost productivity for multiple housing providers.

We hope that these case studies will assist in minimizing some of the challenges faced by both members and registry staff while providing members with tools and knowledge to get the most out of the various features of the database.

If you have a challenge that you would like to see profiled in a future issue of Registry Insites, please let us know at thehousingregistry@bchousing.org.

2009 council elections

The success of The Housing Registry depends upon members who volunteer their time and expertise to ensure the registry continues to grow and improve. The current composition of The Housing Registry Council is as follows:

- elected members from three distinct large housing provider members;
- elected members from two distinct small housing provider members;
- elected members from two distinct community agencies;
- appointed by the British Columbia Non-Profit Housing Association;
- appointed by the Co-operative Housing Federation of BC; and,
- appointed by BC Housing.

Elected council representatives are eligible to serve for a term of two years and terms on council are staggered so that the terms of roughly half the council representatives expire each year.

In 2009 candidates will be sought from the following categories:

- large housing provider (over 1,000 units) – two seats;
- small housing provider (under 1,000 units) – one seat; and,
- community agency – 1 seat.

All current Housing Registry members will receive a call for nominations in the mail in June 2009. The nomination package will include information on all organizations eligible

for nomination. Elections will be held in the early fall. The successful candidates will be introduced to membership at the annual meeting of Housing Registry members, which will be held at the BC Non-Profit Housing Association Conference in November 2009.

Please watch for the nomination package in the mail this June and start to consider if your organization would like to participate on council.

Member profile: New Chelsea Society

In 2008, [New Chelsea Society](#) was chosen to manage a BC Housing property in Burnaby for low-income families. A requirement of the agreement was that tenants were to be selected from The Housing Registry. Rather than drawing some tenants from the registry and others from the society's own large waiting list, New Chelsea Society opted to simplify the process by switching all of their subsidized housing sites onto The Housing Registry. The society has been a member of the registry for approximately a year. It has 750 housing units at 10 sites.



“Initially, we were concerned about getting all our information up on Housing Connections,” said Geraldine Campbell, Administration Assistant. “But all we had to do was simply send over our files, including our applicant lists, and BC Housing did all the data entry in just a couple of weeks.”

“We are extremely pleased with the amount of information the registry provides,” said Lee Miller, Assistant Administrator. “It gives us a much clearer picture of a potential tenant and often includes years of their tenancy history. The comment files are especially helpful and this resource has been one of the biggest pluses of joining the registry.”



New Chelsea Society's Geraldine Campbell (left) and Lee Miller.

“Also, we can see if an applicant is under sponsorship, which is useful to us because we don't place tenants in subsidized units if they fall into this category,” added Geraldine.

As with any system, there are different ways of doing things. Lee finds that she occasionally defers registry business to Geraldine. “I have been doing things our old way for 20 years, and some habits are hard to break,” she said. “Geraldine is newer and she's more comfortable with Housing Connections.”

The New Chelsea Society staff acknowledges there are still some improvements that can be made to the registry: “It can sometimes be slow in the late afternoon so we try to use it

earlier in the day, and it is sometimes difficult if you're on the phone with an applicant and you can't answer their questions in a timely manner." It was also noted that it can sometimes take awhile for information submitted to be updated. However, these issues are being addressed and these areas of concern have improved lately.

"The registry staff is extremely approachable and the level of support is outstanding," said Geraldine. "We have scheduled a follow-up information training session to get a refresher. We'll have a list of questions to go over and I'm sure we'll pick up a lot more simply because we understand the system so much better now and are used to it."

"We would certainly recommend the Housing Registry to other non-profit housing societies like our own", stated New Chelsea Society's General Manager, Pat Buchannon, "and we would be happy to speak with any that are thinking about going with the registry."

The Supportive Housing Registration service

BC Housing and the non-profit societies operating the government-owned single room occupancy (SRO) hotels in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside have collaborated to create a service to provide a single point of placement for applicants. Supportive Housing Registration (SHR) connects people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness with supportive housing. At this time, SHR is only placing applicants in the government-owned SROs. It will expand to include other new supportive housing units in Vancouver as these are completed.

The Housing Registry and SHR are complementary systems. If an applicant is on one housing list and applies for the other as well, their name is flagged and staff will determine which list the applicant should be on. If a person who is ineligible for a supportive housing unit in Vancouver applies for housing through SHR, staff will redirect the applicant to The Housing Registry.

Green cleaning products

BC Housing has done some research and testing of green cleaning products to determine which ones work well and are environmentally friendly as well as cost effective. They have identified [Janitors' Warehouse](#) as a supplier that you may wish to work with if you are considering switching to less harmful cleaning products. The specific products that BC Housing is now using at its public housing sites are manufactured by M-Chem, a B.C.-based producer of green cleaning products.

Here are the products BC Housing has tested and is now using:

- Multimax all-purpose cleaner;
- Oxigenic washroom sanitizer/cleaner;
- Glassmax glass cleaner;
- Neutramax neutral floor cleaner;

- Burlesque floor stripper;
- Evolution floor finish;
- Orderly germicidal/disinfectant cleaner;
- Good Riddance odour eliminator.

Janitors' Warehouse carries M-Chem's full product line; please refer to their catalogue for additional products.

www.bchousing.org

Feedback? Questions? Story ideas? Contact the editor.

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