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message from the chair

Gerald Rougeau, BC Kinsmen Housing Network

It has been a busy year for The Housing Registry. In March a new application form was launched and, at the end of June, database changes were implemented. The end result? Enhanced information is now available on applicants and we have a more sophisticated wait-listing tool. This all adds up to better results when an applicant list is run and less chance of applicants being waitlisted for developments that will not meet their needs.

Just six months after the launch of the new application form, over 60 per cent of all applicants have been contacted and have updated their applications. The goal is to have 100 per cent of applicant files updated by the end of this year.

The next year will see further enhancements including the ability for members to provide more detailed information about buildings which will further enhance the matching process.

In other news, a call for nominations for The Housing Registry council was issued in September. Based on nominations received, there was no need for an election and all seats were filled by acclamation. For details on the new council see the following story. I would like to thank the outgoing council members for their contributions as well as to welcome new council members.



I hope that you will be able to attend our annual general meeting on November 17, 2008 from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. at the Best Western Richmond Hotel and Conference Centre as part of the BC Non-Profit Housing Association's conference.

As I have stated before, The Housing Registry is only as good as its users make it. I encourage all housing providers to take advantage of its benefits. Registry software, for instance, offers significant financial savings. Be part of the solution and remember that it's our clients who should come first.

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

Sincerely,

Gerald
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articles

2008 council elections

The following organizations were recently appointed to The Housing Registry's council effective January 2009:

Name	Member organization	Member category
Steve Hoock	Affordable Housing Society	Large Housing Provider
Shyla Cuddeford	Newton Advocacy Group Society	Community Agency
Bev Bailey	Greater Victoria Housing Society	Small Housing Provider
Doug Creba	Nanaimo Affordable Housing Society	Small Housing Provider
TBD	Shuswap Independent Living Association	Small Housing Provider

The following organizations will be serving the second year of a two-year term:

Name	Member organization	Member category
Kate Joy	Capital Region Housing Corporation	Large Housing Provider
Gerald Rougeau	Fraser Valley Kinsmen Housing Society	Small Housing Provider
Jag Klair	Greater Vancouver Housing Corporation	Large Housing Provider

Standing Appointments to the council:

Erin Smandych	BC Housing	Appointment
Julia Sundell	BC Non-Profit Housing Association	Appointment
Darren Kitchen	CHF-BC	Appointment

Annual general meeting

The Housing Registry's annual general meeting will be held Monday, November 17, 2008 at the Best Western Richmond Hotel & Convention Centre. If you are attending

the BCNPHA conference or if you are located in the Lower Mainland please join us from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m.

Workshops at BCNPHA conference

The Housing Registry council is pleased to present the following workshops on Tuesday, November 18 at the BC Non-Profit Housing Association annual conference.

If you are already a member of The Housing Registry you may wish to check out “Housing Registry tips and tricks” from 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. This workshop is targeted to existing members and will provide an overview of the changes to the system made over the past year as well as some tips and tricks designed to assist members with getting the most out of their membership. Attend this workshop and have an opportunity to meet other Registry members and share your experiences.

If you have heard about The Housing Registry but are not sure how this might apply to your organization, you may wish to sign up for “The Housing Registry” from 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. The workshop will provide an overview of The Housing Registry and an opportunity to hear first hand from housing providers who belong to the Registry about how membership works for their organization. The workshop will also include a demonstration of the computerized applicant database.

If you are unable to attend either of the workshops above, please stop by The Housing Registry booth in the trade show area. Registry staff and members will be on hand to answer your questions and walk you through an online demonstration of the database.

Applicant Eligibility Review update

In July 2008, three innovative changes were introduced as a result of the Applicant Eligibility Review. The review was launched in 2006 and identified a number of opportunities for improvement.

Phase 2 of the review included the introduction of new categories of housing need for selecting tenants as an option to the traditional point score or chronology, revised eligibility criteria and an improved computer system.

New Housing Needs Categories for selecting tenants

The existing application system had been in place for many years, and no longer provided enough information or capacity to effectively assess, prioritize and match applicants in greatest need. Other jurisdictions – England, New Zealand, Australia and other parts of Canada – have also experienced an increase in the number and complexity of applicants

and have introduced a system of housing need categories that receive priority, and place applicants chronologically within those groups.

This new tenant selection method prioritizes applicants into five categories based on the scope and urgency of their housing need:

- Applicants facing a severe risk to health and/or safety, such as homelessness or living in a homeless shelter;
- Applicants with serious health/medical/social needs, such as risk of homelessness, fleeing domestic abuse, living in severely inadequate housing, or transitioning to a more independent living situation;
- Applicants whose housing need is moderate in comparison with the two previous categories, such as living in temporary or inadequate accommodation;
- Applicants with a specialized housing need or low housing need, such as living in marginally crowded housing; and
- Applicants for market units in subsidized buildings.

“Once an applicant has been placed within a needs category, they are wait-listed chronologically,” said Erin Smandych, Housing Registry council member and manager of Housing Services at BC Housing. “Non-profit and co-op Housing Registry members can adopt the new categories for selecting tenants, or use other methods such as point score or chronological order.”

Revised eligibility criteria for directly-managed units

The basic eligibility criteria for public housing buildings remain the same. Applicants must be B.C. residents, have incomes below the Core Need Income Threshold for their area, and be in a household of seniors, families, or persons with disabilities.

Two of these definitions have been clarified: families must have a dependent child, and persons with disabilities must qualify for a disability pension or disability tax credit. Before, a family did not need to include a child, and a doctor’s note was adequate to qualify for disability.

Enhanced computer system

Housing Connections, the software program used by members of The Housing Registry, now interfaces with another database to automate the matching of applicants with suitable housing to ensure people are not waitlisted for buildings that do not meet their needs. This is work that was previously often done manually.

In addition, new information has been added to applicant and development databases:

- Any health and mobility challenges applicants face;
- Type of development, number of units and typical unit sizes;
- Policies and services like pet policies, day care, or health/support services on site;
- Floor coverings, heat type, bathing facilities, accessibility and parking;

As well, current data identifying each building, location and contacts will be retained.

“Together, these changes will significantly improve our ability to match applicants to the most appropriate accommodation,” noted Smandych. “This new approach builds on an expanded application for subsidized housing introduced in Phase 1 earlier in the year. The

application now provides more information about applicants' housing and health needs, and a new supplemental form provides more background on applicants in urgent need of housing, such as the homeless or women and children fleeing abuse.”

Training on the system changes were provided via conference call and WebEx during the months of July through September. If you would like to arrange training for staff who use the Housing Registry database, please e-mail thehousingregistry@bchousing.org and Registry staff will work with you to arrange any required training.

BC Housing introduces asset ceiling

BC Housing also introduced for their public housing developments an asset ceiling of \$100,000, effective August 1, 2008. The new asset ceiling is in alignment with other jurisdictions and agencies and provides greater equity and transparency in determining eligibility for rental subsidy and other housing programs.

Stocks, bonds, term deposits, mutual funds, cash and real estate equity are considered in determining asset valuation; however, personal affects, retirement and education savings, bursaries and scholarships, and government compensation packages are exempted in determining asset valuation.

Housing Registry members can individually determine if they wish to continue with no asset ceiling or establish an asset ceiling for eligibility. If a Registry member decides to implement an asset ceiling they simply need to advise the Housing Registry at thehousingregistry@bchousing.org of the effective date and the asset ceiling amount. The computer system can be updated so that applicants with assets that exceed the established ceiling will not be waitlisted for the development.

www.bchousing.org

Feedback? Questions? Story ideas? Contact the editor.

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