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message from the chair

Bill Richardson, Affordable Housing Societies

Welcome to the premiere issue of The Housing Registry's electronic newsletter. On behalf of my fellow Council members, we hope that you find the information here useful. We want to communicate with our members regularly about the progress of the registry, the people involved, and on how it is advancing to the original goals set by the Steering Committee and then, by the Council.

The Steering Committee was set up in 1998 to bring forward the idea of a central housing registry or "wait list" to aid both housing providers and applicants in search of suitable housing. It evolved to an Advisory Council to represent members and to work with BC Housing to create what is The Housing Registry. The Housing Registry Council consists of representatives from housing providers, the BC Non-Profit Housing Association, the Co-operative Housing Federation of BC, community associations, and BC Housing.

Ultimately, our goal is to have all housing providers using The Housing Registry to fill their units, thus giving applicants an equal opportunity to be selected as tenants, while at the same time affording housing providers savings in administration and time.

The Housing Registry has grown from a simple registry of applicants in need of adequate housing to an integrated tie-in to BC Housing's new Housing Connections software. This will eventually lead to the availability of online direct input of rent calculations for both new tenants and those with an annual review. As with all new software, there are glitches that must be sorted out. By the end of this year, we hope

to have the tie-in with Housing Connections smoothed out and to have the reporting structure simplified.

We welcome your suggestions on future articles and other ways to improve communications between housing providers and the registry. I am happy to act as a go-between and encourage you to contact me or any of the council members listed in this newsletter if you have any questions or concerns.

All the best.

Bill
brichardson@affordablehsg.com

articles

Meet the Housing Registry Council

The Housing Registry Council consists of representatives from housing providers (three members from three distinct large housing providers and two members from two distinct small housing providers), the BC Non-Profit Housing Association (BCNPHA), the Co-operative Housing Federation of BC (CHF-BC), community associations, and BC Housing.

Your current council is Chair Bill Richardson, Affordable Housing Society, Vice Chair Gerald Rougeau, BC Non-Profit Housing Association, Treasurer Erin Smandych, BC Housing, and at-large members Dave Davies, Conference Housing Society, Karyn French, Pacifica Housing Society, Don Esplen, Burnaby-Lougheed Lions Housing Society, Christine Makarowski, Greater Vancouver Housing Corporation, Ken MacDonald, WINGS Housing Society, Wes Hosler, Co-op Housing Federation of BC, and Ann Howard, BC Housing.



Left to right: council members Gerald Rougeau, BC Non-Profit Housing Association; Erin Smandych, BC Housing; Christine Makarowski, Greater Vancouver Housing Corporation; and Don Esplen, Burnaby Lougheed Lions Housing Society.

2006 Council elections

The success of The Housing Registry is dependent upon members who volunteer their time and expertise to ensure that the registry continues to grow and improve. Members recently received a call for nominations to the council and we encourage you to get involved by nominating colleagues—or even yourself—for positions. The deadline for nominations is September 1, 2006.

Candidates are being sought from the following categories:

- Large Housing Provider (over 1,000 units) – 1 seat;
- Small Housing Provider (under 1,000 units) – 2 seats;
- Community Agency – 1 seat.

The Nomination Committee will summarize the nominees in their categories and, if necessary, solicit nominations for categories that require additional candidates. All nominees will be contacted to accept or refuse their nomination. Voting packages will be distributed September 26; the deadline for return of ballots is October 25. All successful candidates will be contacted by November 1 and the new council will be introduced to the membership at the Annual General Meeting which will be held at the BC Non-Profit Housing Association Conference on Monday November 20, 2006 from 5:15 to 6:15 p.m.

Member profile: BC Kinsmen Housing Network

The BC Kinsmen Housing Network manages six sites in the Lower Mainland, representing 276 units in Coquitlam, Surrey, Langley and Abbotsford. Clients are families and people with disabilities.



“We’ve been involved with the Housing Registry since the beginning,” said the society’s executive director Gerald Rougeau, who also sits on The Housing Registry Council as the BC Non-Profit Housing Association’s representative. “By being part of the Housing Registry, we’re able to work smarter and find ways to save money without jeopardizing the needs of our clients.”

BC Kinsmen Housing Network benefits by realizing cost savings in its day-to-day operations while clients benefit by not having to apply to multiple providers. “This reduces their time and stress,” added Gerald. “The registry identifies clients for us and collects information in a timely fashion. We retain control over tenant selection. It’s a tool that works and is very beneficial.”

statistics

Statistic 1

As of June 30, 2006, there were **49** Housing Registry members. Of these, **40** are housing providers representing housing in **27** communities across the province.

Statistic 2

This membership represents **17,663** units, including 7,800 public housing units (managed by BC Housing) 9,662 units managed by non-profit societies, and 201 units in housing co-operatives.

Statistic 3

The remaining **9** members include the BC Non-Profit Housing Association, the Co-operative Housing Federation of B.C. and **7** community groups, which joined the registry in order to assist applicants with their search for affordable and appropriate accommodation.

tips and tools

Housing Connections home page

The home page is designed to provide a snapshot of information for the user and a doorway to move through the system.

Due Date	App/Unit	Household	Reminder
29/06/2006	#999739	Bunny, Bugs	Obtain landlord reference information and complete processing of application.
29/06/2006	#999737	Howard, Johnson	Contact applicant regarding incomplete preferences.

At the top of the screen is an area for Service Messages. Housing Registry staff post information regarding system down times, upgrades or other information for users.

Once you have read a Service Message, you can remove it from your home page by clicking on the beside the message. You will still be able to view deleted messages for a period under the “All Service Messages” tab.

The home page provides a summary of all outstanding applicant and unit tasks as well as any reminders that you have set for yourself. By clicking on a task type, the system will redirect you to a list of all the outstanding tasks of that type. By clicking on a reminder, the system will take you to the client file.

To return to the home page from anywhere in the system you can either select home page from the Quick Menu, or you click on The Housing Registry symbol in the top left hand corner of any screen.

For assistance with the features of the Home Page or any other function of the Housing Connections system, click on the **?** in the top right-hand corner of the screen. This will open the Housing Connections User Manual.

frequently asked questions

I forgot my password. What do I do?

Send an email to The Housing Registry at thehousingregistry@bchousing.org. Your password will be sent to you by reply email.

I called an applicant and their phone number is out of service. What do I do?

Enter a comment on the applicant file and email The Housing Registry to advise that the contact information is out of date. Housing Registry staff will put the file on hold until updated information is received and the file will no longer come up on your or other Housing Provider lists. It is important that you send an email to the registry as entering a comment does not flag registry staff that an action is required.

Do I need to put a comment in applicant files each time I speak to an applicant?

As the registry is a shared database, it is important that we record contacts with applicants. By recording the actions being taken on files we eliminate situations like:

- Multiple housing providers offering units to the same applicant, resulting in vacancy losses for one of the providers;
- Applicants calling the registry because they “forgot to ask something” or “forgot their appointment time” and registry staff have no way of knowing who to refer the applicant to;
- Other situations that result in confusion, duplication of effort, or misunderstandings.

Do I need to email The Housing Registry every time I speak to an applicant?

No. You only need to email the registry if registry staff need to take action on the file, such as:

- Applicant wants his/her file cancelled;
- File needs to be reviewed and updated so an offer can proceed.

Is there going to be a fee introduced for membership in The Housing Registry?

The Housing Registry Council reviews the need for membership fees on an annual basis. For the fourth year in a row, the Council has found other resources to fund and deliver Housing Registry services to our members. The Council will continue to work in partnership with BC Housing and all registry members to minimize costs.

www.bchousing.org

Feedback? Questions? Story ideas? Contact the editor.

Editor: Jill Lunde 604-439-4135; glunde@bchousing.org