

MEMORANDUM

To: Directors of Housing York Inc. Board
From: Kathy Milsom, General Manager
Date: January 20, 2020
Re: Housing York Inc. Activity Update

A program to remove window air conditioners was initiated December 2019 to better ensure safety for residents and the general public

Window air conditioning units could be a safety risk if not properly secured. In view of a recent tragic incident in Toronto, and to further ensure the safety of residents and the general public, residents will no longer be permitted to have window air conditioning units installed above the first floor, unless the window is directly over a balcony.

Housing York Inc.'s (HYI's) newer apartment buildings have central air conditioning systems. Many of the older buildings have balconies and one building, Hadley Grange in the Town of Aurora, has window air conditioners supplied, installed and maintained by HYI, as a condition of the building's original development approvals.

Ten of HYI's 29 apartment buildings have windows that are not located over a balcony where a resident-installed air conditioner could create a safety hazard. In December 2019, HYI developed a program to remove existing resident air conditioners installed above the first floor and not directly over a balcony. As part of the planning process, HYI held information sessions at a seniors building in the City of Richmond Hill and at a mixed-occupancy building in the Town of Newmarket. These information sessions helped shape how HYI proceeded with the communication and execution of the program.

Roll-out of the program began in late December 2019. All residents in each of the 10 impacted buildings received an information package explaining the air conditioner removal process. Residents were advised they would not be permitted to reinstall removed air conditioners and were offered two options:

1. Have HYI take possession of the removed air conditioner in exchange for a credit of \$400 on their rental account, to reduce a future rent payment or to purchase a floor

model air conditioner through HYI's bulk purchasing initiative. Most residents chose the latter option.

2. Keep the removed air conditioner and not receive a credit, with the understanding that the unit cannot be reinstalled in the future.

To support timely and safe removal of the units, HYI retained the services of a contractor. In total, 156 air conditioning units were removed. In most cases, the original window glass was available for reinstallation, reducing the associated repair costs. The cost of removal and repair was just over \$26,000, and was accommodated within the 2019 operating budget. The Region is funding the credits provided to residents that enabled HYI to take possession of the removed air conditioners. Residents understood and were supportive of HYI's decision to remove window air conditioners.

Emergency preparedness education for HYI residents

HYI's 2017 to 2020 Plan, [*Achieving New Heights through Innovation and Sustainability*](#), included a commitment to share emergency preparedness communications with residents to help build resident resiliency. HYI met this commitment by delivering emergency preparedness communications to residents throughout the year in newsletters and at bi-annual resident meetings.

HYI also partnered with the Region's Paramedic Services to deliver emergency medical information kits to senior households at resident meetings. The kits, when completed, provide emergency responders with the household's medical information that can be useful to know in the event of an emergency, such as pre-existing health conditions, medications and allergies. Residents are encouraged to include copies of their health card, emergency contact information and related medical legal documents. The magnet provided allows the kits to be placed on refrigerator doors to enable emergency responders to quickly locate the information.

Most recently, four properties in the Town of Georgina and one property in the Town of Newmarket took part in these information sessions on emergency preparedness. Information was also provided regarding different types of emergencies that could result in residents having to leave their homes for an extended period of time, and residents were encouraged to create their own "emergency go-bag," based on a checklist provided by HYI.

HYI will continue in partnership with Paramedic and Seniors Services to engage residents at the remaining seniors' properties in 2020, to support emergency preparedness.

Community Paramedicine at Clinic (CP@clinic), a program funded by York Region and the Central Local Health Integration Network

Since 2015, York Region Paramedic Services has participated in the Community Paramedicine at Clinic (CP@clinic), a program funded by York Region and the Central Local Health

Integration Network. CP@clinic is a drop-in community-based health promotion program for subsidized seniors' apartment buildings with a high volume of 911 calls. It is a free, confidential service offered to residents to have their blood pressure measured weekly by a trained paramedic over a one-year period. Participants are also provided information about risk factors for heart disease, stroke and diabetes. Participants are linked to community resources as needed, and information collected by the paramedic team can be reported to residents' family physicians. The Community Paramedicine team has achieved a number of successes by providing health supports to HYI residents, including:

- 15% drop in 911 calls over a one-year period
- 590 client visits and over 180 referrals to community supports for residents living in seven HYI communities from March to October 2019

The program was re-launched in the fall of 2019 at Dunlop Pines in the City of Richmond Hill, Orchard Heights Place in the Town of Aurora and Fairy Lake Gardens in the Town of Newmarket.

Resident services were maintained throughout the holidays

Most Regional offices were closed from Wednesday, December 25, 2019, through Wednesday, January 1, 2020, inclusive. In order to ensure timely response to resident enquiries, HYI's office in the Town of Newmarket remained open on December 30 and 31, 2019. The holiday closures were communicated to residents on notice boards and in the fall newsletter.

Throughout the holidays, staff was on-call to respond to urgent maintenance requests, such as hot water outages, elevator problems and an issue with the monitoring system for the waste water pumping system at Bray Circle in the Town of Newmarket.

HYI celebrated the holiday season with residents

Throughout December, HYI staff held resident events to celebrate the holiday season. The events were well attended and provided staff the opportunity to interact with residents over tea and holiday treats. As one example of an activity, residents were encouraged to bring a dish that is common in their culture. Residents were excited to learn about the dishes served and celebrate the cultural heritage of their neighbours.

The fall newsletter highlighted the many culturally significant holidays that take place over the holiday season. The newsletter also included holiday safety tips and reminders, such as not to use open flame candles and to recycle cardboard boxes rather than disposing them down the garbage chute.

Housing development updates

Stouffville Affordable Housing Development, Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville – site plan application has been submitted

Plans for this new approximately 100 unit building are underway. A consultant team of engineers, designers and planners has been established. Early concepts have been created and a site plan application was submitted to the Town in December. The first Community Liaison Committee meeting, held on December 10, 2019, provided an opportunity for a small group of neighbours and community leaders to learn more about the plans underway, and offer feedback as the design and construction progresses. A second Community Liaison Committee meeting is planned for February.

The capital investment plan for this project includes provincial funding of \$7.1M under the Ontario Housing Priorities Initiative and federal funding of \$4.1M under the Investment in Affordable Housing Program. An application has also been submitted for funding through the National Housing Co-Investment Fund, and HYI has recently been notified that the application has moved on to the next stage of approvals for further consideration.

Unionville Seniors Affordable Housing Development, City of Markham – the first building permit has been issued

A building permit was issued to Martinway, the constructor, in early January 2020 to facilitate plumbing and servicing works for the building. Work on the underground servicing components, including bringing water works and utility connections from Highway 7 to the site, is underway. Road reconfiguration and earthworks have commenced near the entrance shared with the Unionville Home Society. Further mobilization by Martinway and a ramp up of site activity is anticipated to begin in the coming weeks.

Woodbridge Lane, City of Vaughan – substantial completion was achieved

Substantial completion of the construction of Woodbridge Lane was achieved in November 2019, and the contractor is working towards total completion of the project by February 2020. Minor finishing work and correction of small deficiencies is ongoing. Operationalization of the building is in progress. Five new households and seven returning households have already taken occupancy.

Marketing is ongoing. Rental of the market units has been much slower than anticipated. There were 130 subscribers on the list for the 30 three-bedroom market units available when leasing began in late November 2019. All subscribers have been contacted and offered an opportunity to view and lease a unit. Some subscribers did not respond. Others booked viewing appointments but did not attend. Some attended but were curious about the building rather than having a real interest in leasing, and a number of those who attended were hoping to be offered subsidies.

In total, four units were leased to households that had subscribed to the three-bedroom market list. HYI is currently contacting two-bedroom subscribers, advertising the three-bedroom units and contacting subsidized applicants.

Staff is reviewing options to accelerate the lease-up process to minimize the negative impact on the budgeted rental revenue. At this point, HYI is not reducing rents, as it is more important to take a considered approach that will achieve the monthly revenue target of \$158,000, rather than a rushed approach that could potentially compromise the long-term financial sustainability of the project. Staff will mitigate the anticipated revenue shortfall in 2020 through prudent management of operational expenses.

Kathy Milsom
General Manager

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