

## **MEMORANDUM**

To: Directors of Housing York Inc. Board  
From: Kathy Milsom, General Manager  
Date: February 25, 2020  
Re: Housing York Inc. Activity Update

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### **Connecting seniors and youth at Rose Town in the City of Richmond Hill through the 360°kids “Every Bite Matters” employment program**

“Every Bite Matters” is a 360°kids program that provides youth with culinary training to prepare and serve meals. The 16 week paid employment program is targeted to youth who face barriers to employment and have interest in culinary skills development. Participants are provided with certification opportunities for Smart Serve, Food Handlers and First Aid/CPR, as well as pre-employment workshops focused on job readiness and life skill development.

The program operates from the commercial kitchen located in the 360°kids space at the Richmond Hill Hub. The program began with service to seniors at the Richmond Hill Hub and has recently expanded to include Rose Town in the City of Richmond Hill, a 125-unit apartment for seniors. Now in its twelfth session, the program has served over 3,195 hot meals to seniors, supported 27 youths in achieving ongoing employment and nine youths in returning to school.

The program continues to be very successful for both youth and seniors alike. Some senior residents from the Richmond Hill Hub have been coming since the first session started and rarely miss a day. Seniors and youth alike look forward to the program’s themed and cultural lunches. In addition to providing a great service to youth and seniors, the program has had the added benefit of helping build positive relationships between Richmond Hill Hub residents and 360°kids.

### **Free services for Housing York Inc. (HYI) residents from the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and Humane Society**

Housing York Inc. (HYI) partners with a variety of organizations to fulfill its mission to deliver housing programs and services that are important to the communities in which HYI operates. Last year, HYI was able partner with the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

and Humane Society (Ontario SPCA). The Ontario SPCA received a grant from PetSmart Charities of Canada to increase health opportunities for under-resourced pets and their owners. The grant funding was intended for people with barriers to accessing pet care, including language, culture, socioeconomic status or access to transportation.

The Ontario SPCA held two information sessions at Brayfield Manor and Heritage East in the Town of Newmarket. Residents were invited to pick up free pet supplies such as leashes, collars, toys, food and treats, and to find out about a range of pet services that can be provided free of charge through the Ontario SPCA grant program. HYI is home to many pets and recognizes they can make important contributions to residents' well-being. Funding permitting, HYI will continue to explore partnerships that support furry residents.

### **Positive outcomes from HYI's new market rent subscribers list**

To improve customer service and speed up the leasing process of market rent units, HYI modernized the process for communicating market rent vacancies. The public can now visit [www.york.ca/marketrentHYI](http://www.york.ca/marketrentHYI) for information about market rentals. To pursue renting with HYI, applicants can indicate their preferred unit size and subscribe to receive information on market vacancies at any of the 15 HYI properties with market rent units.

There are currently more than 1,300 market subscribers. When a vacancy occurs, HYI sends an email to the applicable subscribers. The email includes information about unit viewing opportunities and the process to lease a market unit. The vacancy is offered to qualified households on a first come, first served basis.

The web-based process is working to help fill vacancies quickly. For example, a one-bedroom unit available at the Richmond Hill Hub in the City of Richmond Hill, received over 60 responses to the subscriber notification and was leased in less than a week.

### **Leasing activities are progressing well at Woodbridge Lane in the City of Vaughan**

After a slower than anticipated start to the rental process, the Woodbridge Lane rental office is experiencing considerable activity, showing and leasing units to wait list applicants and people interested in market rentals, while concurrently welcoming new residents to the building.

Potential residents are responding positively to apartment finishes, kitchen layouts and underground parking. Concerns were expressed about the size of some units and the limited availability of parking. Since the building has 142 residential parking spaces for 162 units, residents cannot be offered more than one parking space. This limitation impacts leasing, particularly for market rent units.

Overall, leasing activities are progressing well. Market units have been offered to subscribers and are also listed on the Multiple Listing Service. As of February 12, 2020, 40% of units were leased and the building was 28% occupied. HYI is confident that market revenues needed to

sustain the building will be achieved over the long term. Resident move-ins are proceeding smoothly and residents are settling into their new home.

## **Partnering with first responders to support training programs**

York Region's Paramedic Services includes a Special Response Unit whose primary objective is to provide emergency medical support to frontline ambulances during multi-casualty incidents and to support York Regional Police officers during high risk incidents. Special Response Unit paramedics work alongside the York Regional Police Search and Rescue, Public Order and Emergency Response Units.

Earlier this year, the Special Response Unit practiced their rappelling skills at Founder's Place, a nine storey building in the Town of Newmarket. During the event, signage informed residents, neighbours and the general public that a training exercise was in progress.

HYI also routinely partners with Fire Services and York Regional Police to support their training programs. Resident feedback is consistently positive when training takes place in their communities. Residents are proud their communities contribute to first responders' training and enjoy watching training activities.

## **Small water system fundamentals training for HYI maintenance staff**

Leeder Place and Porter Place are emergency housing facilities in the Town of East Gwillimbury, owned by HYI and operated by Blue Door Shelters, through a service agreement with the Region. In 2019, as part of an updated service agreement, HYI assumed responsibility for all property management functions for the facilities, including well and water treatment systems that provide potable water.

As part of a continued improvement program, HYI is expanding the number of staff trained to handle any potential issues with the water system. Thirteen HYI employees recently participated in the Small Water System Fundamentals Course facilitated by Walkerton Clean Water Centre, an operational service agency of the Government of Ontario.

## **HYI adapts to changing technology**

As technology changes, HYI adapts to provide services that are important to residents. For example, as personal cellular phones continue to replace telephones connected to land lines, HYI is updating its systems to enable residents to connect their cellular phones to phone systems in apartment buildings.

With the increasing popularity of internet-based entertainment options, such as Netflix and Crave, HYI is reconsidering the approach to bulk cable television arrangements. HYI has two properties, Thornhill Green in the City of Markham, and Orchard Heights in the Town of Aurora, where historically residents have been provided cable television as part of their lease. Residents pay approximately \$40 per month for a cable television package that currently retails at

approximately \$85. The cable package is provided at a discounted rate, but under the terms of the contract, all residents must participate. As is common in the industry, these are “all or nothing” arrangements. HYI does not have the option of exempting residents who do not want cable. For some residents, the cable cost is a significant portion of their monthly rent.

Internet has become almost a necessity, and many homes at Thornhill Green and Orchard Heights enjoy high speed internet. With HYI’s approval, Bell and Rogers, have recently upgraded the fibre at most HYI buildings including Thornhill Green and Orchard Heights, giving residents more choice. Today, many households are choosing to not utilize cable television, opting to stream their entertainment choices through an internet package. The market is becoming more competitive, with many options that enable residents to watch content on their phones, tablets, computers, in addition to their television.

Given a choice, most residents might prefer not to pay for cable. The current cable contract expires in 2020. Before entering into a new cable agreement, likely with a higher monthly cost, HYI will survey residents at both properties to assess their interest in continuing with bulk cable service. If the majority of residents express a desire not to continue with a mandatory cable package, HYI will discontinue the practice and work with any adversely impacted residents to help access other options.

### **“100 Cups Competition” challenges residents at the Richmond Hill Hub to properly dispose of fats, oils and grease**

Safe disposal of fats, oils and grease protects building pipes from clogging and helps sustain waste water systems. Last year, HYI teamed up with the Region’s Environmental Services department to provide an educational session on FOG to over 40 residents at the Richmond Hill Hub, enlisting the help of a number of staff to deliver the presentation in Cantonese, Mandarin and Farsi, in addition to English.

As part of an ongoing education campaign, residents at the Richmond Hill Hub will be invited to join a community challenge to collectively redirect 100 cups of fats, oils and grease from their drains to an HYI designated disposal area. Residents will be able to see the accumulation, emphasizing the potential impact of fats, oils and grease in drainage systems. Prizes will be awarded to the top contributors. HYI hopes this will help raise fats, oils and grease awareness in a fun and collaborative way.

### **Housing development updates**

#### **Stouffville Affordable Housing Development, Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville – consultation efforts continue**

A site plan application was submitted to the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville in December, and the Region’s consultants are working collaboratively with the Town to address any comments or concerns. The Region’s development team is working towards a resubmission of the site plan in

the spring. A second Community Liaison Committee meeting was held in late February, and provided an opportunity for a small group of neighbours and community leaders to offer feedback on the design as it progresses. In addition, a presentation was made to the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville Council on March 3rd to provide an update on the application process.

**Unionville Seniors Affordable Housing Development, City of Markham – construction work is underway**

Excavation and foundation work on the building is well underway by Martinway, the Region's contractor. Drilling for caissons has begun on site, and work on the nearby roadways and infrastructure services is nearing completion. The Region continues to exercise best efforts to inform nearby residents about construction activity, and to mitigate impact to the surrounding community whenever possible.

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