

MEMORANDUM

To: Directors of Housing York Inc. Board
From: Kathy Milsom, General Manager
Date: January 25, 2021
Re: Housing York Inc. Activity Update

Holiday newsletter distributed to Housing York Inc. residents

A holiday newsletter was distributed to all Housing York Inc. (HYI) residents in December 2020. The newsletter highlighted the various cultural and religious holidays celebrated over the winter months. Articles provided information on fire safety tips, proper garbage disposal and Public Health's COVID-19 precautions and reminders. Residents were also reminded how to reach HYI for maintenance emergencies during the holiday closure.

Resident services were maintained throughout the holidays

Most Regional offices were closed from Thursday, December 24, 2020 through to January 3, 2021. As HYI services needed to be maintained, a reduced employee complement continued to work or were on standby throughout the holiday closure, including the statutory holidays and evenings, to respond to urgent maintenance issues, answer leasing and rent payment inquiries, manage move ins and prepare for year end.

Maintenance requests over the holidays were managed effectively, and were typical of calls HYI receives over regular weekends and evenings.

HYI continues to implement the Tenancy Management Policy to address arrears while supporting residents

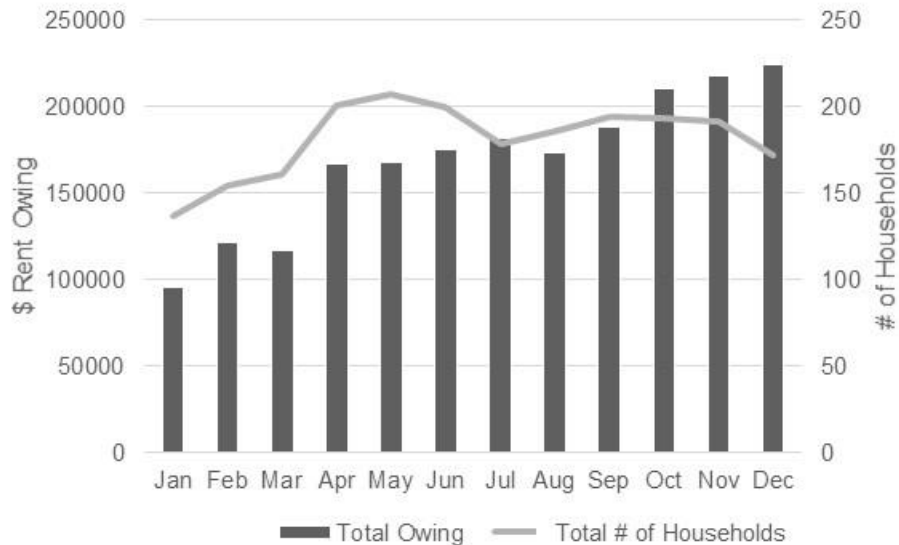
HYI works closely with residents in arrears to connect them to available resources and to establish realistic payment plans. Unfortunately, not all residents are responsive to these efforts. HYI's [Tenancy Management Policy](#), approved by the HYI Board in December 2017, balances HYI's roles as both a responsible and caring landlord. Under the policy, HYI relies on the Landlord and Tenant Board process to hold residents accountable for paying their rent while offering connections to supports to assist residents in sustaining their tenancies.

As a reminder, under normal circumstances, residents receive an N4-Notice to End a Tenancy Early for Non-Payment of Rent (N4-Notice) when their account goes into arrears, followed by updated monthly notices until a successful repayment plan is implemented. Although most residents begin working with HYI to preserve their tenancies at this point, for those who do not respond to an N4-Notice, the next step is an application for a Landlord and Tenant Board eviction hearing. HYI notifies the resident that a hearing application has been filed, and the Landlord and Tenant Board notifies the resident when a hearing date is set. Most residents in arrears will work with HYI to establish a repayment plan. Even if the hearing proceeds and eviction is ordered, HYI will not enforce the eviction if the resident implements a reasonable repayment plan.

COVID-19 disrupted tenancy management. In March 2020, the Ontario Superior Court issued an order suspending residential evictions, leading some residents to conclude that they could not be required to pay rent. Others experienced considerable economic uncertainty and were concerned that paying their rent would leave them without enough money for other necessities. HYI stopped issuing N4-Notices and reached out to households in arrears to connect them to supports, reiterate the importance of paying rent and to discuss payment plans. In June, HYI began to issue N4-Notices again to households that were not making reasonable efforts to pay their rent. Receiving an N4-Notice clarified for some residents that despite the provincial eviction ban, they were still required to pay their rent. In August 2020, the Landlord and Tenant Board began holding hearings for rent arrears. HYI began filing applications for hearings. Unfortunately, the backlog is significant. At the end of December, HYI had 53 arrears-related hearing applications pending with no dates scheduled. The Landlord and Tenant Board has continued to hear applications for urgent matters such as illegal acts or serious impairment of safety.

Figure 1 provides an overview of rent arrears in 2020. The number of households with rent arrears fluctuated over the year, spiking in the early months of COVID-19 before stabilizing. At the end of December 2020, 172 households were in arrears. This stabilization reflects HYI's efforts to work with households, and the resumption of Landlord and Tenant Board processes. Although the number of households in arrears has improved, the amount owed by households in arrears is higher, resulting in a new high of \$224,526 in rent owed at the end of December. Although the increase is significant, the rent arrears owing accounts for under 1% of the 2020 rent revenue budget.

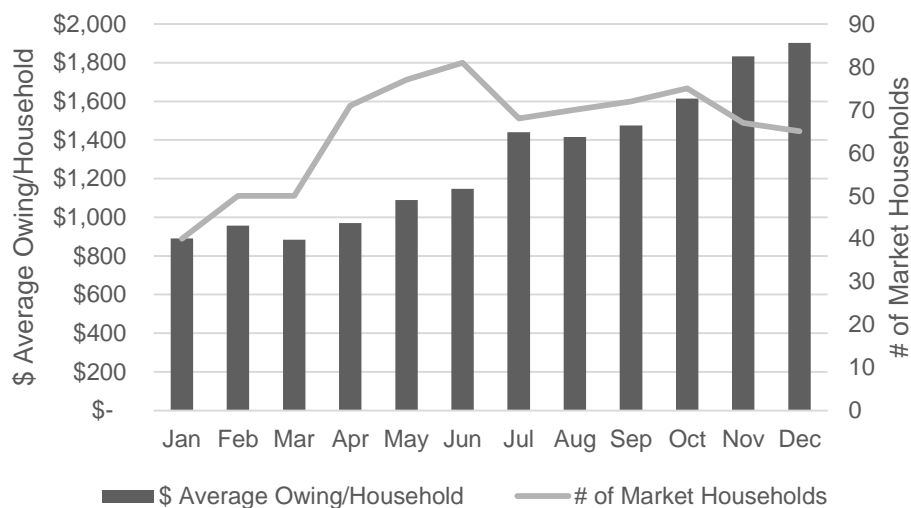
Figure 1
2020 Rent Owed and Households in Arrears



HYI's current arrears are best understood by considering subsidized and market rent households separately. At the end of December, just under 5% of subsidized households owed rent arrears. This is close to normal levels. The average amount owed per subsidized household increased by approximately \$330 from January to December. With eventual resumption of normal Landlord and Tenant Board activity, and in some cases longer repayment plans, these tenancies should be sustainable.

The impact of COVID-19 is most notable with HYI's market rent households. About 20% of HYI's tenancies are market rent, with 584 market households at the end of December. Of these, 65 were in rent arrears. As a result, market tenancies account for 11% of HYI households in arrears but 63% of current rent arrears. These tenancies are more vulnerable. Market tenancies are not automatically eligible for rent reductions when household income decreases. HYI continues to work with these residents and, as a result, the number of households in arrears declined from the June peak; however, as illustrated in Figure 2, the average amount owed by market households in arrears increased from approximately \$900 in January to about \$1,900 in December.

Figure 2
2020 Market Households - Average Rent Owed and Households in Arrears



The long-term sustainability of these tenancies will be impacted by changes in federal income support programs and economic recovery.

The fall 2020 resumption of Landlord and Tenant Board hearings supported HYI's arrears management; however, on January 12, the Province of Ontario announced another temporary pause in the enforcement of evictions. Unlike the 2020 eviction ban that resulted in suspension of most Landlord and Tenant Board hearings, this time the ban is limited to the enforcement of residential evictions. The Landlord and Tenant Board will continue to hear eviction applications and issue orders, with enforcement of eviction orders postponed until the province lifts the restriction. Evictions can still be enforced for urgent situations, such as illegal activity.

Under normal circumstances, HYI enforces very few evictions. The enforcement pause may result in higher arrears for a small number of households but is not otherwise expected to have a significant impact. HYI will continue to implement the [Tenancy Management Policy](#), following Landlord and Tenant Board processes as needed, and continuing to work closely with residents to help sustain tenancies.

Unless unexpected trends arise, updates on arrears will be reported quarterly through the business plan progress report under Strategic Priority 2: Inclusive Communities and Successful Tenancies, Goal 2: Residents are supported to have successful tenancies.

Housing development updates

Rose Town, City of Richmond Hill - balcony replacement project is complete

Balcony repairs are complete at Rose Town. The project began in April 2020 and involved balcony upgrades including repairs to concrete and replacement of the existing balcony railing with new glass panelling. During construction, residents did not have access to their balcony. Residents feedback has been positive and many have expressed pleasure with the new look of their home.

Unionville Seniors Affordable Housing Development, City of Markham – ongoing construction work

Martinway Developments Limited, the general contractor for this project, continues to progress with work on the underground parking area. Building foundations and foundation walls including waterproofing have been completed. Elevator shaft and the majority of the columns at the lower level have been installed. Construction of the slab on grade for the lower parking level P2 is complete. Construction of the structural slab for level P1 parking is underway.

Stouffville Affordable Housing Development, Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville – site plan application approval anticipated

The site plan application approval process is nearing completion with the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville's planning staff. A virtual public information process was launched in October, including a short video explaining the project, design elements and project schedule. The public had the opportunity to complete an online survey to provide feedback. Two-hundred and ninety responses were received, with the majority of respondents commenting on the importance of having affordable rental units within the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville. A range of feedback on how to further improve the proposed site plan design was collected, resulting in a further review of the aesthetic design of the proposed building to ensure it fits appropriately within the fabric of the neighbouring community. This design review will take place during the detailed design phase of the building, once site plan approval has been granted by the town. Demolition of the existing commercial structures has begun and will be completed in February. The request for proposals for architectural and engineering consulting services to prepare the detailed design and the construction tender package closed and the contract has been awarded to TCA/Thier + Curran Architects Inc.



Kathy Milsom
General Manager

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