

MEMORANDUM

To: Directors of Housing York Inc. Board
From: Kathy Milsom, General Manager
Date: January 13, 2022
Re: Housing York Inc. Activity Update

2021 Housing York Inc. Business Plan fiscal year-end update

Included with this update, as Attachment 1, is the fiscal year-end report of performance against the 2021 Housing York Inc. (HYI) Business Plan. As the attachment shows, 2021 commitments have been largely accomplished, despite the considerable ongoing challenges presented by the pandemic, with 85% of actions completed and 85% of targets met or exceeded. The remaining 15% of actions will be completed in 2022 due to COVID-related operational pressures, such as industry wide shortages of construction supplies and competing priorities. Some highlights are noted below.

Highlights for Strategic Priority 1: Expanded Housing Portfolio

- To support portfolio expansion, development concepts have been completed for two Region-owned sites in the City of Markham and the Town of Newmarket, exceeding the 2021 target of one concept. Meetings have also been held with developers to discuss opportunities on sites in the Towns of Aurora and Whitchurch-Stouffville and the City of Markham.
- In [November 2021](#), Regional Council approved the establishment of a Community Housing Development Master Plan and, in [December 2021](#), the HYI Board supported development of the plan, meeting the 2021 target. The plan will be presented to Council and the HYI Board in Q2 2022, and the Region will continue to advocate end of mortgage savings be retained by Service Managers to serve as a potential funding source for these projects.

Highlights for Strategic Priority 2: Inclusive Communities and Successful Tenancies

- A consultant has been engaged and methodology has been established for resident surveys that will be administered in 2022, meeting the 2021 target. Surveys will evaluate

measures such as resident satisfaction with referral services, percentage of program participants who feel the right programs are available in their HYI community, and more.

- Payment plan options and supports have been offered to all households in arrears, meeting the 2021 target. In addition, 98.5% of tenancies at risk for arrears have been preserved, exceeding the target of 97%. Further detail regarding work to preserve tenancies and tenancy management is provided in the following sections of this memorandum.

Highlights for Strategic Priority 3: Financial Sustainability

- Lifecycle analysis for replacement of building components has been completed. The analysis found 96% of components over \$50,000 met or exceeded component life expectancy, exceeding the 2021 target of 90%. Only 0.5% of components over \$50,000 failed before 50% of the component life expectancy.
- A new request for proposal (RFP) process has been used that enables the assessment of both qualitative and pricing criteria of proposals to achieve best value for money, as service quality issues related to elevator maintenance has been a top resident concern in HYI buildings. The request for proposal was used for a collaborative purchasing initiative with Long-Term Care and community-based housing providers. The call for proposals closed on November 26, 2021, and a service provider has been selected. The new contract will be effective February 1, 2022.

Housing York Inc.'s Community Newsletter reminds residents of the importance of tenant insurance

In late 2014, HYI implemented a policy requiring residents to have insurance. The HYI lease was revised accordingly, and all new residents are required to show proof of tenant insurance before being permitted occupancy. Updated proof of insurance is requested annually as part of the rent subsidy renewal process, where applicable. As landlords cannot change the terms of an existing lease unilaterally, residents with leases that predate the policy are encouraged, but not required, to have tenant's insurance.

The Community Newsletter distributed to all HYI residents in December included a reminder of the importance of tenant insurance, noting that insurance can help with the cost of replacing personal belongings, paying for temporary accommodations, covering living expenses, and addressing liability claims. Residents were provided with the contact information to apply for Housing Services Corporation's Tenant Insurance Program, available to community housing residents, including HYI residents, at an affordable rate (Housing Services Corporation is a non-profit organization committed to ensuring that Ontario residents have access to safe and affordable housing that improves their quality of life).

Addressing resident survey feedback through new approaches to procurements

HYI, like other community housing providers, routinely surveys residents to help management best address resident needs and direct limited resources where they will have the greatest impact. The 2019 HYI resident survey findings informed key actions and targets around building inclusive communities, providing supports and services to residents, and informing the strategic directions in HYI's 2021 to 2024 Strategic Plan.

The 2019 HYI resident survey provided feedback on a range of topics including resident satisfaction with outsourced services such as janitorial, elevator maintenance and laundry. With the term of the current elevator maintenance contract coming to an end, as noted under the highlights of the accomplishments against the 2021 Business Plan targets, a new RFP template that can be used for procurements for which quality of service as well as competitive pricing are both of importance was used. For the elevator maintenance contract, to address resident satisfaction rates, quality of service is particularly important. Past contracts were awarded based on lowest compliant bid; the new approach balances both financial and qualitative aspects of elevator service delivery, including firm experience, references, and performance/response outcome reporting. The RFP is also a simplified document to encourage greater competition. Eight elevator firms responded to the RFP. The new contract is expected to start in February 2022.

HYI also issued a similar RFP to retain an external survey company to conduct the upcoming 2022 resident surveys. The resident surveys will provide feedback regarding resident satisfaction and monitor progress of several strategic plan initiatives.

Housing York Inc. continues to implement evolving COVID-19 requirements

HYI continues to adapt business processes in response to the evolving COVID situation. Recognizing the rapid spread of the Omicron variant, HYI closed all resident lounges and common rooms before the holidays. Resident feedback on this decision has generally been very positive. Building maintenance continues, with employees compliant with the Region's mandatory employee vaccination policy and equipped with personal protective equipment appropriate to their work, for their own as well as residents' protection. Contractors are required to complete COVID screening before attending an HYI property and residents are screened prior to completion of required in-suite work.

In mid-December, the Region began implementation of a mandatory vaccination policy for contractors. The policy applies to situations where a contractor has direct contact with Regional employees or clients. Direct contact is defined as ten minutes or more, less than six feet apart. The Region notified all Regional contractors of the policy and established a process to track compliance. About half of HYI's contractors were contacted through this process. HYI also has more than 100 contractors and vendors that are not contracted through the Region, many of them smaller businesses. HYI communicated the policy directly to those vendors and continues to work with the Region to track compliance. Effective January 10, 2022, contractors whose work will require direct contact with residents or employees must be compliant with the policy.

Housing York Inc. continues to work with residents to preserve tenancies at risk

In [December 2017](#), the Board of Directors approved HYI's Tenancy Management Policy. The policy balances HYI's roles as both a responsible and caring landlord. Under normal circumstances, HYI moves quickly to issue an N4-Notice to End a Tenancy Early for Non-Payment of Rent (N4-Notice) when a resident's rental account falls into arrears. Most residents respond promptly, restoring their account to good standing before falling so far behind that they are unable to catch up. If the resident does not address their arrears, HYI applies for a Landlord and Tenant Board hearing, which can result in an eviction order. Throughout the process, HYI works with residents to arrange reasonable repayment plans, as well as offering connections to income support programs and referrals to other resources as needed to support their tenancies. The resident can stop the process at any time by bringing their rental account into good standing and most do so before an eviction is ordered. Enforcement of an eviction is a last resort and an infrequent occurrence.

COVID-19 disrupted tenancy management. In March 2020, the Ontario Superior Court issued an order suspending residential evictions. At the same time, the Landlord and Tenant Board stopped holding hearings regarding rental arrears. HYI suspended issuance of N4-Notices until June 2020, resuming with an initial focus on households that were not responding to HYI's efforts to work with the household to address their arrears. The Landlord and Tenant Board began holding virtual hearings regarding rent arrears in August 2020, but with considerable delays in comparison to normal timelines.

Tenancy management activities stabilized through 2021. Although twice in 2021 the Province of Ontario temporarily halted enforcement of evictions, virtual hearings of Landlord and Tenant Board matters continued throughout the year with ongoing delays.

In 2021, HYI issued N4-Notices to 200 households. Most residents with arrears continue to make rental payments and progress towards reducing their arrears. HYI continues to pursue action through the Landlord and Tenant Board if the resident is not making reasonable efforts to address their arrears.

The Landlord and Tenant Board issued HYI nine eviction orders in 2021. HYI has six months to request that the Sherriff enforce an eviction order. HYI has deferred scheduling three of the evictions while continuing to work with residents. Six evictions were scheduled. Of these, three tenancies were preserved as HYI was able to work with the residents just before the eviction, to arrange payment of the outstanding arrears, resulting in recovery of almost \$35,000. Of the three evictions enforced, one was a situation where, in addition to arrears, HYI was pursuing eviction related to serious tenancy issues. The other two were situations where the residents had not made any rental payments for many months. The combined amount owed by these three households totals approximately \$42,000.

At the end of 2021, 173 current households owed a total of just over \$187,000 in rental arrears. As of December 31, 2021, more than 93% of resident rental accounts were in good standing.

Consistent with 2020, the year-end rental arrears account for less than 1% of the total 2021 resident rents.

Provincial rent freeze expired December 31, 2021

In 2020, the Province of Ontario passed legislation freezing 2021 rents at 2020 levels. The rent freeze applied to both market rent and subsidized households. The Province of Ontario directed community housing providers to continue reviewing household eligibility for rent-geared-to-income throughout 2021, with any resulting notices of rent increase deferred to 2022. HYI continued updating subsidized rents as required and issued market rent increase notices with 2022 effective dates. Just under 40% of HYI households had a rent increase take effect on January 1, 2022.

Housing development updates

Unionville Commons, City of Markham – ongoing construction work

The general contractor for the project continues to progress with work on the roof and the mechanical penthouse. Masonry work is underway and has been completed up to the twelfth floor. Precast panels are installed up to the sixth floor.

The project is progressing as planned and is scheduled to be completed in 2023.

Stouffville Affordable Housing Development, Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville – public procurement to select the builder

The tender to publicly procure the builder closed on December 6, 2021. Contract award is underway. Construction is scheduled to start early 2022 and is anticipated to be completed by the end of 2023.

Town of East Gwillimbury Transitional Housing – ongoing construction

Construction is well underway for this building and, when complete, will provide for a total of 18 transitional housing units consisting of six accessible units on the ground floor and another 12 units on the second floor.

Excavation, foundation footings and slab on grade, as well as trenching for site services are complete and the hydro connection is in place. The modular panels arrived in mid-December and will be assembled on site. Once the exterior walls are complete the interior finishes will begin. Construction completion is targeted for end of March.

Sutton Transitional Housing in the Town of Georgina – ongoing construction

Construction is well underway for these buildings, and when complete, will consist of four single-storey buildings that will house a total of eight transitional units.

Excavation, foundation footings and concrete block walls are complete, and mechanical and electrical rough ins are in progress along with civil works to connect site services. Exterior wall construction began in early January and construction completion is targeted for end of March.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kathy Milsom', with a large, sweeping flourish extending from the bottom left.

Kathy Milsom
General Manager

Attachment (1)
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