



## Report of the General Manager

### **Resident Inclusion Plan for Housing York Inc.**

#### **Recommendation**

The Board approve the Resident Inclusion Plan provided as Attachment 1.

#### **Summary**

This report proposes a Resident Inclusion Plan for Housing York Inc. (HYI) for Board approval. The Resident Inclusion Plan supports HYI's ongoing efforts to foster inclusive communities and advance the objectives of the Inclusion Charter for York Region.

#### **Background**

##### **The Board endorsed York Region's Inclusion Charter in September 2018**

As one of the most diverse and rapidly changing communities in Canada, York Region residents speak over 120 different languages and come from 230 distinct ethnic origins. HYI communities are a reflection of the changing demographics across the Region. To respond positively to rapidly changing demographics, the Community Partnership Council, a group that leads local strategies to welcome newcomers from around the world to York Region, encouraged adoption of an Inclusion Charter.

The Municipal Diversity and Inclusion Group was formed to develop the Inclusion Charter. Co-Chaired by York Region and York Regional Police, this community partnership brings together local municipalities, school boards, hospitals, conservation authorities and agencies with a common commitment to inclusion. After a robust and extensive consultation process, the Inclusion Charter for York Region was developed and Regional Council endorsed the Charter in [June 2018](#).

The Charter embraces all dimensions of diversity and is grounded in the belief that our greatest strength is the ability to build communities that celebrate and value differences. The Charter focuses on inclusion which strives to create environments where everyone can develop to their full potential, participate freely and live with respect, dignity and freedom from discrimination.

In [September 2018](#), HYI's Board of Directors endorsed the Inclusion Charter for York Region supporting the Region's commitment to making communities more welcoming and inclusive.

## **The Resident Inclusion Plan fulfills a commitment under HYI's 2017 to 2020 Plan and aligns with HYI's Vision**

HYI's 2017 to 2020 Plan: [Achieving New Heights through Innovation and Sustainability](#) sets out a number of strategic directions including "Strengthening Community Health." Recognizing that the Region was working towards an Inclusion Charter, as an action under this strategic direction, HYI planned to create a strategy to support diversity and inclusion for residents.

The Resident Inclusion Plan supports multiple objectives, including:

- Ensuring HYI aligns with Regional priorities
- Informing on-going enhancement of HYI buildings, services and programs
- Letting residents know what they can expect from HYI, and
- Recognizing that residents have key roles to play in shaping their communities

The Resident Inclusion Plan will support HYI in advancing the Inclusion Charter's vision of York Region as a welcoming and inclusive community and HYI's vision to build inclusive communities that everyone would be proud to call home.

### **Analysis**

#### **HYI respects diversity of residents and promotes inclusions within its communities**

HYI demonstrates its commitment to inclusion in many ways:

- New buildings are designed to meet or exceed provincial accessibility standards. Accessibility of older buildings is enhanced through retrofit projects as required.
- HYI uses a variety of approaches to inclusive communications, including translated materials and translation services, plain language documents, pictogram based signage and HYI Alerts.
- Inclusion is considered in HYI's business practices. For example, HYI responds to individual requests for accommodation; accessibility requirements are included in procurement processes and new policies are developed to identify and avoid barriers to inclusion.
- HYI supports community building activities that promote inclusion by creating positive opportunities for residents to interact, such as community barbecues, garden committees and regular resident meetings.
- HYI partners with the Region and community agencies to deliver programs and services that are important to residents.

#### **HYI engaged residents, staff, and the Region's inclusion charter team in developing the recommended Resident Inclusion Plan**

The Resident Inclusion Plan development process began with establishment of a cross-departmental team that included staff responsible for the Inclusion Charter for York Region initiative. HYI engaged a consultant to assist with the project. One of the consultant's key deliverables was to develop and implement a resident consultation plan. HYI coordinated

consultation logistics, such as refreshments and translation supports. To encourage residents to share both positive and negative feedback about their experiences, staff did not participate in the resident discussions. The consultant-led resident engagements were organized around a social activity to encourage casual discussions centred on inclusivity and belonging in their communities. Building on the results of this work, HYI held a series of staff workshops to develop the proposed Resident Inclusion Plan.

**Residents want to feel respected and valued**

Through the consultation process, residents were asked to share their thoughts about what made them feel at home and included in their communities.

The importance of being respected and valued was a common theme. Some residents indicated that the companionship and support of their neighbours made them feel their community was an extended family. Others indicated that the increasing diversity of their communities made it harder for them to feel connected, noting as examples that some of their new neighbours spoke different languages or didn't share the same holiday traditions.

Residents indicated that HYI engages with them respectfully, keeping them well informed. Some residents indicated that they would like more opportunity for input on matters that affect them.

**The Resident Inclusion Plan recognizes both HYI and residents have a role to play in maintaining inclusive communities that everyone would be proud to call home**

HYI is committed to respecting the diversity of its residents and to fostering inclusive communities. HYI also recognizes residents have a key role to play. Much of the experience of living in our communities is about day-to-day interactions among residents. Residents from different backgrounds don't always understand each other's language, cultural or religious observances and this can cause friction. In its role as landlord, HYI encourages residents to be good neighbours.

HYI's approach to resident inclusion recognizes that we all have a role to play to support the Charter vision for welcoming and inclusive communities:

	<b>ASK</b>	<b>LISTEN</b>	<b>ADAPT</b>
<b>HYI'S COMMITMENT</b>	We make it easy for residents to request our services and to tell us what's important to them	We value resident perspectives when we are making decisions that affect them	We do our best to adjust our services and our buildings to be inclusive for all residents
<b>RESIDENT'S ROLES</b>	Tell us if you have a concern with our services, your home or your community	Be considerate of your neighbours and remember it is their home too	Do your part to ensure that everyone is welcome in your community

The concepts of “Ask, Listen and Adapt” are intended to provide staff with a simple, easily remembered approach to inform day-to-day business decisions and interactions with residents. The approach with respect to residents is two-fold; first to encourage them to let HYI know if there is a concern; and second, to do their part to contribute to an inclusive community.

## **The Resident Inclusion Plan highlights HYI’s four key action areas**

1. Enhance the accessibility of our buildings
  - New buildings will reflect current accessibility best practices; for example, the Unionville Seniors Housing Development is being designed to incorporate age-friendly design principles.
  - We will continue to enhance accessibility as part of building repair and retrofit projects.
2. Provide inclusive communications
  - We will look for opportunities to leverage technology to enhance our ability to provide more accessible and multi-lingual services; for example, staff is currently assessing a software solution that could translate HYI Alerts into residents’ preferred language of communication.
  - As standard documents are created or updated, we will increase use of plain language, icons and pictograms, for example, in 2019, the resident lease will be updated with a plain language approach.
3. Ensure business processes respect diversity
  - We will conduct a 2019 Resident Survey to better understand what’s important to residents.
  - We will increase opportunities for residents to connect with HYI and to inform decisions that affect their communities; for example, in 2019 we will develop a plan to provide regularly scheduled office hours in resident buildings as well our business offices. We will also continue to enhance our engagement with residents as part of capital repair projects.
4. Provide programs and services of value to residents
  - We will continue to support community building activities and work with residents to find solutions to community concerns; for example, continuing to support community activities, such as barbecues and gardening committees. We will also continue to implement our Tenancy Management Policy to address issues that adversely impact our communities.
  - We will continue to work with Regional and community partners to deliver programs that support inclusion, such as English as a Second Language classes and after school programs

## **HYI will continue to engage residents and promote the Resident Inclusion Plan**

The Resident Inclusion Plan will be shared with residents in a variety of ways:

- A copy of the Resident Inclusion Plan will be included the welcome packages for new residents.
- The Resident Inclusion Plan will be highlighted in Community News, HYI's resident newsletter and published on the HYI web page.
- Residents will have the opportunity to discuss the Resident Inclusion Plan as part of regular resident meetings and will be encouraged to consider their role in inclusive communities.
- The Resident Inclusion Plan will be posted at each HYI property, along with the HYI Vision and Mission statements.

### **Financial Considerations**

Development of the Resident Inclusion Plan, including the \$38,000 plus HST in consulting costs, was managed within HYI's 2018 administrative budget. The actions identified in the Resident Inclusion Plan will be managed within approved operating and capital budgets.

### **Local Impact**

HYI operates housing in each of the nine municipalities. The proposed Resident Inclusion Plan will support HYI in creating communities that value and respect differences, and view these differences as a resource and strength.

### **Conclusion**

The Resident Inclusion Plan will enhance existing operational practices to help achieve the Board endorsed vision for HYI, fulfill commitments in the 2017 to 2020 Plan and support the Inclusion Charter for York Region's commitment to welcoming and inclusive communities.

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For more information on this report, please contact Kerry Hobbs, Director, Operations at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 72071. Accessible formats or communication supports are available upon request.

Recommended by: Rick Farrell  
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Approved for Submission: Katherine Chislett  
President, Housing York Inc.

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Attachment  
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