



Exchange

A newsletter for Social Housing Providers in the City of Toronto

Volume 5, Issue 2 – Spring/Summer 2007

Highlights

Window & Balcony Safety

Do you know what to tell your residents?

..... Page 2

The Heat is On!

Toronto Public Health's hot weather tips for landlords.

..... Page 2

Housing Connections

Applicants can now manage their file online.

..... Page 3

Plus

- Q & A Corner
- Provincial Arrears Database Goes Live
- First Edition of **Asset Management Exchange**

Social Housing Unit

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Director's Message

I want to highlight a bursary program that you, as housing providers, may be familiar with. If you have tenants or members who are planning to attend post-secondary education or training in the fall, you may want to encourage them to apply for a Dr. Albert Rose Bursary.

The Dr. Albert Rose Bursary is a program from the Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH). It was established in 1984 to help social housing residents with the costs of a postsecondary education. The program is named in honour of the late Dr. Albert Rose who dedicated his life's work to education and social housing. The deadline for applications is Friday, July 6, 2007. For more information, contact the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Phone: 416-585-6021.

Email: bursary.mah@ontario.ca. Or visit their web site, www.mah.gov.on.ca. Click on 'The 2007 Dr. Albert Rose Bursary Program'.

Kathleen Blinkhorn, Director

Federal Co-op Goes KaBoom!

With summer approaching, you may be turning your attention to the outdoors. With that in mind, I wanted to tell you about an exciting outdoor project taking place in Toronto. Perth Co-operative, a federal co-op in Toronto, has been picked by KaBoom! to receive a community built playground. KaBoom! is a non-profit organization that has a goal to create a "great place to play within walking distance of every child in North America." Perth Co-op applied to KaBoom! in the fall of 2006 and their playground is being built now. It is an exciting community development opportunity for Perth Co-op. To learn more about KaBoom!, visit their web site at www.kaboom.org.

Windows & Balconies Pose Special Risks In Summer

During the warm summer months high rise residents often leave their windows and balcony doors open to keep their units cool. While this may help keep the heat down during the hottest months of the year, it is not safe for young children.



- ✓ Screens are thin and can easily give way under the weight of even a very small child.
- ✓ Never put cribs, beds, and other furniture that children can climb, under the window.

Each year, more than 200 children under the age of 9 in Canada are hospitalized for falls from buildings. Young children can easily fall from windows left open, or windows that have loose screens. We urge social housing providers to do proper inspections of their building window screens and closures each year. We also encourage providers to speak with their tenants or members about window safety for their children. Here are some tips to remember.

- ✓ If you plan to replace windows, make sure your new ones are designed with safety features.
- ✓ Window screens do not prevent falls!

- ✓ Make sure that doors to balconies are kept locked. Furniture should never be close to balcony railings where children can easily climb over and fall.
- ✓ Window guards and stops can reduce the risk of falls, but only when used correctly! Remind residents to follow instructions on how to use these guards properly.
- ✓ Never leave young children unattended!

We have included some window safety information from City of Toronto Municipal Licensing and Standards. For more information on this topic, and other home safety tips, visit the Safe Kids Canada web site, <www.sickkids.on.ca/safekidscanada>.

Heat Hazards: Are your residents at risk?

Warm weather can be a welcome change after a long winter, but high temperatures and humidity can be very dangerous for some. The elderly, the very young, or those on medications or with chronic illnesses are at risk, especially if they live in buildings without adequate cooling.

Landlords can play an important role in protecting their tenants or members from extreme heat. Toronto Public Health has a number of resources for landlords designed to help save lives during periods of very hot weather in Toronto.

Public Health offers education sessions on hot

weather health risks and strategies for landlords. This is a voluntary program, given by Public Health Nurses. To speak to a Public Health Nurse or book a session contact Toronto Health Connection at 416-338-7600.

The Toronto Public Health web site also has a number of materials that you can view or download. Go to <www.toronto.ca/health/beatheat_landlords.htm>

From here you can download information that shows you how to develop a 'Hot Weather Protection Plan', a 'Beat the Heat Slide Show', and a 'Landlord Summer Heat Safety Notice' that you can post in your building.

Housing Connections System Changes

It's Now Easier for Applicants to Manage Their Own File

Housing Connections has recently made some changes to help applicants to the centralized waiting list.



Housing Connections now has an on-line video explaining step-by-step how to apply for subsidized housing in Toronto. You can watch the new Housing Connections video on their web site at <www.housingconnections.ca>.

The interactive system applies eligibility rules while the applicant is applying online for subsidized housing.

Once applicants have an active file with Housing Connections they can access their application online and make changes to their information whenever they want. The new

service increases accessibility, gives applicants more control over their own applications, and allows them to keep it up to date.

With an application number and a personal identification number, applicants can now update address, telephone, contact, and financial information including income and assets. They can also update their housing choices, print their application and housing choices, respond to letters, and view household member information.

For more information, visit the Housing Connections web site at <www.housingconnections.ca>.

Toronto Training Tips

Housing Providers often ask us about training opportunities for their staff, board members and volunteers. **Training Tips** provides practical information on courses, seminars, workshops and resources that are already available and that may be helpful to your organization.

RESIDENTIAL FIRE SAFETY & EMERGENCY PLANNING SEMINAR

This seminar covers the following topics:

- ✓ How to improve the building occupants' fire safety awareness and preparedness
- ✓ How to improve and maintain building features related to life safety, fire suppression, firefighters' access, and limiting the spread of fire and smoke
- ✓ How to improve your supervisory team's emergency response to fire
- ✓ How to implement all aspects of the building's fire safety plan

This seminar can be customized for schedules, location, building type, etc. It's targeted to property managers, building owners, superintendents, volunteers and others who are interested in improving the level of fire safety awareness and Fire Code compliance. The seminar cost is approximately \$200 and includes:

- one day of intensive instruction and interaction,
- useful resources and reference materials,
- opportunities to meet and discuss relevant fire safety issues with fire officials,
- opportunities to interact with peers managing similar properties, and
- certificate of attendance.

For more information, contact Brian Stewart at Toronto Fire. Phone: (416) 338-9390. Email: tfscontinuinged@toronto.ca.



Q & A Corner

Foster Child's Income & Occupancy Standards

Q. I have an RGI household that is currently housing a foster child. How are foster children regarded in terms of determining RGI and under the City's occupancy standards?

A. There are two parts to this question – one deals with occupancy standards, and the other deals with income calculation and RGI subsidy.

If an RGI household has a foster child, the City's occupancy standards as outlined in City Guideline 2003-8 (Revised June 28, 2004) apply. Children of the opposite sex are given separate bedrooms and children of the same sex share a bedroom. If the shared room does not provide 4 square metres per person, then each child would get their own bedroom.

The *Social Housing Reform Act*, Regulation 298 excludes a foster child from the definition of a "child of the household" for the purposes of determining RGI. This means that once the foster child turns 16 you would include any income that they receive in household income, unless it is an excluded form of income. For a list of excluded income see Regulation 298, s. 50 or Section 5 of your RGI Guide.

Provincial Arrears Database is Up and Running!

A database is now available to help service managers and housing providers with rent arrears issues.

The Province-wide Arrears Database was created by the Social Housing Co-ordinated Access Network of Ontario and the Social Housing Services Corporation (SHSC).

It is a centralized system that gathers former tenant rent arrears and makes this information available to participating Access Centres who administer social housing waiting lists. The database allows participating Access Centres to upload their local rent arrears to the system, and use the database to check for arrears from other participating centres when determining eligibility for waiting lists.

Applicants that appear in the database will not be added to waiting lists until full payment is made or re-payment plans are established and remain in good standing.

To create a system that truly captures all rent arrears across the province, Access Centres are encouraged to upload their local arrears to the database.

To learn how to do this and gain access to the database, contact Steve Kyriacopoulos at SHSC. Phone: 416-594-9325 ext. 229.
Email: skyriacopoulos@shscorp.ca.

Last RGI For New Staff Training Before Fall

Wednesday July 11th, 2007
9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

365 Bloor Street East, 15th Floor

To register, call Dayle Cleveland at 416-338-8342.