

Attachment 2

Toronto Community Housing Pest Management Program



Toronto Community Housing's Pest Management Strategy and Program was developed in 2007 to address pest infestations. The Program places particular emphasis on bed bug management, given bed bugs' prominence throughout the city of Toronto in recent years.

The Program focuses on:

- improved building management practices;
- improved systems of pest treatment;
- increased support for tenants and staff; ; and
- fostering of partnerships with community and governmental agencies.

Improved Building Management Practices

Toronto Community Housing employs an Integrated Pest Management approach in all of its communities. The Integrated approach is based on a review of pest biology, best practice research and a set of actions that incorporate staff and tenant education. Notably, the Program emphasizes a chain of accountability, whereby all parties, from tenant, to contractor, to property manager, have their role to play and are accountable for successful bed bug management. The task of the property manager is to ensure that everyone is aware of and sufficiently empowered to perform their roles.

Improved Systems of Pest Management

In 2009, Toronto Community Housing issued a Request for Proposal to create a pool of pre-qualified pest control contractors that managers must hire from for pest related services. Contractors were not selected on the basis of lowest bid, but in regards to their qualifications and experience in areas such as Integrated Pest Management and interaction with vulnerable tenants. Approved contractors must adhere to detailed specifications that include requirements for fitting box spring and mattress covers with bed bug proof enclosures, as well as use of specific, Toronto Community Housing approved treatment methods and products. The new pest management contracts are also outcome based and require contractors to provide 3 month warranties for treatments of units and common areas.

Support for Tenants and Staff

Toronto Community Housing's focus is at present, to build front-line staff capacity to correctly apply pest management program and protocol to buildings. Each building superintendent plays a key role in, first, identifying and addressing bed bug infestations as appropriate to the nuances of the building and tenant population. Secondly, superintendents are a first point of contact for tenants, and have the capacity to provide significant outreach and educational support to tenants in their unit preparations and

treatment. Superintendents have been trained in bed bug management protocols, as well as methods for identifying and addressing bed bug infestations. Staff are also being provided with firm knowledge of the means by which they may assist tenants and link them, where appropriate, to community resources.

Partnerships with Governmental and Community Agencies

Implementation of the Program has further reinforced for staff that approaches to bed bug management must be customized to reflect the unique qualities of each building community. Staff have been working closely with tenants, Public Health and other supportive agencies to prepare comprehensive pest reduction plans, tailored to individual tenant needs and abilities.

Progress to Date

In these preliminary stages of program implementation, Toronto Community Housing has found that where bed bug management plans and protocols were followed, there have been corresponding rates of success in reducing pest infestations. Sealing of unit cracks and crevices has been found to be a very successful method of reducing the spread of bed bugs to neighbouring units. From 2007-2009, staff have sealed approximately 6,394 units portfolio-wide through the Unit Refurbishment Program. As well, approximately 10% of Toronto Community Housing units are sealed per year during turnover of units. Where units have been correctly sealed, staff have noticed an up to 60% decrease in infestation rates.

The challenges Toronto Community Housing has observed to successfully managing bed bug infestations are not dissimilar from those experienced by other organizations. There is a marked need for more supportive services for vulnerable tenants and seniors, which Toronto Community Housing has neither the capacity or resources to directly provide. There are also no straightforward means for continuously monitoring individuals in need of ongoing attention and support. These areas will be partially addressed through Toronto Community Housing's roll out, in 2010, of a comprehensive Mental Health Framework, that will provide staff with the resources and capacity to assist in the referral of vulnerable tenants to supportive agencies. Going forward, Toronto Community Housing is also exploring supporting the development of tenant bed bug preparation social enterprises, for which there is significant community interest and demand.