

CHAPTER 2: OVERVIEW OF THE SOCIAL HOUSING PROGRAM

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City of Toronto's Responsibilities under the *Housing Services Act*

On January 1, 2012, the Province of Ontario revoked the *Social Housing Reform Act, 2000* and replaced it with the *Housing Services Act, 2011* (HSA).

Under the HSA, the duties of the service manager include

- managing a centralized waiting list for people applying for RGI housing, and
- administering *rent-geared-to-income* (RGI) assistance. This is a subsidy from the City that makes up the difference between the amount that the household pays for the unit and the lower of the indexed or actual *market rent* for the unit.

In the HSA, the term *service manager* refers to the municipal level of administration. In Toronto, the City is the service manager. This means that the City of Toronto administers, funds, and sets *local rules*.

The City must follow the rules set out in the HSA and its regulations. Regulation 367/11 deals with RGI administration, including the rules for handling *personal information*.

HSA Responsibilities Performed for the City of Toronto

The HSA allows the City, as service manager, to contract their responsibilities for RGI administration to other organizations. The service manager remains accountable to the Province of Ontario for these responsibilities. [HSA, Section 17]

The City has contracted the management of the centralized waiting list for RGI units to *Housing Connections*. The HSA regulations about the selection of RGI households and the administration of RGI assistance apply to

- non-profit housing developed through provincial programs, and
- non-profit housing co-operatives developed through provincial programs.

The City has contracted the administration of RGI assistance to most *housing providers* through an *RGI Service Agreement*. Toronto Community Housing administers the RGI assistance program for its tenants under its *Operating Agreement* with the City of Toronto.

Under the terms of these agreements, housing providers are required to implement the HSA, its Regulations and local rules.

The HSA regulations for the RGI program also apply to any unit in a building in which households receive RGI assistance under the terms of a Rent Supplement Agreement. This includes

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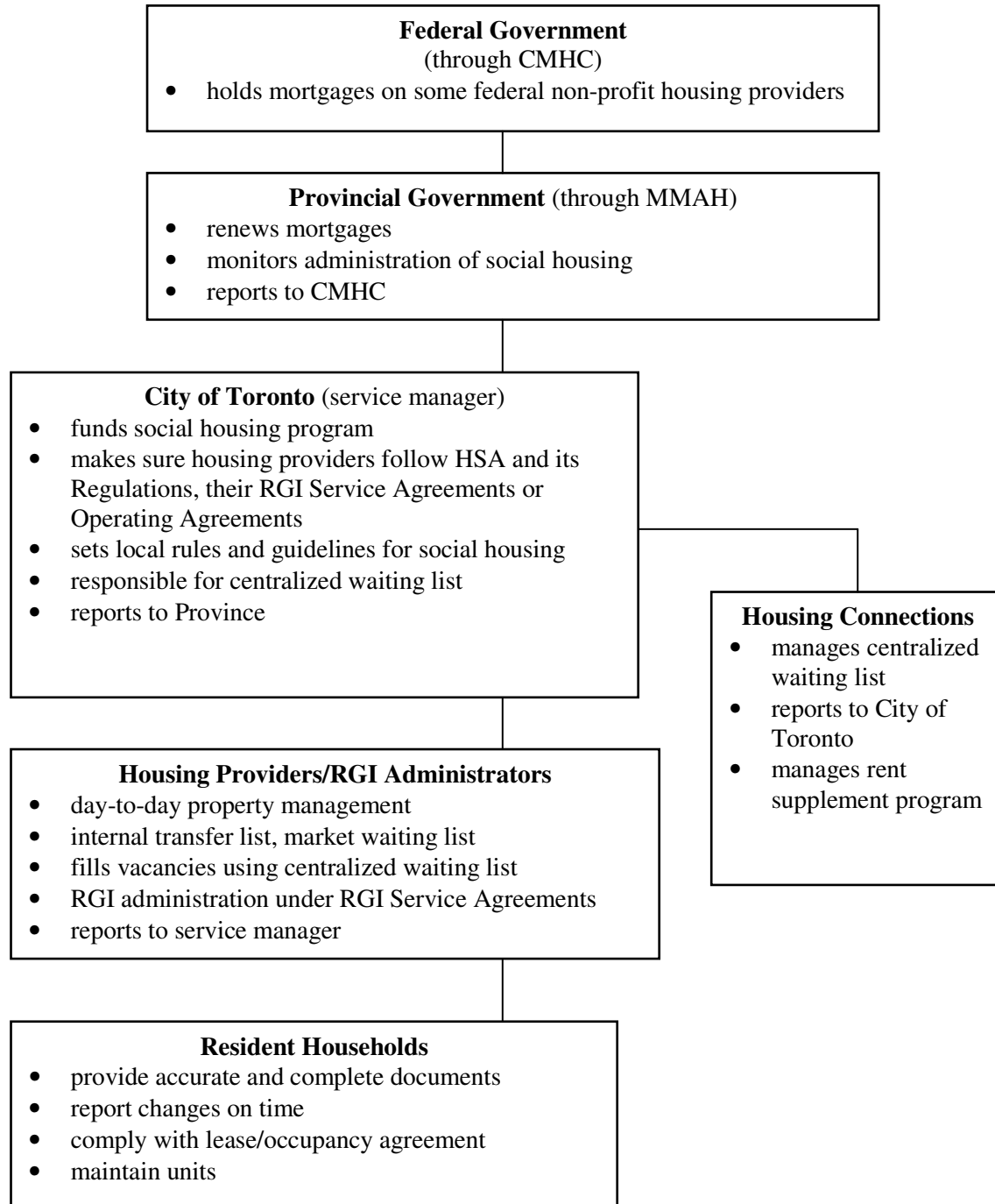
- Rent supplement agreements signed by the City of Toronto and former federal housing providers (under the *National Housing Act* s. 26/27 or 95). In this case, housing providers are responsible for RGI administration.
- Rent supplement agreements signed by the City of Toronto and a non-profit housing provider who has signed an agreement with the City's Affordable Housing Office. In this case, housing providers are responsible for RGI administration.
- Rent supplement agreements signed by Housing Connections and either a non-profit or private building owner who has signed an Agreement with the City's Affordable Housing Office. In this case, Housing Connections administers the RGI program for the units under the agreement.
- Rent supplement agreements signed by Housing Connections and a private landlord. In this case, Housing Connections administers the RGI program for the units under the agreement.

Agreements with the Affordable Housing Office may have been signed under the Canada-Ontario Affordable Housing Program, the Supporting Communities Housing Initiative (SCPI) or the Housing Programs Initiative (HPI).

Note: The HSA **does not apply** to

- federal non-profit and urban native housing. Municipalities administer and fund this housing. However, these housing providers follow their original Operating Agreements.
- Co-ops developed under federal government programs — Section 61, Section 95, and the Federal Co-op Housing Program. The Agency for Co-operative Housing administers and funds this housing.

Who Does What in Social Housing in Toronto



Roles and Responsibilities of Housing Providers

Toronto Community Housing, along with community based co-operatives and non-profit housing providers, provides housing for households paying market rent and geared-to-income rent. Most housing providers also provide housing for people with *special needs*. They offer

- modified units – a unit with special features to help people with physical disabilities.
- support services – services for people who need special help to live independently in the community. To qualify as special needs housing under the HSA, these services must be funded by the province.

A modified unit may also be accompanied by support services.

Some non-profits are *alternative housing providers*. They house (formerly) homeless and hard to house households.

RGI Service Agreement/TCHC Operating Agreement

Under the RGI Service Agreement or TCHC Operating Agreement, housing providers must comply with the HSA and *City Guidelines*. These are local rules that the City is permitted to make or must make under the HSA.

The Board's role is to make sure that the housing provider complies with the RGI Service Agreement or TCHC Operating Agreement and the rules set out in the HSA and its Regulations. Staff usually look after the day-to-day RGI administration. Every staff person who administers RGI must attend training provided by the City. New staff must attend a training course within three months of beginning the job. They must pass a test at the end of the training. All staff must attend follow-up courses as required by the City.

Board members and staff responsible for RGI administration need to be familiar with their corporation's responsibilities under the RGI Service Agreement or TCHC Operating Agreement. Under the agreements, RGI Administrators must

- make sure that a household is eligible for RGI housing
(See Chapter 3 of this Manual)
- decide the size of unit that the household qualifies for
(See Chapter 4 of this Manual)
- determine the household's income and assets
(See Chapter 5 of this Manual)
- calculate how much rent the RGI household will pay
(see Chapter 6 of this Manual)
- review the household's eligibility for RGI assistance and make RGI decisions

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(see Chapter 7 of this Manual)

- manage waiting lists, fill vacant units and allocate RGI assistance
(see Chapter 8 of this Manual)
- manage the persona information of RGI households
(see Chapter 9 of this Manual)

City Guidelines and the RGI Administration Manual - Important Change

The HSA allows service managers to set *local rules* to deal with certain issues. All local rules about the RGI Program are detailed in the RGI Administration Manual.

The Social Housing Unit will announce changes to the RGI Administration manual through City Guidelines.

[City Guidelines](#) are available on the City of Toronto's social housing website.

Always refer to the latest version of the on-line [RGI Administration Manual](#).

Terminology in the RGI Administration Manual

We have identified several different types of organizations that all have responsibilities for administering RGI assistance programs. The RGI Administration manual will refer to all these organizations as RGI Administrators.

Providing Information to the Public

The HSA has rules about information that RGI Administrators must make available to tenants and the public including special needs clients

You must give the public access to

- procedures for applications for rent-geared-to-income assistance, including what information and documents the service manager requires
- local eligibility rules
- occupancy standards

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- the service manager's system for selecting households
- information on the housing project
- information about the provincial eligibility rules
- information about the provincial priority rules

Make this information available so that people can copy it at their own expense.

Housing providers (staff and board) must ensure that their RGI households understand their obligations under the HSA and local rules.

Good Communication

As an RGI administrator, you must provide information to people who live in the project, to applicants, and to the public. You will need to communicate

- with people who speak English as a second language
- with people who find reading difficult
- with people who have difficulty seeing or hearing.

The rules of the program are complicated and strict. You must provide information that will help people understand and follow these rules so that they can get and keep the housing they need.