



County of Wellington

Social Services Department – Housing Services

INFORMATION BULLETIN

Directive Number: 2015-06

Effective Date: November 26, 2015

This Information Bulletin has been developed by the County of Wellington in its role as Consolidated Municipal Services Manager (CMSM) and is intended to be made available to all housing providers.

SUBJECT: Arrears Policy Change

LEGISLATIVE REFERENCES: Housing Services Act, 2011

POLICY REFERENCES: N/A

DIRECTIVE REFERENCES: N/A

ATTACHED: N/A

BACKGROUND:

In 2014, the County of Wellington released the 10 year Housing and Homelessness Plan for Guelph and Wellington titled “A Place to Call Home.” This community plan recommended 8 Goals and 38 individual actions to be taken, with one of these actions being to “Explore options to assist people with arrears/credit issues to access housing.” In June of 2015, the County released the “A Place to Call Home” 2014 Annual Report in which we identify this same action as a next step moving into 2015.

The issue of rent arrears as a barrier to access low-income housing has been raised in relation to rent-geared –to-income (RGI) housing across Ontario. Rent arrears refer to any members of the household owing money to any social housing provider in Ontario for arrears of RGI and damages. In order to address these community concerns, Housing Services staff endeavoured to develop a comprehensive arrears policy for all current and future households on the centralized waiting list, and all tenants in County of Wellington owned rent-geared to-income and affordable housing units.

As the development of the comprehensive arrears policy moved forward it was evident that arrears as a barrier to housing could be addressed fairly quickly on the centralized waiting list. County of Wellington Housing Services proposed and recommended a change to the local arrears eligibility rule on the centralized waiting list that would reduce the impact arrears has on potential households in need in our community.

INFORMATION:

As of November 26, 2015, County of Wellington Council has approved for use an “Eligible Pending Arrears” status for use on the centralized waiting list. The “Eligible Pending Arrears” status provides eligibility on the Centralized Waiting List if any member of the household owes

geared-to-income rent or housing charge arrears and damages to the unit to any social housing provider (federal/ provincial or municipal funded) in Ontario.

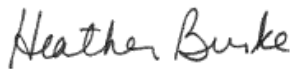
Households may apply and be approved for eligibility on the Centralized Waiting List based on their most recent date of application while owing rent arrears. This household can maintain an "Eligible Pending Arrears" status on the Centralized Waiting List, as long as they continue to maintain all other centralized waiting list eligibility criteria.

While on the Centralized Waiting List, arrears must be paid in full prior to the applicant households' housing preference selections being approved and receiving offers of housing under this status. This time may average two years under a chronological status according to the mid-2015 County Housing Statistics. Applicants would be required to provide proof of arrears repayment before offers of housing could be received.

All new or reactivating applicants applying to the Centralized Waiting List with arrears will have wait times determined by their most recent application date. This eligibility rule change does not allow past applicants deemed ineligible due to arrears to receive backdated original application dates on the Centralized Waiting List.

County of Wellington staff will be working to implement this new arrears policy eligibility criteria and status consistently into practice with all new and reactivating applicants on the centralized waiting list. Staff continue to work on the development of the County's comprehensive arrears policy over the coming months, and any new policy changes will be communicated to any and all parties that are impacted.

Please contact your Housing Advisor if you have any questions.



Heather Burke
Director of Housing