

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Over the past year, the City of Greater Sudbury has taken over direct responsibility for the administration of Greater Sudbury Housing (GSH). The intent of this change is to bring increased accountability, consistency and transparency to housing operations and, at the same time, achieving underlying goals of supporting the development of neighbourhoods in GSH communities, ensuring that tenants have clear avenues to be heard and ensuring that there are clear and consistent policies on tenants' rights and obligations.

This report provides a number of updates on this ongoing transition including the findings from the Greater Sudbury Housing Survey and Town Hall Meetings ('Coffee Chats') held this past February by the Northern Leadership Program Peer Group.

The report also provides an update on the community partnerships that staff have been working on as part of a population health strategy to bring additional programming to tenants within our housing facilities.

## **BACKGROUND**

In September 2018, the transition of the Greater Sudbury Housing Corporation (GSHC) to a quasi-independent operating model was approved. This model transferred the administrative component of the corporation to the municipality while leaving the assets within the GSHC. Greater Sudbury Housing Operations (GSHO) is the newest division in the Community Development Department.

## **DETAILS**

### **1. Tenant Engagement**

Tenant engagement is a key process in providing opportunities to create trust between landlord and tenants. The City recognized the importance of this and initiated a project through the Northern Leadership Program, to have a peer leadership group assist in establishing new relationships with Sudbury Housing properties.

During the month of February, a Peer Leadership Group from the Northern Leadership Program, staff from Greater Sudbury Development Corporation (GSDC) and Greater Sudbury Police Services (GSPS) conducted town hall style meetings (Coffee Chats) with tenants and tenant lead groups in order to engage residents concerning matters that were important to them and to improve the quality of life and place and move markers on the City's Housing Population Health Priority. As part of the strategy for this tenant engagement, a survey was developed and distributed during the Coffee Chats, with additional hard copies made available at properties. A link to an online version of the survey was also available on the Housing and City's websites for approximately six (6) weeks.

The objectives of this tenant engagement were:

- To improve services, programs and other initiatives that will enhance the quality of life and place for tenants;

- To determine the needs of tenants in order for them to maintain a successful landlord and tenant relationship;
- To listen to feedback provided by tenants to improve communication between tenants and landlord; and
- Develop an open and transparent Tenant Complaint Process for tenants living within Greater Sudbury Housing Corporation properties.

The key areas of concern identified by Tenants were:

- safety and security
- health and well being
- property maintenance and beautification
- communication and tenant engagement

Appendix A is a summary report prepared by the Northern Leadership Program outlining the survey results, resident concerns and requests for possible changes to service levels and programs.

## **2. Community Partnership Opportunities**

In the context of the City's commitment to population health priorities and interest in building and strengthening neighbourhoods in GSH complexes, a number of community partnership opportunities have been explored. Highlights of the new partnerships which will be piloted or implemented in the summer and fall of 2019 include:

- The Community Garden at 1920 Paris Street received a donation from Coopers Equipment Rental in the form of volunteer labour and equipment to till the existing garden area and spread new topsoil in preparation for the planting season. Housing operations staff assisted with the tilling of the garden area at 720 Bruce Street and installation of a new garden shed.
- Our Children Our Future (OCOF) will be partnering with Housing Operations to offer a free after-school program in the Multi-use Centre at 1960 Paris beginning this Fall.
- Laurentian University Cool Kids Program which is an anti-bullying and sports activity program that has been developed for use by local schools will be operating a free pilot project one night per week in the Multi-Use Centre at 1960 Paris throughout the summer.
- Partnership with VON and the Health Unit to offer exercise programs to seniors in the common rooms of 1920 Paris, 1960A Paris and 166 Louis Street. Pilot project with Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) and Canadian Mental Health Association for a transitional community support worker based at 720 Bruce Street and whose focus is to support tenants and assist with maintaining positive tenancies.

- Partnership with the NE LHIN, March of Dimes and Coulson Court Non Profit Housing on a Neighbourhood Model of support services for Capreol residents.
- Partnership with Better Beginnings Better Futures (BBBF) to offer Collective Kitchens program at Louis Street and 720 Bruce Ave. A community barbecue was held at Louis Street at the beginning of July including children's activities.
- Participate in monthly Community Safety meetings led by the GSPS, Social Planning Council and NOAH Community Hub. These regular monthly meetings with tenants and tenant led groups at various housing properties have resulted in increased communication regarding housing and safety matters.

These are only a few of the opportunities that staff are working on to bring activities and wellness programs to housing residents free of charge and demonstrate our commitment to population health priorities. Staff will continue to evaluate and respond to future partnership opportunities that arise.

### **3. Tenant Rights and Obligations**

Part of creating a safe and welcoming neighbourhood is ensuring that all tenants are able to experience the quiet enjoyment of their homes. As such, all tenants have an obligation to abide by the terms and conditions outlined in their tenancy agreement. This includes adhering to applicable housing legislation, rules, regulations and City by-laws.

As landlord, GSH has an obligation to ensure that those do not abide by these standards, are dealt with in a clear, fair and consistent manner. Staff utilizes the process outlined below:

If the Housing Corporation receives a complaint that a tenant has failed to comply with the terms and conditions of their lease agreement, housing policies or City by-laws, the following steps are undertaken to review the situation and determine the appropriate course of action:

Step 1 - Validation of the Complaint: The process to validate a complaint may include; obtaining corroborating statements from other witnesses, review of photographic or video surveillance footage, obtaining reports from police, security or by-law personnel, talking to the accused tenant or gathering other relevant information.

Step 2 – If the complaint has been validated, then a Notice of Complaint letter may be issued. A notice of complaint is issued if this is a first offence and the nature of the breach has determined that it is easily correctable by the tenant, The tenant will be provided with an opportunity to respond to the Notice of Complaint.

Step 3 - Issue the applicable Landlord and Tenant Board Notice; The most common notice filed based on tenant complaints is called an N5 Notice to

End your Tenancy for Interfering with Others, Damage or Overcrowding. This notice allows the tenant 7 days to stop the activity and correct the breach or 21 days to elect to move out. If the tenant complies and there are no further issues the process ends. The notice is on file and in effect for 6 months.

Step 4 – If there is a similar or repeat occurrence of the breach of the Tenancy Agreement that was identified in the first N5, then the Landlord issues the tenant a 2<sup>nd</sup> N5 Notice and files an L2 Application to End the Tenancy with the Landlord and Tenant Board.

At the Landlord and Tenant Board there is an opportunity to mediate the situation. If a mediated agreement is reached the result is a minimum of 12 months with no reoccurrences. If mediation is not successful or agreed upon by both parties then the matter proceeds to a hearing.

At the Landlord and Tenant Board hearing the evidence is provided to an adjudicator in the form of documentation, or testimony by staff, witnesses or officers. Subsequent to Landlord and Tenant Board hearing, the adjudicator delivers a decision in writing on the termination of the tenancy. The length of time it takes to receive the order may vary depending on the adjudicator's opinion of the severity of the situation.

The Landlord and Tenant Board does not require a letter to be sent prior to serving the first notice however, this practice displays to the Landlord and Tenant Board that Housing has provided an additional opportunity to correct the issues and therefore the practice of sending letters, helps fulfill the Housing Corporation's duty to accommodate and work with vulnerable tenants.

There are a number of different Landlord and Tenant Board forms and applications available to both Landlords and Tenants. More information on Landlord and Tenant Board forms can be found at <http://www.sjto.gov.on.ca/ltb/forms>.

## **CONCLUSION**

Housing Operations staff has been focused on initiatives to improve the quality of life and place for tenants, which has resulted in positive changes and improvements over the past year. Staff will continue with these efforts to foster positive relationships with tenants and increase the number of partnership initiatives and opportunities.

The next steps in this process include:

1. Further engagement with residents, through surveys, coffee chats and participation in community safety meetings with tenants, tenant lead groups and other Community Partners;
2. Increase opportunities to educate tenants on their responsibilities under their lease during annual fire safety, pest management or other tenant meetings; and

3. Working with Community Partners to bring forth findings from coffee chats, surveys and other programs and initiatives to the Population Health, Safety & Well-Being Panel to assist with outcomes.