Registry *insites*

The Housing Registry — *Providing Options, Opening Doors*

message from the chair

Gerald Rougeau, BC Kinsmen Housing Network

Welcome to the August 2009 issue of *Registry Insites*. I hope that everyone is having a fantastic summer and has had some opportunity for rest and relaxation before moving into the season of back-to-school sales and prepping for winter.

Since the last issue of *Registry Insites*, the council has conducted two surveys. The first survey was targeted to existing housing provider members and the second to non-profit housing providers who do not currently belong to The Housing Registry. Thank you to everyone who took the time to respond to one of these surveys; the information gathered will be invaluable as we set priorities and plan for the future. See the article in this newsletter for some preliminary results.

Our 2009 annual meeting of members will be held on Monday, November 16, 2009 from 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. at the Sheraton Vancouver Airport Hotel in Richmond. If you are attending the BC Non Profit Association Conference or if you are located in the Lower Mainland I encourage you to attend the annual meeting of members, meet the council and other Housing Registry members.

If you have any comments or questions about The Housing Registry and/or *Registry Insites*, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,
Gerald
604-530-2100

2009 elections: The Housing Registry Council

The Housing Registry Council is a body made up of elected or appointed council representatives which advises on the operations of The Housing Registry. The goal of the council is to ensure the success of the overall operations of the Housing Registry.

Last month a call for nominations was mailed out to all Housing Registry members. Nominations are being sought from membership for council representatives to serve on the Housing Registry Council for a two-year term starting January 2010.

Nominations are being sought for representatives as follows:
- 2 (two) Large Housing Provider members
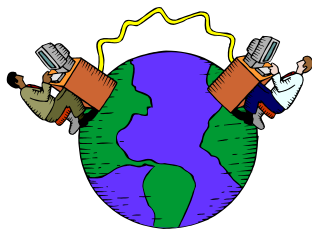- 1 (one) Small Housing Providers
- 1 (one) Community Agency

The nomination package included a list of all members eligible for nomination and a nomination form. Nomination forms are due on **September 11, 2009**.

If you have not already done so, please review the nomination package and consider running for council or nominate another organization that you would like to have representing you at council.

The timeline for the nomination and election process is as follows:
- September 11, 2009 – Nominations due;
- September 18, 2009 – Nominee acceptance/rejection confirmation;
- September 21, 2009 – Election materials distributed to members;
- October 16, 2009 – Voting ballots due;
- October 30, 2009 – Notification members elected or acclimations and appointments;
- November 16, 2009 – Annual meeting of members.

Challenges of a shared database – continued

This article is the third in a series outlining how all users of Housing Connections can ensure that the database is updated. This results in improved services to applicants and provides efficiencies for everyone.

Housing Connections has various functions designed to assist work flow and to facilitate effective information sharing. The case studies provide members with the knowledge and tools required in order to get the most out of the database's various features.

If you have a challenge that you would like to see profiled in a future issue of *Registry* Insites, please let us know at thehousingregistry@bchousing.org.

Situation

I work in The Housing Registry Contact Centre. It is 2:30 p.m. and I just received a panic phone call from an applicant who has an appointment with "Bob" to view a unit at 3 p.m. They are just leaving work and realized they forgot the address and phone number at home and do not have enough time to drive home and make it back in time for the 3 p.m. meeting.

They cannot remember the name of the organization that Bob works for and can't remember being told a building name. They just recently moved to the area and are not familiar enough with the community to know what neighbourhood the building is in. There are no comments on the applicant file that anyone has contacted this applicant within the last two weeks.
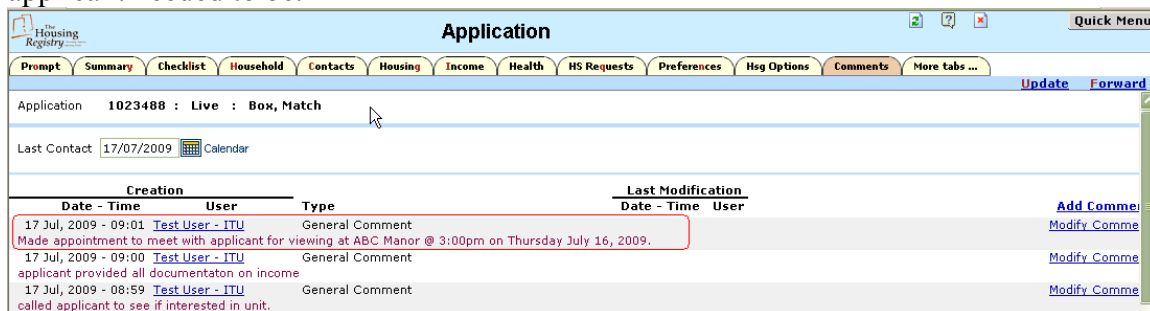
Cause

There are two possible scenarios. The first is that Bob works for a housing provider that does not belong to The Housing Registry. The second is that a Housing Registry member staff person is on their way to meet with the applicant to show them the apartment. When the housing provider made the appointment with the applicant, it was not recorded in the applicant file, either through comments or by entering an offer in the system.

Solution

The Housing Registry staff person will do everything they can to see if they can help the applicant and figure out where they need to be. This can be a long and lengthy process reviewing the names and addresses of all buildings on an applicant's file or in a municipality to see if anything rings a bell. We may even call housing providers with housing in a community to see if they have a "Bob" working for them.

Despite these efforts, in many instances the applicant misses the appointment and then tries to reschedule. This creates extra work for the housing provider and may even result in a vacancy loss.
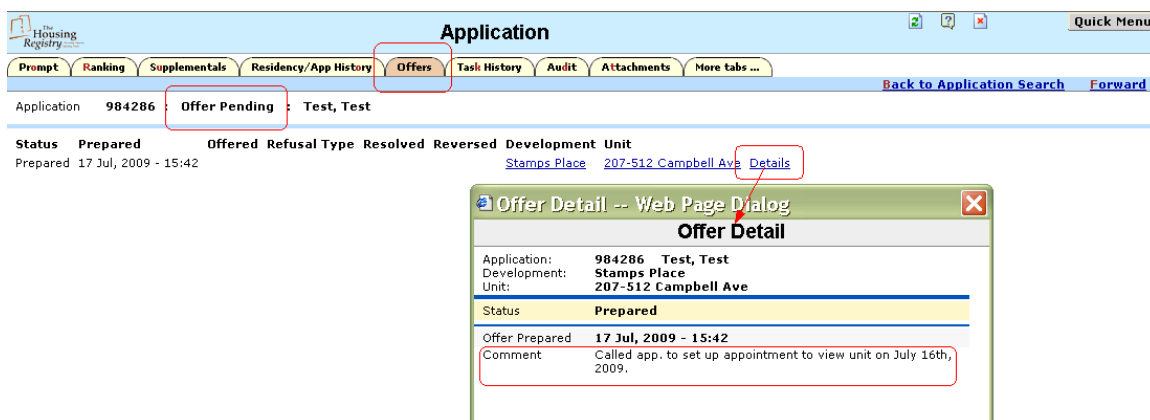
If the housing provider had inserted a brief comment in the applicant file, Housing Registry staff would have been able to immediately see who had made the contact and where the applicant needed to be.

Alternately, if the provider had completed a Prepare Offer on the applicant file, the file status would have changed to "Offer Pending" and the Registry staff person could have tracked down the provider and building through the "Offers" tab.

If you are a Housing Registry member and would like to arrange for additional training, or if you just have a quick question about the system, please e-mail The Housing Registry at thehousingregistry@bchousing.org. Registry staff are happy to arrange training. This can be provided at your office, at the Registry office or even over the computer and telephone.

Housing Registry surveys

Thank you to all Housing Registry members and non-profit housing providers who took the time to complete one of two Housing Registry surveys conducted over the past month. The council appreciates everyone taking the time to provide input during the busy summer vacation period. Surveys are continuing to trickle in; however, we are pleased to provide some preliminary results below.

For a more complete evaluation of the survey results, check out the October edition of *Registry Insites* or come see us at The Housing Registry annual meeting of members on Monday, November 16, 2009 from 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. at the Sheraton Vancouver Airport Hotel in Richmond.

Housing Provider member survey

The first survey was distributed to all existing housing provider members of The Housing Registry with a goal of better understanding what is working and where improvements can be made. In addition, information was gathered to assist in identifying and prioritizing possible business and system changes for the future.

Highlights
- 81 per cent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that membership in The Housing Registry reduced staff time spent responding to applicant enquiries.
- 100 per cent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they can easily get assistance and answers from the Housing Connections HelpDesk.
- Over 86 per cent of respondents stated that receiving information and notices through *Registry Insites* is valuable or very valuable.

Non-profit, non-member survey

The second survey was distributed to non-profit housing providers who do not currently belong to The Housing Registry. The goals of this survey were to raise awareness of The Housing Registry and to identify some of the possible barriers to membership.

Highlights
- Over 90 per cent of respondents have a manual (paper-based) applicant list.
- 44 per cent of respondents were not aware that membership in The Housing Registry is free.
- Over 72 per cent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that applicants are continually contacting them to ask about vacancies, even when they have none.
- Over 43 per cent of respondents stated that it was likely or very likely that they would join The Housing Registry within the next year.

And the winners are!

Congratulations to Hudson's Hope Healthcare & Housing Society and Rainbow's End Housing Co-op which were the lucky winners in the draw for a registration package for the BC Non Profit Housing Association's 17th Annual Conference November 16-18, 2009.

Thank you once again to the BC Non Profit Housing Association and BC Housing for donating the draw prizes.

Applications – Minimum requirements

Ever look at the application form for The Housing Registry and wonder what is the mandatory information required in order for an applicant to be considered for housing?

Ideally all information on the application is provided as this assists with assessing an applicant's current housing need and the type of housing that will best meet their needs. However, in some instances all of the information may not be available or even applicable to all applicants.

When working with applicants to complete Housing Registry application forms, please ensure the application includes the minimum information required as outlined below. This will streamline the process for the applicant and Housing Registry staff, thus ensuring that applicant files can be activated right away and considered for available units.

1. At least one method of contacting the applicant (phone, e-mail, address, contact person with phone number, etc.).
2. Main applicant and co-applicant must be a minimum of 16 years of age.
3. Date of birth must be provided for all household members. (If anyone in the household is pregnant, the due date cannot be in the past.)
4. All active household members must meet Residency Requirements* and individuals not born in Canada must provide proof of status in Canada.
5. Applicant must have selected at least one development for which they meet eligibility requirements. Eligibility requirements are set at the development level and include items such as:
   - Target client group: family, senior, disabled, singles, etc.;
   - Income & asset requirements;
   - Development must include appropriately sized units for the applicants' household;
   - Pet restrictions.

6. Household must currently live in British Columbia.
7. Must specify their current living circumstances, how many bedrooms do they have and what are they paying for rent.
8. At least one previous landlord information. (Character reference may be accepted if they have never rented.)
9. Main applicant, co-applicant and any household members age 19+ must declare all income sources. In addition:
   - Individuals with no income must state this on application form;
   - Household must demonstrate an ability to pay rent. Therefore, if all adults in the household claim "no income", additional information is required such as proof of application for employment insurance or income assistance through the Ministry of Housing and Social Development.
10. Main applicant, co-applicant and any household members age 19+ must sign the application form.

* For more information on Residency Requirements, please read the article "Residency requirements" included in this newsletter.

Residency requirements

Due to the limited number of affordable housing units in the province and the demand for affordable housing, eligibility for affordable housing is limited to current residents of British Columbia. In addition, all members of the household must be Canadian citizens, permanent residents or refugee claimants.

The table below provides details on the documents required by The Housing Registry to support an applicant's status in Canada.

Status	Supporting Documents
Canadian citizen (Born in Canada)	Optional: Copy of Canadian birth certificate*
Canadian citizen (Born outside Canada and parent(s) were Canadian citizens at time of birth.)	Required: Copy of one (1) of the following: • long form Certificate of Canadian Citizenship; or • Certificate of Registration of Birth Abroad
Not born in Canada	Required: Copy of one (1) of the following: ▪ Permanent Resident Card (both sides); ▪ Record of Landing (IMM1000 document) if arrived in Canada before June 28, 2002; ▪ Confirmation of Permanent Residence (IMM5292 document) if arrived in Canada after June 28, 2002; ▪ Refugee Eligibility Determination.

*While individuals born in Canada are not required to provide proof at time of application, they will be required to provide proof in the future at the time they are being considered for an available unit.

Lost or Stolen documents

If an applicant is unable to provide residency documents as they have been lost, stolen or destroyed, they can contact Citizenship and Immigration Canada through its website at www.cic.gc.ca or call 1-888-242-2100 (in Canada only). They will need to download or request an application for replacement documents (IMM 5545). The completed application then needs to be mailed to the nearest Citizenship and Immigration Centre.

Who is not eligible to apply for housing?

Individuals or families in Canada under a private sponsorship agreement are not eligible while the sponsorship agreement is in force. If the sponsor is unable or unwilling to pay, The Housing Registry may consider the application upon receiving documentation supporting that the sponsor is unable or unwilling to support the individual or household.

Anyone who is in Canada on a temporary basis, such as individuals who have come to Canada as a "visitor" or "tourist" or anyone in Canada on a "student" visa will not be eligible to apply for housing.

Member profile: More Than a Roof Mennonite Housing Society

Like many non-profit housing providers, More Than a Roof is growing. The society currently has eight housing sites for families and singles located throughout the province, representing over 350 units, with more in development. That growth was one of the reasons More Than a Roof decided to join The Housing Registry in March 2009.

"It was becoming quite difficult to manage all the applications and to input them into a central database," said May Mah, More Than a Roof's Resident Manager at Lakepark Village in Burnaby. "Having someone else handle applications was our main objective. There are so many other things to take care of and it was hard keeping up with all the applications and the phone calls."

May and her fellow building managers have appreciated being able to defer applicant inquiries to The Housing Registry and have noticed an increase in their own efficiency. May describes the transition to The Housing Registry as smooth. "We pretty much just sent all our applicant files over. We still get some applications in the mail or by fax and we just forward these."

May Mah, More Than a Roof's Resident Manager at Lakepark Village.

BC Housing provided training on the Housing Connections database and handed out contact information should May or her colleagues ever need assistance. "It's pretty straightforward," May said of Housing Connections, "for me, it was just practice and trying things out. I've done some things by trial and error, but you can't wreck the system. I've called BC Housing once for support and I've helped out my colleagues a few times too. Two of us had Mac computers and one had to get a PC; it would be great if Housing Connections could work with Macs too."

May finds the information in Housing Connections to be sufficient for making decisions about filling vacant units. The society maintains complete autonomy regarding which applicants they choose as tenants. "We look first at applicants who indicate they want to live in one of our sites. If we need to look further to find an appropriate applicant, we have a wider pool of people to draw from."

May anticipates further benefits of being a member of The Housing Registry. "We haven't been using the rent calculation functions yet, but we're planning to. Right now, it's up to our property manager to do this during a tenant's rent review. Having resident managers do this work will free up the property manager to do other things and we'll be less dependent on her."

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