The Housing Registry
Providing Options, Opening Doors

Registry *insites*

message from the chair

Gerald Rougeau, BC Kinsmen Housing Network

It's hard to believe another year has passed. I would like to thank all members for your patience and assistance as The Housing Registry introduced a number of changes in 2008. Not only were the new application and optional supplemental forms launched, significant computer system changes were also brought in. Anyone who has gone through a computer system implementation knows that there are always a few hiccups to keep everyone on their toes.

The Housing Registry staff also took on the unprecedented task of contacting every applicant on the Registry to make sure their applications were updated with the additional information being collected on the new application form. This ensures all applicants are on a level playing field. As of January, over 90 per cent of applicant files have been updated and the plan is to have all files amended by the end of March 2009.

The next challenge is making sure the applicant data is maintained. We all share responsibility for ensuring information is up to date and accurate; see the article *"Challenges of a shared database"* in this issue for some helpful hints on how we can work together to make sure applicant files are properly maintained.

This year the council is planning to focus on two primary areas. First and foremost is communication with our membership. As one of our communication tools, *Registry Insites*

will be published quarterly. If you have an item you would like to see in a future issue, please let me know.

Secondly, the council is planning to conduct a survey of potential Registry members to identify some of the barriers to membership. This will help us focus our marketing efforts and assist in identifying potential changes to Registry services. Our goal is to increase our flexibility to meet the needs of many organizations, while still providing an invaluable service to applicants by streamlining the process to apply for housing.

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
kinhome@uniserve.com

articles

Meet The Housing Registry Council

The Housing Registry Council consists of representatives from housing providers (three members from distinct large providers and two members from distinct small providers), the BC Non-Profit Housing Association (BCNPHA), the Co-operative Housing Federation of BC (CHF BC), community associations, and BC Housing.

2009/10 Council Members

Bev Bailey

Bev is the Housing Assistant for Greater Victoria Housing Society (formerly Victoria Senior Citizens Housing Society). Bev has been with GVHS for five years; prior to that, she worked with Pacifica Housing. Bev has been working with the Registry since it was first introduced to the non-profit sector. "The Registry is an important tool and the more it is used and shared the more valuable it will be to everyone. I look forward to being more directly involved with this process."

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bbailey@greatervichousing.org

Doug Creba, Vice-Chair

Doug is a Tenant Support Worker and Property Manager for Nanaimo Affordable Housing Society. "When I was first introduced to the Registry system it made so much sense I felt I could do a lot to encourage greater participation." Doug participates as a representative from a small housing provider.

250-714-0172
doug@nahs.ca

Shyla Cuddeford

Shyla is a Housing & Income Supports Outreach Advocate for Newton Advocacy Group Society. She joined the society in June 2007. Shyla advocates for people dealing with poverty-related matters ranging from Income Assistance appeals, finding and sustaining adequate housing and representations at Dispute Resolution Hearings. She provides outreach services through various partner agencies in Surrey and surrounding areas and is also a member of the Advocacy Outreach Group. "Belonging to The Housing Registry and being an Access Point gives our clients more opportunities to find affordable and adequate places to live."

604-596-2338
Shyla_nags@hotmail.com

Kate Joy

Kate is Senior Property Manager at Capital Region Housing Corporation where she has worked for 18 years. The Capital Region Housing Corporation was established in 1982 by the Capital Regional District to build and manage housing for low and moderate income families, seniors and persons with special needs. Membership in The Housing Registry and participation on the council assists the Housing Corporation with its commitment to improving housing opportunities for the citizens of the Capital Regional District in the years to come.

250-388-6422
kjoy@crd.bc.ca

Darren Kitchen

Darren Kitchen is the Government Relations Director at CHF BC. He is responsible for political liaison, election campaign efforts, leaky co-ops and new co-op development. CHF BC has been involved with The Housing Registry since its inception and has an appointed seat on the council. Active participation on the council is important for CHF BC in order to ensure The Housing Registry takes into consideration the unique needs of co-operative housing developments.

604-879-5111 (ext. 144)
dkitchen@chf.bc.ca

Jag Klair

Jag is Supervisor, Affordable Housing Programs, Metro Vancouver Housing Corporation. She joined the housing team at Metro Vancouver in 2002. Jag sits on the Housing Registry Council as she believes that quality affordable housing is the foundation of strong, safe and healthy communities.

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jklair@metrovancouver.org

Gerald Rougeau, Chair

Gerald is the BC Kinsmen Housing Network's Executive Director and is serving his second term as the council's chair. When asked why he sits on the Housing Registry council and is a champion for the Registry, Gerald replied, "To make a difference for our children, as they are our future and our future leaders."

604-530-2100
kinhome@uniserve.com

Erin Smandych, Secretary

Erin is BC Housing's Manager, Applicant Services. Erin joined BC Housing in 1990 as a Housing Assistant working with applicants. Now as the Manager of Applicant Services, she sees every day how The Housing Registry assists applicants and streamlines processes for housing providers. Erin is the BC Housing representative on the council and serves as secretary to the council.

604-439-4735
esmandych@bchousing.org

Julia Sundell

Julia is the Administrator at Skeena Place, an assisted living development that opened in July 2006. She also sits on the board of the BC Non Profit Housing Association where she holds the position of Northern Director. BCNPHA has been a key partner in the Registry since its inception over 10 years ago; Julia is BCNPHA's representative. "I sit on the council because I believe that while the Housing Registry is an excellent tool for some types of housing providers, it requires some modifications to be beneficial for all types of housing providers."

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skeenaplace@bulkley.net

Challenges of a shared database

We can all relate to the frustrations of trying to contact an applicant and the phone number being out of service. Or what about playing phone tag with an applicant only to find they are no longer interested in the areas listed on their file?

If it isn't difficult enough that applicants don't always notify us of changes in a timely manner, it is even more frustrating when you can see that others have had the same problem… on the same file!

There are many benefits to a centralized/shared database. However, there are also a number of challenges. Everyone who accesses the database has a role to play in updating it. Each step that is missed on an applicant file can result in lost productivity for multiple housing

providers. It is important to remember that all these challenges would exist with a decentralized system. In fact, many of the challenges would be worse as there is little to no opportunity for information sharing.

Outlined below are a number of the challenges that we have heard from Housing Registry members and Registry staff along with the potential causes and steps for all users to take to avoid these pitfalls in the future.

Situation	I called Mrs. Smith to offer her a unit last week. Today when I look at her file I see that ABC Housing Society has housed her. Now I need to start again and will incur vacancy loss.
Cause	If comments were not made in the applicant file, or the "Prepare Offer" functionality was not used, ABC Housing Society would not be aware of the pending offer.
Solution	Always make comments in the applicant file whenever there is contact. Particularly if an offer is being made, or if the applicant has been asked to take action for you. In the case of making an offer, utilize the 'Prepare Offer" functionality in Housing Connections. This will change the applicant file status to "Offer Pending" – then they will not come up on other members' lists.

Situation	Last month I tried to call Mr. Brown but his phone numbers were not in service. I entered this in the comments; why is he still coming up on my list?
Cause	Registry staff do not review or monitor comments made by members. Therefore, unless something else triggers Registry staff to review the file, they are unaware that the contact information is out of date.
Solution	If you are unable to reach an applicant, make your comments and then send The Housing Registry an e-mail. From the Quick Menu in the top right hand corner of your screen, select "E-mail BC Housing." If done from the applicant file, the subject line will be populated with the file number. Include in the e-mail relevant details such as "phone number not in service."

Registry staff will then put the file into renewal status and the applicant will be sent a letter requesting contact for a full file update. |

Situation	Applicant came up on my list for a Rent Geared to Income (RGI) unit. The comments show that XYZ Housing Society received proof of income last month and told the applicant that they are over income. Why are they still coming up for RGI units?
Cause	XYZ Housing Society failed to update the income information in the Income tab and/or failed to forward the income information received to The Housing Registry office.
Solution	Registry staff do not monitor comments. Members need to update the applicant's income information in the Income tab in the database. This would

have automatically excluded the applicant from RGI units. If proof was also received, the member needs to forward the income verification to The Housing Registry office. That way even if they had not updated the file, Registry staff would have entered the information and ensured that the applicant was appropriately listed for developments with market units.

Situation	I talked to this applicant last month and they told me that they were not interested in this building. Why do they keep coming up on my list?
Cause	The applicant preferences were not updated to remove the development.
Solution	If the applicant has selected the specific development, it can be removed by selecting the "delete" link to the right of the development name on the Preference Screen. If the applicant has selected anywhere in the municipality you can select the development and specify to "exclude" that specific development.

Remember, we all share responsibility for updating and maintaining applicant files as we work with them. The Housing Registry database is our database and we need to make every effort to keep the information current and accurate.

If you need assistance performing any of the above functions, check out the Housing Connections on-line user manual by selecting the **?** button in Housing Connections.

If you have specific questions you would like to see in future issues of *Registry Insites*, please let us know at thehousingregistry@bchousing.org.

2008 in review

2008 was a busy year for The Housing Registry.

February	A burst pipe over Erin Smandych's desk flooded the main Housing Registry office, displacing the contact centre and all Housing Registry staff. The contact centre was temporarily relocated and remaining staff dispersed to various locations while the water was extracted.
	Needless to say everyone was thankful for electronic applicant files which were unaffected by the flood.
March	After two years of research, consultation and design, the new Housing Registry application and optional supplemental form were introduced.
April	Registry staff begin the process of contacting all existing applicants to conduct file updates based on the new application form.

May	Council members delivered Registry presentations at BCNPHA's regional networking sessions in Nanaimo, Cranbrook and Kelowna.
July	Updates to The Housing Registry database were launched. Enhanced matching between applicant and development data is now available.
July & August	Online training provided to Housing Registry members on changes to the database – 21 separate course totaling 84 hours of training.
September	Additional online training courses made available for members.
November	Housing Registry AGM and workshops on The Housing Registry delivered at the BCNPHA conference.
December	Over 80 per cent of all applicant files have been updated based on the new Housing Registry application form.

And if that wasn't enough – check this out.

Housing Registry Contact Centre	Jan – Mar	Apr – June	Jul – Sep	Oct – Dec	Total
Inquiry line calls	16,095	18,211	17,147	14,629	66,082
Applications Received	2,897	2,495	2,127	1,905	9,424
Applicants Housed	423	448	497	467	1,835

statistics

Changing demand for housing

Over the past few years the number of active applicants and tenants requesting transfers has been slowly declining. The table below shows changes to the numbers on The Housing Registry over the past few years.

March 2006	March 2007	March 2008	January 2009
15,343	14,388	13,932	9,909

Without an in-depth analysis of individual applicant files, it is difficult to know what the main contributing factors were to the decline in applications. However, they may include:

➔ Increased housing provider membership in The Housing Registry resulting in applicant files being updated on a timelier basis when they are housed with a non-profit or co-operative housing provider.

➔ New eligibility criteria introduced in 2008; some applicants may not meet the new definition of family or persons with a disability.

➔ A strong BC economy over the past couple of years resulting in applicants who no longer require subsidized housing and dropping off the Registry or tenants moving out of subsidized housing to the private market, freeing up a subsidized unit for an applicant on the Registry.

➔ An enhanced database providing more information on which developments may meet an applicant's needs in the areas selected. This allows applicants to make more informed decisions if they wish to remain on the Registry.

➔ During the applicant update process, some applicants may temporarily drop off the list if they have not responded to a request for a file update. Their files may be reactivated at a later date.

➔ Doubling of the Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters budget in October 2005.

➔ Introduction of the Rental Assistance Program in October 2006.

It is important to remember that the numbers fluctuate on a monthly basis as new applicants apply and existing applicant files drop off for a variety of reasons (e.g.: income increased and no longer need subsidized housing; left province; moved to long-term care; received a subsidized unit; found a suitable unit in the private market, etc).

The table below shows a breakdown of the 9,909 files by household type.

Family	Persons with disabilities	Seniors (age 55 +)	Wheelchair Modified	Singles	Rent Supplements	Transfers[1]	Pending Applications	Total
4,090	1,816	2,292	256	517	34	893	11	9,909

[1] Transfers are current tenants residing in subsidized housing who have an approved request to transfer on The Housing Registry. This includes over and under housed, medical and social needs.

For detailed information on eligibility requirements for The Housing Registry and definitions of each household type, please visit www.bchousing.org/housing-assistance.

Approximately 20 per cent of all applicants' files (approximately 2,000 in the province) fall into the highest category of housing need. This includes applicants who are facing a severe risk to health and safety or those with serious health, medical or social needs who are living in seriously substandard accommodation, or are transitioning from a supported living situation to a more independent situation.

Please let us know if there are any Housing Registry statistics that you would like to see published in future issues of *Registry Insites*.