
HOUSING CHARGE ASSISTANCE POLICY

PURPOSE

- To set out members' rights and responsibilities for receiving housing charge assistance, and
- To establish a framework for:
 - Managing and allocating the subsidy pool and subsidy surplus fund in a fair and consistent way in compliance with the CMHC operating agreement
 - Monitoring and assessing the impact of the policy application on all member households and on the economic viability of the co-op, and
 - Planning for changes in subsidy and housing charges in response to household changes.

POLICY

THE PROCESS FOR MEMBERS AND THE CO-OP:

1. The co-op will verify household income and assess housing charges (income testing) once per year and when needed as households report changes in income during the year (in-year charges) or make new applications for assistance.
 2. Households applying for assistance must complete the co-op's housing charge assistance application form and provide the required proof of household income.
 3. Households that do not submit an application form will be assessed the maximum housing charge for the unit.
 4. The co-op may ask for further proof of income as required.
 5. Management staff will:
 - a. Verify that applicants qualify for assistance
 - b. Calculate the amount required for each applicant
 - c. Notify the applicant of the assessed housing charge, and
 - d. Administer the subsidy waiting list.
 6. After the annual income testing, the co-op will give 30 days' notice of the assessed housing charge.
 7. The co-op may stop providing housing charge assistance to a household for any or all of the following reasons:
 - a. An increase in income disqualifies the household
 - b. Failure to report increases in household income at the annual income testing
 - c. Willful falsification of the household charge assistance application form or proof of income
 - d. Failure to abide by the housing charge assistance policy.
 8. Any member denied assistance or disputing the amount of assistance granted may appeal the decision to the board. The decision of the board is final.
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PLANNING AND MANAGING HOUSING CHARGE ASSISTANCE

9. The co-op will use the annual income testing and estimate of members' changing needs and demographics to develop annual longer-term plans for:
 - a. Use of housing charge assistance
 - b. Ability to fill vacant units with members requiring assistance, and
 - c. Possible ways to create more funds for the subsidy pool.
10. The co-op will monitor the subsidy status reports monthly. The Treasurer will advise the board of the amount of funds in the subsidy pool and the amount of money held in the subsidy surplus fund. The Treasurer will also recommend levels to be maintained in the subsidy funds to meet anticipated needs.
11. If there is not sufficient subsidy available, the co-op will consider changes to the housing charge assistance policy to limit use of the subsidy and/or to create more funds for the subsidy pool. Any changes to the assessed housing charges will take effect at the regular annual time.

ASSESSING HOUSING CHARGES:

12. Currently the co-op uses 34% of gross annual household income to calculate assessed housing charges. If there is not sufficient subsidy however, this percentage may be changed with the approval of membership.
13. Member households receiving social assistance or family benefits shall pay the shelter component of the assistance or family benefit with adjustments for utilities (refer to Schedule B of the CMHC operating agreement).

IN-YEAR APPLICATIONS AND CHANGE IN INCOME:

14. Members must advise the co-op of any change in source of income or any increase in gross household income of more than \$200 within 30 days of the increase.
15. Members may advise the co-op of any decrease in gross household income of more than \$100 so that their housing charge may be decreased, provided that there are sufficient funds in the subsidy pool.
16. The co-op will review the amount of change in income referred to in Point # 14 and Point # 15 at the time it is received.
17. The co-op will provide notice of any change in housing charge resulting from a mid-year change in income.
 - a. For an increase in housing charge: 30 days' notice, the time being calculated from the last day of the month in which the income increase occurred. For example, if a household's increase in income was in mid-September, the housing charge increase would take effect November 1.

- b. For a decrease in housing charge: the decrease will take place on the 1st day of the month after the change is reported.
18. When households apply for assistance mid-year, the co-op will allocate assistance:
- a. Only if sufficient funds are available in the subsidy pool or subsidy surplus fund, and
 - b. On a first-come, first-served basis.

SUBSIDY WAITING LIST

19. When there are not sufficient funds in the subsidy pool and households paying full housing charges apply for assistance, the co-op will establish a subsidy waiting list of members who are eligible for assistance.
20. Households on the subsidy waiting list will receive assistance when it comes available. Assistance will be given in the following order of priority:
- a. Households that comply with the over- and under-housing policy, and
 - b. On a first-come, first-served basis.