



ST. THOMAS - ELGIN
ONTARIO WORKS
423 Talbot Street
St. Thomas, Ontario
N5P 1C1



Local Priority Policy for applicants on the Centralized Waiting List

Effective April 19, 2004

I. Local Priority for *In Situ Applicants**

As permitted under legislation, the City of St. Thomas establishes the following local priority for *in situ* market tenants or members:

Eligible market rent households currently residing with social housing providers may apply for rent-geared-to-income assistance through the Co-ordinated Access Centre, with the application back-dated to the date the household first moved into the social housing provider's facilities and at which the household has resided consecutively up to the time of this application under this local priority.

Rent-geared-to-income assistance will be provided to eligible in situ applicants under this local priority policy for their current units with their current housing providers only.

II. Objectives of this policy

The purpose of this policy is to:

- address concerns put forward by social housing providers in St. Thomas and Elgin County and by tenants and members concerning priority assistance for *in situ* market households affected by sudden loss of income,
- recognize the viewpoint widely held by social housing providers that their role involves advocacy and support for all residents of their social housing communities, including market and geared-to-income residents,
- ensure fair and balanced consideration of the needs of applicants coming from both private sector rental units and those who currently reside with social housing providers in St. Thomas and Elgin County,
- minimize evictions of current households for rent arrears due to unexpected loss of income,
- establish criteria and procedures to determine the eligibility of *in situ* priority applicants,
- ensure that the process of access to rent-geared-to-income assistance is not abused,
- ensure that the rules and regulations for processing rent-geared-to-income applications are consistent for all applicants.

III. Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible under this local priority, applicant households must

- have experienced a significant and unexpected change in circumstances that affects their ability to pay market rents, such as a change or loss of income or a loss of spouse,
 - meet all eligibility requirements for rent-geared-to-income assistance,
 - meet local Occupancy Standards in their present units,
 - have no record of any housing violations (such as excessive noise, wilful damage to unit, chronic non-compliance with the housing provider's by-laws or policies),
 - apply for Employment Insurance (EI) benefits, if eligible,
 - have no prior history of rent arrears
- (Note: If the household has current rent or housing charge arrears as a result of the significant change in income which is the subject of this policy, a repayment plan for the arrears is required).

IV. Procedures

When a housing provider wishes to utilize this local priority, the following steps will be taken.

1. The housing provider will complete an “*In Situ* Priority Verification Form” (attached).
2. The housing provider will advise the *in situ* household to take the form to the Co-ordinated Access Centre to apply for rent-geared-to-income assistance under this local priority.
3. The *in-situ* priority household applicant must complete a new “Application for Subsidized Housing” form.
4. Eligibility will be assessed and applications will be processed in the usual manner, in accordance with the “Centralized Waiting List Procedures” manual.
5. If eligible, the applicant's name will be added to the Centralized Waiting List.
6. The application will be back-dated to the date the household first moved into the housing provider's complex and at which the household has resided consecutively up to the time of local priority application.
7. The *in situ* priority application cannot displace any provincially mandated Special Priority applicants on the waiting list. SPP applicants continue to rank at the top of the waiting list.
8. The housing project selected will be the housing project at which the household currently resides. (Any other housing selections may not be backdated.)
9. If the application is ranked at the top of the provider's chronological subsidiary waiting list as a result of this *in situ* priority, Access Centre staff will immediately notify the housing provider.
10. The effective date that rent-geared-to-income assistance may begin is the date the *in situ* priority applicant reaches the top of the housing provider's chronological subsidiary waiting list.
11. This local priority policy does not absolve housing providers from the obligation to maintain prescribed geared-to-income and market levels under their Target Plans.

* *In situ*, in this policy, refers to current tenants of non-profit social housing providers and current members of co-operative housing providers in St. Thomas and Elgin County under programs administered by the City of St. Thomas.

**Market rent tenants/members
applying for rent-geared-to-income assistance**

IN SITU PRIORITY VERIFICATION FORM

(to be completed by Housing Provider)

Housing Provider: _____

Name of Tenant/Member: _____
(surname) *(first name)*

Date of Birth: _____ Current Bedroom Size: _____

Date of move-in: _____ Address/Unit #: _____
 (most recent)

(Circle one)

Does the tenant/member currently meet the Occupancy Standards? Yes No

Does the tenant/member generally have good rent paying habits? Yes No

Does the tenant/member have any current arrears in payments? Yes No

If yes, please explain:

Is there a repayment plan in place for the current arrears? N/A Yes No

Does the tenant/member have any record of any housing violation? Yes No

What is the reason for this *in situ* priority application?

Job loss _____ Lay-off _____ Death of spouse _____

Other (describe) _____

Additional Comments (optional):

Social Housing Provider Signature

Date