

St. Thomas – Elgin Social Housing

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Bulletin: #07-02	✓ Public Housing	✓ Federal section 26 & 27
Subject: ARREARS DATABASE	✓ Rent Supplement	✓ Provincial Reformed
Date: June 7, 2007	✓ Federal section 95	✓ Municipal Non-Profit

The City of St. Thomas has signed an agreement to participate in a province-wide web-based Arrears Database developed and hosted by Social Housing Services Corporation (SHSC). Local implementation of the system is expected to take place this summer. The website will be secure and accessible only to authorized Access Centre or Service Manager staff.

The database will assist the Co-ordinated Access Centre with determining eligibility for social housing by providing a tool for tracking applicants' rent and damage arrears. Under the *Social Housing Reform Act*, Access Centre staff must ensure that applicants have no outstanding former tenant arrears of rent or damages with another social housing provider, or, if so, that there is a repayment plan in place and in good standing.

Therefore, all social housing providers in St. Thomas and Elgin County are directed to forward former tenant or member arrears information to the Access Centre for uploading of this information into the province-wide Arrears Database. Housing Providers should submit arrears information for at least the past two years (or more if the Provider still shows the arrears as active and collectible).

The following information must be submitted to the Access Centre by July 13, 2007. These are mandatory fields:

- housing provider name
- project name
- tenant/member name(s)
- tenant address where the arrears were incurred (including unit number)
- tenant/member date(s) of birth and/or Social Insurance Number(s)
- total arrears
- whether or not there is a repayment plan (yes or no)
- whether or not the repayment plan is in good standing (yes or no)
- whether or not the tenant/member has misrepresented income (yes or no)

If possible, the information should be provided in Excel format.

Housing Providers should notify the Access Centre of any changes at least monthly, in order to ensure the arrears information in the database is accurate. For example, when a former tenant or member has fully repaid his or her arrears, the Access Centre should be notified so staff can remove the name from the Arrears Database.

Housing Providers are advised to amend their Release and Consent Forms (attached to standard leases or Occupancy Agreements) as well as the standard Notice of Rent Adjustment to include a clause stating that arrears information will be shared with Access Centres across the province once the lease or Occupancy Agreement is terminated. Tenants or members should be informed verbally about the Province-Wide Arrears Database system when the consent form is signed as well when tenancy begins and ends.

The main benefits of the Arrears Database are:

1. For Access Centre staff - to provide a tool for eligibility screening. Applicants with arrears will be more easily identified and will not be eligible for placement on the waiting list until arrears have been paid or a repayment plan is in place and is in good standing.
2. For Housing Providers – better tracking will result in an increased likelihood that former tenants or members will repay arrears or enter into repayment plans with Housing Providers in order to qualify for subsidized housing.

Additional procedures and forms may be developed over the coming months to assist Housing Providers with the timely submission of arrears information.

The database will only be as good as the information entered into it. The full co-operation of all Housing Providers is appreciated.

