

**Subject: Update to Local Rules under the Housing Services Act, 2011**

**File Number: ACS2023-CSS-GEN-004**

**Report to Community Services Committee on 23 May 2023**

**and Council [14 June 2023](#)**

**Submitted on [May 11, 2023](#) by Clara Freire, Interim General Manager – Community and Social Services**

**Contact Person: Paul Lavigne, Director, Housing Services**

**613-580-2424 extension 43206, [courriel: paul.lavigne@ottawa.ca](mailto:paul.lavigne@ottawa.ca)**

**Ward: Citywide**

**Objet : Mise à jour des règles locales en vertu de la loi de 2011 sur les services de logement**

**Dossier : ACS2023-CSS-GEN-004**

**Rapport au Comité des services communautaires et de protection**

**le [23 mai 2023](#)**

**et au Conseil le [14 juin 2023](#)**

**Soumis le 11 mai 2023 par Clara Freire, Directrice générale par intérim – Services sociaux et communautaires**

**Personne ressource : Paul Lavigne, Directeur, Services de logement**

**613-580-2424 poste 43206, email: [paul.lavigne@ottawa.ca](mailto:paul.lavigne@ottawa.ca)**

**Quartier : À l'échelle de la ville**

#### **REPORT RECOMMENDATION(S)**

**That the Community Services Committee recommend Council approve the Local Rules, as updated and set out in full in Document 1.**

#### **RECOMMANDATION(S) DU RAPPORT**

**Que le Comité des services communautaires recommande au Conseil**

**d'approuver la nouvelle version des règles locales, présentées intégralement au document 1.**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **Assumption and Analysis**

Pursuant to the *Housing Services Act, 2011*, the City of Ottawa, in its role as Service Manager, has the responsibility to establish local policies, known as Local Rules, regarding certain aspects of the administration of Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI) assistance. Local Rules are approved by Council and pertain to: Eligibility, Occupancy Standards (unit sizes), Priority (priority access to RGI assistance), Wait List Systems and Service Manager Consents.

The City periodically reviews the Local Rules as a result of changes to the legislation or consultations with stakeholders. Council last approved the Local Rules in 2017 following extensive sector consultations. Having worked with the twenty-six (26) Local Rules from 2017 to present, staff are now seeking Council-approval to update the Local Rules to reflect recent legislative changes and requirements. Since 2017, changes have been introduced by the Province to simplify and streamline the administration of RGI assistance and to improve consistency of rules among municipalities and between government issued housing benefit programs.

In particular, staff are recommending that Council approve nine (9) changes to the 2017 Local Rules. The nine (9) changes are being proposed for one of three reasons:

1 – Legislated and Mandatory. These updates are required to reflect recent legislative changes. These pertain to the number of offers (while over-housed and while on the wait list) and the removal of biennial reviews for households in receipt of Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP).

2 – Legislated and Discretionary. These updates are proposed due to new discretionary powers given to the service managers in the legislation. These pertain to income and asset limits, the timeline to pursue income and report changes, and in-year reviews.

3 – Staff-Initiated Refinements. This recommended update will refine current rules based on feedback received and experience over the past five (5) years and are not the result of recent changes to the legislation. Staff is proposing one refinement pertaining to extending the time a household has to select community preferences on the Centralized Wait List (CWL) when determined to be over-housed.

Document 1 contains the 2023 Local Rules in their entirety, with the nine (9) changes recommended by staff being noted for ease of reference.

### **Financial Implications**

There are no financial implications associated with the report recommendations.

### **Public Consultation and Input**

Housing Services stakeholders were consulted on the development of the income and assets limits which are legislated with a discretionary aspect. Thirty-two (32) stakeholders reviewed and provided feedback in the form of an online survey completed in December 2022 and January 2023. Stakeholder representation included social housing providers, sector organizations, property management firms, social support agencies and housing advocacy organizations.

For the remainder of the changes, staff relied on ongoing work with fifty-one (51) social housing providers and oversight of the review of decisions requested by households applying for, or in receipt of, Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI) assistance. Based on this, staff are proposing the additional changes, where there is discretion, to further streamline the administration of RGI assistance and provide additional time for households to pursue income, report changes, and select communities when over-housed.

## **RÉSUMÉ**

### **Hypothèses et analyse**

La *Loi de 2011 sur les services de logement* oblige la Ville d'Ottawa, en tant que gestionnaire de services, à établir des politiques, appelées « règles locales », concernant certains aspects de l'administration de l'aide sous forme de loyer indexé sur le revenu (LIR). Ces règles, qui sont soumises à l'approbation du Conseil, portent sur l'admissibilité, les normes d'occupation (grandeur de logement), la priorité (priorité d'accès à l'aide sous forme de LIR), les systèmes de liste d'attente et le consentement du gestionnaire de services.

La Ville révisé ses règles locales périodiquement, soit en cas de modifications législatives ou à la suite de consultations avec le milieu. La plus récente version de ses règles locales, qui sont actuellement au nombre de 26, a été approuvée par le Conseil en 2017 à la suite de vastes consultations sectorielles. Le personnel demande maintenant au Conseil d'approuver une nouvelle version de ces règles, révisées à la

lumière des récentes modifications et exigences législatives. Depuis 2017, la province a introduit des changements dans le but de simplifier et de rationaliser l'administration de l'aide sous forme de LIR, et afin d'uniformiser les règles d'une municipalité à l'autre et entre les programmes gouvernementaux de prestations de logement.

Plus particulièrement, le personnel recommande au Conseil d'approuver neuf (9) changements aux règles locales de 2017, lesquels changements sont proposés pour l'une ou l'autre des trois raisons suivantes :

1 – Changement obligatoire découlant de la loi : doit être apporté en conséquence de modifications législatives. Concerne le nombre d'offres (pour les ménages qui occupent un logement trop grand et qui sont sur la liste d'attente) et l'élimination des révisions aux deux ans pour les ménages bénéficiant du Programme ontarien de soutien aux personnes handicapées (POSPH).

2 – Changement découlant de la loi, pouvoir discrétionnaire : proposé suivant les nouveaux pouvoirs discrétionnaires conférés par la loi aux gestionnaires de services. Concerne le seuil de revenus et la valeur maximale des biens, le délai pour obtenir un revenu et déclarer les changements, et les révisions en cours d'année.

3 – Amélioration suggérée par le personnel : proposée afin de peaufiner les règles à la lumière de la rétroaction reçue et de l'expérience des cinq dernières années. Ne découle pas de changements législatifs. Le personnel propose une amélioration visant à prolonger le délai dont les ménages disposent pour choisir les ensembles domiciliaires préférés sur la liste d'attente centralisée lorsqu'il est déterminé qu'ils occupent un logement trop grand.

L'intégralité des règles locales de 2023 se trouve dans le document 1; les neuf changements recommandés par le personnel y sont notés à titre de référence.

### **Répercussions financières**

Aucune répercussion financière n'est associée à la mise en œuvre des recommandations du présent rapport.

### **Consultation publique et commentaires**

Le secteur du logement a été consulté à propos de l'établissement de seuils pour le revenu et de valeurs maximales pour les biens du ménage, des critères prescrits par la loi qui ont aussi un caractère discrétionnaire. En tout, 32 personnes ont examiné les propositions et donné leur avis dans un sondage mené en ligne en décembre 2022 et

janvier 2023. Ont participé notamment des fournisseurs de logements sociaux, des organismes du secteur, des firmes de gestion immobilière, des organismes de soutien social et des organismes de défense des droits des locataires.

Quant aux autres changements proposés, le personnel s'est basé sur le travail qu'il fait en continu avec 51 fournisseurs de logements sociaux et sur l'analyse globale des révisions de décisions demandées par des ménages ayant sollicité ou recevant une aide sous forme de LIR. Ces changements additionnels, autorisés par la marge discrétionnaire, visent à simplifier encore davantage l'administration de l'aide sous forme de LIR et à donner aux ménages plus de temps pour obtenir un revenu, déclarer les changements et choisir leurs ensembles domiciliaires préférés s'ils occupent un logement trop grand.

## **BACKGROUND**

As Service Manager under the *Housing Services Act, 2011* (HSA), the City has the ability and the responsibility to establish certain local policies, referred to as Local Rules, in order to administer, implement and distribute social housing resources, which includes access to Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI) assistance in an equitable, fair, and consistent manner.

Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI) assistance is a provincially legislated housing subsidy offered by the City of Ottawa to make rent affordable for qualifying households. The rent for a subsidized unit, referred to as the RGI rent, is typically set at thirty percent (30%) of a household's monthly net income determined using income tax information or a fixed amount if they are in receipt of Ontario Works (OW) or Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP). Unlike OW and ODSP, which is available to anyone who applies and qualifies, RGI assistance is a limited resource. Households must meet eligibility requirements, be selected in accordance with the legislated waitlist system, and maintain their eligibility on a continuous basis to receive the subsidy.

In Ottawa, the number of households seeking subsidized housing far exceeds the number of units available. As a result, it can take many years for households to access subsidized housing. There are approximately 17,000 subsidized housing units in Ottawa. As of December 31, 2022, there were 11,065 households on the City's Centralized Wait List (CWL) for subsidized housing, and only 1,230 applicants were housed from the CWL over the year.

The City first established Local Rules in 2002 under the *Social Housing Reform Act, 2000* (SHRA). At that time, the City established 56 Local Rules as part of a report

approved by Council entitled Social Housing Local Policies ([ACS 2002-PEO-HOU-008](#)).

In 2008, the City revised the list of Local Rules by deleting 24 rules, modifying 12, and keeping 20 intact, for a total of 32 rules. This revision was approved as part of a report to Council entitled Evaluation of Local Policies in Social Housing ([ACS2008-CPS-HOU-0012](#)).

In 2012, the SHRA was repealed and replaced with the *Housing Services Act, 2011* (HSA) as part of the Province's Long Term Affordable Housing Strategy. While the HSA continued to allow and require service managers to establish certain Local Rules, its purpose also included specific wording as to the provision of flexibility for service managers, recognizing that local needs and pressures may vary across the province. As a result of the change in legislation from the SHRA to the HSA, staff undertook a fulsome review of the Local Rules. In 2017, Council approved 26 updated Local Rules to reflect legislative changes and feedback from extensive consultation ([ASC2017-CSS-GEN-0006](#)).

On March 30, 2022, the Province released [Ontario Regulation 242/22](#), which requires service managers to establish a Local Rule setting RGI income and asset limits by July 1, 2023, for households to be eligible for RGI assistance. Previously, this was discretionary under the legislation, and the City of Ottawa, as Service Manager, chose not to exercise its discretion. At the time, the City did not see the value in implementing income and asset limits because it did not feel they would be an effective way of prioritizing RGI assistance for those most in need. This was rooted in experience demonstrating that most households' incomes were low enough to qualify them for a rent subsidy and did not have any assets of significance to declare. Given setting income and assets limits is now a service manager requirement, staff are bringing forward this report to update the two (2) income and asset rules and taking the opportunity to update seven (7) other discretionary rules.

## **DISCUSSION**

Local Rules are intended to provide flexibility to service managers recognizing that pressures and needs vary across the province. As a result of legislated changes since 2017, as well as feedback from our stakeholders and staff observations on the rules, the following changes to the rules are proposed:

Rule 1 - Maximum Household Income (Household Income Limits or HILs) (Legislated – Discretionary)

Staff is recommending that the HILs for the City of Ottawa be set at an amount equivalent to the HILs established by the Province from time to time (indexed).

*Background on Rule 1* – Household income is the annual net income of all members of the household, excluding the income of full-time students, and excluding any Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP) payments received. In general, household income includes only income that would normally be used for RGI rent calculation.

Under the *Housing Services Act, 2011* (HSA), the City is required to implement Household Income Limits (HILs) for Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI) eligibility by July 1, 2023. The limits must, at minimum, be equal to the HILs specified in Schedule 2 of [Ontario Regulation 370/11](#), which is currently as follows for Ottawa:

Bachelor	1-bedroom	2-bedroom	3-bedroom	4-bedroom
\$43,500	\$50,000	\$60,000	\$72,000	\$92,500

HILs are updated annually by the Province and are calculated using data from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation’s (CMHC) annual Rental Market Report. They are specific to the size, type, and geographical location of the housing. Income limits are used to determine eligibility for a wide variety of housing assistance programs, including housing allowance programs.

To inform the recommended HILs for the City of Ottawa, an analysis of income limit policies was conducted on major Canadian municipalities. HILs are used to determine eligibility for subsidized housing in several municipalities in Ontario and Canada. Most that were analyzed, including Toronto, Hamilton, and London, had established, or are planning to establish, HILs for their municipality as outlined in Regulation.

An analysis of RGI rents charged if a household’s income is equivalent to the HILs as outlined in Regulation was also completed. RGI rents are set at approximately thirty percent (30%) of a household’s monthly income. The RGI rent for a household whose income is at or above the HIL is greater than the market rents charged by Ottawa social housing providers. This means that a household with income at or above the appropriate HIL would have a rent subsidy of zero dollars (\$0) as demonstrated in Table 1. A rent subsidy is the difference between the RGI and full market rent for the unit.

Table 1: RGI Subsidy Amount Based on Household Income Limit

<b>Unit Size</b>	<b>Household Income Limit (HIL) (O. Reg. 370/11)</b>	<b>Approximate RGI Rent (30% of HIL)</b>	<b>Subsidy</b>
Bachelor	\$43,500	\$1,088	\$0
1 Bedroom	\$50,000	\$1,250	\$0
2 Bedroom	\$60,000	\$1,500	\$0
3 Bedroom	\$72,000	\$1,800	\$0
4 Bedroom	\$92,500	\$2,313	\$0

An evaluation of household incomes as reported to the Centralized Wait List (CWL) Administrator, The Social Housing Registry of Ottawa (The Registry), was also completed to determine the impact of setting income limits based on the HILs as outlined in Regulation. It was determined that 327 of 11,065 households currently on the CWL for subsidized housing reported household income above the HILs as outlined in Regulation. This represents approximately three percent (3%) of households on the CWL as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Centralized Wait List Applicants with Income Over the Household Income Limit

<b>Unit Size</b>	<b>Household Income Limit</b>	<b>CWL Applicants with Income Over HIL</b>
Bachelor	\$43,500	0
1 Bedroom	\$50,000	205
2 Bedroom	\$60,000	54
3 Bedroom	\$72,000	50
4 Bedroom	\$92,500	18

Finally, thirty-two (32) stakeholders reviewed and provided feedback in the form of an online survey. Survey respondents included social housing providers, sector organizations, property management firms, social support agencies and housing advocacy organizations. Seventy-eight percent (78%) of respondents agreed with



setting income limits at the HILs as outlined in Regulation for the City of Ottawa.

The recommended HILs will function to prioritize RGI assistance for residents most in need. Once implemented, the City's income limits will mean that only households applying or waiting for RGI assistance with total household income at or below the appropriate HIL will be eligible for RGI assistance. The HILs will not be used to determine current or continued eligibility for RGI assistance which means households currently in receipt of RGI assistance will not be affected by their implementation.

#### Rule 2 - Maximum Household Assets (Asset Limits) (Legislated – Discretionary)

Staff is recommending that the asset limits for the City of Ottawa be set at \$50,000 for an individual and \$75,000 for a household. Households are exempt from the asset limit requirements if all members of the household are part of a social assistance benefit unit (receiving Ontario Works or Ontario Disability Support).

*Background on Rule 2 – Under the Housing Services Act, 2011 (HSA), the City is required to implement asset limits for Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI) eligibility by July 1, 2023.*

[Ontario Regulation 367/11](#), section 32.5 allows for the City's asset limits to be set at a higher amount but must, at minimum, be set at \$50,000 for a household. All assets owned by a household are included in the asset limit calculation, less any permitted exclusions. The permitted exclusions outlined in Regulation are as follows, and municipalities have the ability to add to this list:

- Funds in a Registered Retirement Savings Plan
- Funds in a Registered Retirement Income Fund
- Funds in a Registered Education Savings Plan
- Clothing, personal effects and furnishings
- A motor vehicle
- Tools of a trade
- Business assets
- Prepaid funerals
- Cash surrender value of life insurance

To inform the development of asset limits, an analysis of asset limit policies was completed. Asset limits are currently used to determine eligibility for subsidized housing in several regions in Ontario and Canada, including the regions of York, Peel, Durham,

Calgary, and Montreal. Most regions analyzed had established, or were planning to establish, asset limits at \$50,000 - \$75,000 for an individual and \$50,000 - \$75,000 for a household. Exclusions to the asset limits established by regions were also reviewed and analyzed, and most follow the exclusion list as set out in Regulation.

As part of a comprehensive stakeholder engagement process, the City worked with thirty-two (32) stakeholders to review and provide feedback on the proposed asset limits in the form of an online survey completed in December 2022 and January 2023. Survey respondents included social housing providers, sector organizations, property management firms, social support agencies and housing advocacy organizations. Ninety-seven percent (97%) of respondents agreed with the City setting asset limits at \$50,000 for a single person household and \$75,000 for a household comprised of two or more members, and eighty eight percent (88%) of respondents agreed with following the list of exclusions as outlined in Regulation.

Staff is not recommending any additions to the list of excluded assets identified in the legislation. The recommended asset limits will function to prioritize RGI assistance for residents most in need. Once implemented, the City's asset limits will mean that only households applying for, or currently in receipt of, RGI assistance with assets at or below the appropriate limit will be eligible for RGI assistance. The local asset limit rules approved by Council in 2017 were set out as Rules 2 and 3 which have been merged in this report to create Rule 2.

### Rule 3 - Pursuit of Income (Legislated – Discretionary)

Staff is recommending households have thirty-one (31) days to pursue income, consistent with the recommendations regarding the number of days households have to make community preferences on the Centralized Wait List (CWL) when over-housed and to report in-year changes.

*Background on Rule 3 – Under the Housing Services Act, 2011 (HSA), a household ceases to be eligible for RGI assistance if a household member is eligible to receive income of a type as set out in [Ontario Regulation 367/11](#), section 31 (2) (e.g. Ontario Works (OW), Employment Insurance (EI), Old Age Security (OAS)), and the member has failed to make reasonable efforts to obtain the income. The HSA requires the period of time to be reasonable. To ensure consistency, and unless there are extenuating circumstances, staff consider thirty-one (31) days to be a reasonable period of time to apply for income.*

### Rule 8.2 – Over-housed (Occupancy Standards) (Staff-Initiated Refinement)

Staff is recommending that the number of days within which an over-housed household must make an application to the Centralized Wait List (CWL) be increased from ten (10) to thirty-one (31), consistent with the number of days households have to comply with other Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI) eligibility requirements.

*Background on Rule 8.2* – When a household occupies a unit that is larger than the largest size permissible under legislation, the household is considered “over-housed.” This is usually the result of a change in the household’s composition. The Province accords these households priority status on the CWL to help ensure transfers to appropriately sized units occur in a timely manner and larger units are made available for larger households.

In 2017, Council approved that once it is determined that a household is over-housed and they have been notified as such, the household must make an application to the CWL to transfer to an appropriately sized unit within ten (10) business days of notification.

Experience and reviews of over-housed files has shown that placing these households on the CWL within ten (10) business days does not allow adequate time for households to make community preferences on the CWL. Therefore, staff is proposing to extend the period of time to 31 days.

#### Rule 8.4 – Over-housed (Ceasing to Meet Occupancy Standards) (Legislative - Mandatory)

Staff is recommending, consistent with legislation, that a household is ineligible for Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI) assistance if, after one (1) year from being notified that the unit they occupy is larger than permitted, they refuse an offer to transfer to another unit that is permissible in size under the Service Manager’s occupancy standards.

*Background on Rule 8.4* – When a household in receipt of RGI assistance occupies a unit that is larger than the largest size permissible under legislation, the household is considered “over-housed.” This is usually the result of a change in the household’s composition.

In 2017, Council approved that over-housed households could refuse two offers of housing, but a refusal of the third offer would result in the loss of RGI assistance.

In 2020, the Province reduced the number of offers permitted from three (3) to one (1). Over-housed households could not become ineligible for RGI assistance until one (1) year after they were notified that they occupy a unit that is larger than permissible under

occupancy standards as long as they were following the process to transfer to an appropriately sized unit.

This rule is being recommended because the process must, as per the legislation, provide that a household becomes ineligible for RGI assistance if, after one (1) year from being notified that they occupy a unit that is larger than permitted, they refuse an offer to transfer to another unit that is permissible in size under the Service Manager's occupancy standards.

Rule 10.1 - Rent Increases of Less than \$10 (Discretionary Authority Biennial Reviews) (Legislated – Mandatory)

Staff is recommending removing households in receipt of financial assistance from the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) from Rule 10.1 to reflect current legislative requirements.

*Background on Rule 10.1* – Previously under the HSA, housing providers had the discretionary authority to verify Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI) rent every second year for households that met certain criteria and could decide whether to implement an RGI rent increase when it was less than \$10.

The criteria for a household to be eligible for a two-year review of RGI rent has since been updated by the Province. Households in receipt of financial assistance from ODSP are no longer eligible for a two-year review of RGI rent and therefore their eligibility review will occur annually.

Rule 12.1 - Reporting Changes in Information (Legislated – Discretionary)

Staff is recommending that households in receipt of RGI assistance report the following changes within thirty-one (31) days:

- a) A member of the household begins or stops receiving financial assistance under the Ontario Works (OW) or the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP);
- b) A permanent increase in monthly income for any member of a benefit unit receiving OW or ODSP financial assistance who is not a full-time student; and
- c) A member of the household's income tax has been reassessed or additionally assessed.

Additionally, staff is recommending that households in receipt of RGI assistance report the following changes within one year or at the time of the household's annual eligibility review, whichever occurs first:

- a) A permanent change in the composition of the household; and
- b) A change in a member of the household's full-time student status.

*Background on Rule 12.1* – In July 2020, the *Housing Services Act, 2011* (HSA), was amended to simplify the administration of Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI) assistance. The Province implemented a suite of changes to make calculating rent simpler for service managers and housing providers and easier for residents to predict and understand. A simplified, annual rent calculation process was introduced based on thirty percent (30%) of household income.

As part of the simplification, the Province outlined five (5) changes that must be reported by households in receipt of RGI assistance as a condition of continued eligibility. Under the HSA, households have thirty (30) days to notify their housing provider of the five (5) changes outlined above, and the Service Manager has the ability to extend the notification period beyond thirty (30) days.

The proposed recommendation simplifies the reporting requirements and recognizes that certain events will have a significant impact on RGI rent and eligibility. Staff are of the view that the timelines proposed balance both the need for accountability and administrative requirements and will function to reduce the risk of loss of RGI assistance for households. The reporting requirements for households applying or on the waitlist for RGI assistance remains unchanged such that they report changes as part of their annual review.

#### Rule 16 - In-Year Review of RGI Payable (Legislated – Discretionary)

Staff is recommending RGI rent be recalculated a maximum of once in between annual RGI eligibility reviews only for each of the following circumstances:

- a) A member of the household begins or stops receiving financial assistance under Ontario Works (OW) or the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP);
- b) A permanent increase in monthly income of any member of a benefit unit receiving OW or ODSP who is not a full-time student;

- c) A member of the household's income tax has been reassessed or additionally assessed; and
- d) The income of the household has decreased by at least twenty percent (20%) for the year.

*Background on Rule 16* – Previously, households in receipt of RGI assistance were required to report any changes in income or to the composition of their household within thirty-one (31) days, and RGI rent was recalculated several times in between annual RGI eligibility reviews based on these changes. There was also a provision to allow residents with monthly income increases of less than \$33 to report the increase annually instead of within thirty-one (31) days. The Province determined that recalculating RGI rent multiple times per year was administratively burdensome for both households and social housing providers and contributed to unpredictable rents for households.

In July 2020, the *Housing Services Act, 2011* (HSA), was amended to simplify the administration of Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI) assistance. The amendments introduced an income tax-based annualized RGI rent calculation and reduced the circumstances that RGI rent could be recalculated in between annual RGI eligibility reviews. Currently the City of Ottawa, as Service Manager, may review the RGI rent for a household in receipt of RGI assistance once in between annual RGI eligibility reviews (“in-year review”) only when the following changes occur:

- a) A permanent change to the composition of the household (household membership);
- b) A change in a member of the household's full-time student status;
- c) A member of the household begins to or stops receiving financial assistance under Ontario Works (OW) or the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP);
- d) A permanent increase in monthly income of any member of a benefit unit receiving OW or ODSP who is not a full-time student;
- e) A member of the household's income tax has been reassessed or additionally assessed; and
- f) The income of the household has decreased by at least twenty percent (20%) for the year.

Additionally, the Service Manager may, at its sole discretion, conduct more than one in-year review of each circumstance if it is of the opinion there are extenuating circumstances. Extenuating circumstances are defined as unforeseen circumstances which were outside of the control of the household, are unlikely to occur again and resulted in the household not being able to meet the requirement in order to remain eligible for RGI. The ability to conduct more than one in-year review of each circumstance applies to (a) to (e) above, however, circumstance (f) cannot be reviewed a second time in between annual reviews, even if there are extenuating circumstances.

Experience has shown that in-year recalculation of RGI rent for circumstance (a) is most often related to the removal of a household member, and for circumstance (b), is most often related to a household member starting full-time school, both of which would typically result in a reduction in RGI rent. Experience has also shown that these two circumstances often occur simultaneously with circumstances (c) and/or (f) which qualify a household for an in-year recalculation. The recommended in-year recalculation rules reduce duplication and align with recommended updates to the rules on reporting changes in information.

#### Rule 24 - Number of Offers (Legislated – Mandatory)

Staff is recommending that the Local Rule be revised, in keeping with the legislation, such that if a household with Local Priority Access Status (LPAS) does not accept one (1) valid offer of housing, they will cease to be eligible for Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI) assistance.

*Background on Rule 24* – On January 1, 2020, [Ontario Regulation 367/11](#) of the *Housing Services Act, 2011*, was amended. All households, including those with priority status, now cease to be eligible for RGI assistance if they refuse one (1) offer of housing. Previously, the Regulation allowed households to refuse up to three (3) offers of housing and the Local Rule allowed a household with LPAS to refuse the first valid housing offer and remain on the chronological wait list until they either accepted an offer of housing or refused a total of three (3) offers, whichever occurred first.

This change reduces the wait time for households on the Centralized Wait List (CWL) by ensuring vacant units are filled quickly, recognizing households have had the opportunity to select communities ahead of time and should be accepting a valid offer of housing.

In conclusion, these nine (9) recommendations are being brought forward as a result of recent legislative changes as well as feedback from the sector and experience from staff over the past five (5) years. Staff is recommending approval of the two (2) income and asset rules and seven (7) other rules as outlined above.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications associated with the implementation of the report recommendation.

## **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no legal impediments to the implementation of the report recommendation.

## **COMMENTS BY THE WARD COUNCILLOR(S)**

N/A

## **ADVISORY COMMITTEE(S) COMMENTS**

N/A

## **CONSULTATION**

Housing Services stakeholders were consulted on the development of the new legislative report recommendations. Thirty-two (32) stakeholders reviewed and provided feedback in the form of an online survey completed in December 2022 and January 2023. Stakeholder representation included social housing providers, sector organizations, property management firms, social support agencies and housing advocacy organizations.

For the remainder of the changes, staff relied on its continuous work with the fifty-one (51) social housing providers and oversight of the review of decisions requested by households. Based on this, staff are proposing the additional changes, where there is discretion, to better streamline the administration of the assistance and provide additional time for households to report changes and select communities when over-housed.

## **ACCESSIBILITY IMPACTS**

Recommendations from this report continue to support households requiring accessible housing. Households will be able to directly access and maintain appropriate accessible and affordable housing to meet their needs.



## **INDIGENOUS GENDER AND EQUITY IMPLICATIONS**

There are no Indigenous, gender, and equity implications associated with the report recommendations.

## **RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

There are no risk implications associated with the report recommendations.

## **RURAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no rural implications associated with the report recommendations.

## **TERM OF COUNCIL PRIORITIES**

The recommendations of this report support the 2019-2022 Strategic Plan: Thriving Communities. The City is committed to ensuring Ottawa residents have access to safe, adequate, and affordable housing.

## **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

Document 1 – Summary of Recommended Local Rules

## **DISPOSITION**

1. Housing Services will issue Service Manager Directive(s) that set out the operational details of the updated Local Rules.
2. Housing Services will work with Housing Providers and the CWL Administrator (The Registry) to assist in the implementation of the updated Local Rules.