

**Questions & Responses Following the Presentation Given by
Edward John, Director Housing Services Division, at the
Advisory Committee for People with Disabilities (“ACPD”)
Housing Issues Working Group Meeting Jan 21, 2020**

**1. How does one choose where to live through the new
Access to Housing (“ATH”) model?**

A: Under the new ATH model, staff are transitioning from merely being caretakers of a waitlist to providing supports to individuals who have housing needs. The vision is that staff be available to meet with people to triage their housing situation as they fill out their applications. In many situations, people have needs beyond simply housing (affordable transportation, childcare, debt) and while meeting a person’s housing needs is the primary goal, staff can be connecting people with services which may address some of their non-housing needs as well. In order for this type of ‘person-centered’ approach to work, it is necessary for staff to gather information from people. Gathering data will allow staff to get a better idea of a household’s needs in order to match them with the appropriate services and supports in the community.

2. What kind of benefits are available for renters?

A: More broadly, there is an ongoing concern about the ability of for-profit developers to build rental housing as the City has no legal ability to constrain tenure and affordability level after the affordability term is over. The goal of the Housing Services Division is to work with partners who share in the vision of providing long- term affordable housing solutions. We are aware that we need to not only push the idea of rental housing but push the idea that purpose-built rental housing needs to be maintained going forward. In the

short and medium term, the Division offers programs like the Housing Stability Benefit and Rent Supplements.

3. What assistance is provided to people with disabilities who are filling out the ATH application forms?

A: Anyone requiring assistance in completing the ATH forms can request that a staff person meet with them in the office, in the community or in their home. This assistance is available to anyone who requests it, and is not limited to persons with disabilities.

4. How can the ACPD support getting more accessible units built in new developments?

A: What this group can do is help people understand what accessibility means beyond simply what is contained in the Ontario Building Code. An example of this insight might be explaining to developers on what might be the most important considerations when building accessible units.

5. What can we do to promote new residential construction that can be easily converted into accessible units?

A: While there have been some improvements to Building Code over the years, a challenge remains with the way it is written. The Code is written as a series of minimum targets with which builders and developers must comply. The challenge for Housing Services in achieving higher standards is that without incentives in place, builders are generally not going to go above and beyond the minimums. In an environment with funding constraints there is only so much municipalities can do to influence rules and regulations which are Provincial jurisdiction. Saying that, Housing Services has made considerable progress in working with its

partners and non-profit housing providers to create new affordable rental housing that is either accessible at the time of construction or is constructed in a way that it can be more easily converted into accessible units.

6. How can the City improve the wait times with the Social Housing Waitlist?

A: The City acknowledges there are lots of households on the list; however, it is important to understand that the needs of people and households change over time. Housing Services is in the process of refining how it manages the waitlist. We envision a different way of looking at the list, and a more dynamic way of using the list to meet the needs of people. For example, as people’s lives change (have another child, care for an elderly parent) they have different needs – not always housing. The key is working with people to understand their needs and ensuring they are on a path to stable, secure and affordable housing.

7. Is there an opportunity for this group to review, revise or simplify the Access to Housing (ATH) Main Application Form and Special Needs Form?

A: Yes, staff will bring it back for a facilitated review

8. If someone is in an accessible unit and their situation changes, where they may need new modifications, what is the process to assess the situation and then accommodate that person’s new needs if deemed appropriate?

A: This is no different in social housing than it is in private market rentals. The landlord has a duty to accommodate under the Ontario Human Rights Code. The request for

accommodation or modification should be submitted to the landlord in writing along with any accompanying medical verification.

9. What does the Housing Services Division do to prevent fraud?

A: We have a monitoring system in place which among other things, specifically reviews household incomes on a regular basis. However, it is important to understand that while monitoring is part of the Service Manager’s role, staff are not solely focused on policing people’s incomes. Ultimately, Housing Services is worried about meeting people’s basic needs and prioritizing choice, access and integrity in its service delivery.