



City of Hamilton Report for Information

To: Chair and Members
General Issues Committee

Date: February 26, 2025

Report No: HSC23029(a)

Subject/Title: 2023 Access to Housing Centralized Waitlist Update

Ward(s) Affected: City Wide

Recommendations

- 1) Report HSC23029(a) respecting the 2023 Access to Housing Centralized Waitlist Update **BE RECEIVED** for information.

Key Facts

- Report HSC23029(a) provides annual comparative information on the applicants housed through the Access to Housing Centralized Waitlist for the 2023 year-end and is an update to HSC23029.
- The City of Hamilton's Centralized Waitlist is a provincially mandated list for individuals who require Rent-Geared-to-Income assistance and alternate housing assistance.
- The Housing Services Act, 2011 lays out the rules governing these forms of assistance.

Financial Considerations

There are no budget impacts or costs associated with this report/recommendation.

Background

Not applicable.

Analysis

Table one (1) reports the number of households on the Centralized Waitlist as of December 31 of the years 2018 to 2023. In 2023, the number of households on the waitlist stood at 6,258. This number is relatively stable over the six-year period reported below. The decrease in 2021 can be attributed to data clean up that was done in preparation for the migration of data to a new software system. It is important to note that the actual number of waiting households is larger owing to a backlog in inputting applications. The backlog is due to staffing shortages, demands on staff relating to rent-up of new buildings and an increase in new applications. Of the total number of households on the Centralized Waitlist, 1,217 were currently living in an Rent-Geared-to-Income unit and waiting for a transfer to another unit.

Table 1 - Access to Housing Centralized Waitlist - as of December 31 by Year

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
# total households	6,704	6,231	6,647	5,716	6,110	6,258
# households living in Rent-Geared-to-Income unit	1,166	1,113	1,089	916	930	1,217
# households not living in Rent-Geared-to-Income unit	5,538	5,118	5,558	4,800	5,180	5,041
# of households housed in Rent-Geared-to-Income unit	508	469	416	412	653	657
# of households housed with a Canada Ontario Housing Benefit		126	246	129	429	359
# total households housed from Centralized Waitlist	508	595	662	541	1,082	1,016
% of households housed	7%	9%	9%	9%	15%	14%

The number of households housed in a Rent-Geared-to-Income unit in 2023 was 657. This is the largest number housed since 2018 and a significant increase from 2020 and 2021. The percentage of households housed is calculated based on the total number of annual applications which combines both the number of households currently active on the waitlist and those who have been housed. The increase in households housed can likely be attributed to buildings that opened in 2023 including CityHousing Hamilton's

projects at 8 Roxanne Ave., 35 Arkledun Ave and CHH continued efforts to house waitlist applicants in vacant units. The implementation of the 'one-offer/one-refusal' rule which requires waitlist applicants to accept the first offer of subsidized housing for a unit in a housing location they selected facilitated more households to accept a housing offer.

The number of households housed with a Canada Ontario Housing Benefit was higher in 2022 than in 2023 because the province issued Hamilton additional funding beyond the original amount from underspent allocations from other municipalities.

Between 2018 and 2021, the number of units offered declined for a variety of reasons. One of the most significant is the number of households that opt to remain in a social housing unit even when they no longer qualify for Rent-Geared-to-Income assistance. This is still experienced today by many housing providers who are unable to meet their Rent-Geared-to-Income targets. This decision is likely driven by the increasingly high prices in the private rental market. The reduction also relates to fewer units being available due to redevelopment as well as units being offline due to long term repairs. However, CityHousing Hamilton is currently using Council approved funding to support the \$5.7 M cost to repair and rent 476 vacant units by the end of 2024.

Most of the households housed in 2023 have Special Priority Status, Urgent or Homeless status. Special Priority Status is a provincially mandated priority for victims of human trafficking or family violence, where the applicant intends to permanently separate from an abusive family member with whom they are residing. The chronological applicants housed were primarily seniors because of the large number of buildings with senior mandates. To manage the application backlog, Access to Housing staff have prioritized the assessment of Priority applications and seniors. These applications are entered in real time and are not a part of the current backlog. This backlog will have no effect on an applicant's ability to access social housing. The Access to Housing staff continue focused efforts on the backlog to prioritize customer service.

Alternatives

Not applicable.

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

Priority 3: Responsiveness & Transparency

- Prioritize customer service and proactive communication.

Previous Reports Submitted

- [2022 Access to Housing Update](#) (HSC23029)

Consultation

Not applicable.

Appendices and Schedules Attached

Not applicable.

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