



The Corporation of the City of Stratford
Social Services Sub-committee
Open Session
AGENDA

Date: Tuesday, November 10, 2020

Time: 3:30 P.M.

Location: Electronically

Sub-committee Present: Councillor Henderson - Chair Presiding, Councillor Bunting - Vice Chair, Councillor Burbach, Councillor Ritsma, Councillor Vassilakos

Staff Present: Kim McElroy - Director of Social Services, Eden Grodzinski - Manager of Housing, Corry Gunn - Manager of Anne Hathaway Day Care, Alex Burgess - Manager of Ontario Works, Jeff Wilson - Manager of Children's Services, Jodi Akins - Council Clerk Secretary, Angie Juarez - Supervisor of Social Services

To watch the Sub-committee meeting live, click the following link: <https://stratford-ca.zoom.us/j/82220505042?pwd=Q3RpT2tpNjI0WHJ3ZWdMMGZzdTRHUT09>

A video recording of the meeting will also be available through a link on the City's website at <https://www.stratford.ca/en/index.aspx> following the meeting.

Pages

1. Call to Order

The Chair to call the Meeting to Order.

2. Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest and the General Nature Thereof

The *Municipal Conflict of Interest Act* requires any member of Council declaring a pecuniary interest and the general nature thereof, where the interest of a member of Council has not been disclosed by reason of the member's absence from the meeting, to disclose the interest at the first open meeting attended by the member of Council and otherwise comply with the *Act*.

Name, Item and General Nature of Pecuniary Interest

-

-

3. Delegations

None scheduled.

4. Report of the Supervisor of Social Services, Housing Division

- 4.1. Introduction to Bill 204, Helping Tenants and Small Businesses Act, 2020 (SOC20-010)** 4 - 18

Motion by _____

Staff Recommendation: THAT the report titled "Introduction to Bill 204, Helping Tenants and Small Business Act, 2020" (SOC20-010) be received for information.

- 4.2. Delegation of Authorities for Housing Division Agreements, including properties owned by The Corporation of the City of Stratford and Perth & Stratford Housing Corporation (SOC20-011)** 19 - 20

Motion by _____

Staff Recommendation: THAT the report "Delegation of Authorities for Housing Division Agreements, including properties owned by The Corporation of the City of Stratford and Perth & Stratford Housing Corporation" (SOC20-011) be received for information purposes.

AND THAT Council delegate authority to the Director of Social Services, or Manager of Housing or Supervisor of Social Services, Housing Division to sign agreements between prospective tenants, program recipients, housing providers/landlords and The Corporation of the City of Stratford and/or the Perth & Stratford Housing Corporation.

5. Report of the Manager of Ontario Works

- 5.1. Social Assistance Recovery and Renewal Plan Update (SOC20-009)** 21 - 23

Motion by _____

Staff Recommendation: THAT the report titled "Social Assistance Recovery and Renewal Plan Update (SOC20-009)" be received for information.

6. Next Sub-committee Meeting

The next Social Services Sub-committee meeting is December 15, 2020.

7. Adjournment

Meeting Start Time:

Meeting End Time:

Motion by _____

Sub-committee Decision: THAT the Social Services Sub-committee meeting adjourn.



MANAGEMENT REPORT

Date:	November 10, 2020
To:	Social Services Sub-committee
From:	Angie Juarez, Supervisor Social Services Eden Grodzinski, Manager of Housing Kim McElroy, Director of Social Services
Report#:	SOC20-010
Attachments:	Bill 204 – Rent Freeze Presentation

Title: Introduction to Bill 204, Helping Tenants and Small Businesses Act, 2020

Objective: To provide Council with an overview of Bill 204, *Helping Tenants and Small Businesses Act, 2020*, and outline how it impacts City of Stratford residents as well as Social Services Department – Housing Division operations.

Background: On September 17, Minister Steve Clark introduced [Bill 204, Helping Tenants and Small Businesses Act, 2020](#). On October 1, 2020, the Act received Royal Assent. Bill 204 makes an amendment to the *Residential Tenancies Act, 2006* (RTA) to temporarily freeze residential rent increases between January 1 – December 31, 2021. This bill applies to most rental units including newly built units first occupied after November 15, 2018 as well as to tenants living Community Housing inclusive of those receiving rent-geared-to-income (RGI) rent, with the exception of non-profit housing co-operatives. Landlords are permitted to give a notice of rent increase in 2021, as long as the increased rent will start in 2022. Bill 204 will still allow landlords to apply to the Landlord Tenant Board (LTB) for an above guideline increase and to collect this increased rent if granted by LTB Order.

Analysis: By law, landlords must wait 12 months between rent increase. Since an annual rent increase can happen throughout the year depending on when they moved in or when their last annual rent increase was implemented, the rent freeze will benefit tenants most whose annual rent increase happens at the beginning of the year.

The Ministry for Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) has directed that regardless of the rent freeze the work of RGI administration will continue, therefore this bill will not affect Housing Division Operations from a staffing perspective. Eligible decreases in RGI rent will be implemented as usual. However, under Bill 204, the rent freeze (or “cap”) means that geared-to-income rent would not increase in 2021 as household income increases.

For RGI households on social assistance (i.e. Ontario Works, Ontario Disability Support Program) who pay rent scales, rent would not increase in 2021 and would be capped at the rent scale amount payable as of December 31, 2020. As a result, households who earn additional income and would otherwise transition off rent scales and onto the RGI calculation would remain temporarily at the rent scale rate.

After the rent freeze period has ended, starting January 1, 2022, geared-to-income rent could increase to reflect household income calculated in the most recent annual or in-year review, subject to the regulations in the *Housing Services Act, 2011* on effective dates of rent increases.

For example, an RGI household paying \$300 per month in rent reports an income increase through their scheduled annual review in 2021. While their rent would be recalculated, the household would continue to pay \$300 month for the remainder of the 2021 calendar year. The rent increase would come into effect January 1, 2022.

For additional details, please refer to the attached presentation.

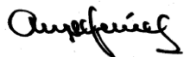
Financial Impact: Under the *Housing Services Act, 2011* rent-geared-to-income (RGI) assistance decreases as the income of recipient households increase. The rent freeze means that despite any increases in income RGI rents will remain capped. This could result in the City of Stratford (Service Manager) providing more subsidy than normally required to Community Housing Providers as well as Housing Allowance and Rent Supplement recipients. It is not possible to accurately predict this figure as it would involve estimating increases in income for RGI recipients in our service area during unprecedented economic times because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The province has not announced any plans to assist municipalities with any shortfall.

Alignment with Strategic Priorities:

Strengthening our Plans, Strategies and Partnerships

Partnering with the community to make plans for our collective priorities in arts, culture, heritage and more. Communicating clearly with the public around our plans and activities.

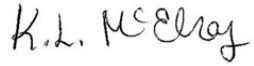
Staff Recommendation: THAT the report titled "Introduction to Bill 204, Helping Tenants and Small Business Act, 2020" (SOC20-010) be received for information.



Angie Juarez, Supervisor of Social Services,
Housing Division



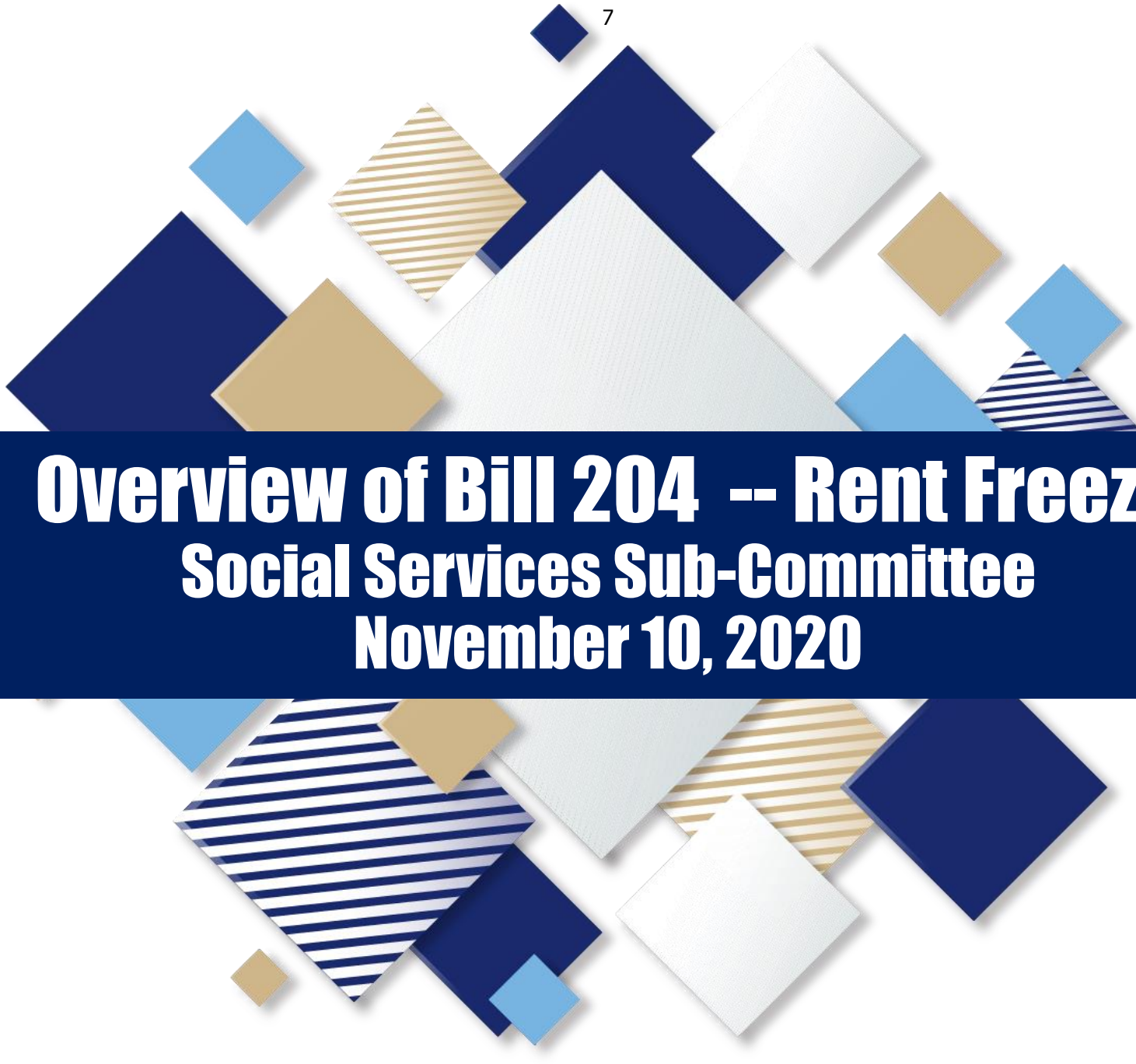
Eden Grodzinski, Manager of Housing



Kim McElroy, Director of Social Services



Joan Thomson, Chief Administrative Officer



Overview of Bill 204 -- Rent Freeze

Social Services Sub-Committee

November 10, 2020



Today's Agenda

- ▶ **Overview of Helping Tenants and Small Business Act, 2020, Bill 204**
- ▶ **Effects on Rent-Geared-to-Income Administration**
- ▶ **Questions**
- ▶ **Additional Resources**



Helping Tenants and Small Businesses Act, 2020, Bill 204

- On October 1, 2020, the Act received Royal Assent
- Bill 204 amends the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 (RTA) by freezing residential rent increases in 2021
- No annual rent increases from January 1, 2021 to December 31, 2021 will be allowed



Housing Providers affected by Bill 2014

The rent freeze applies to rental units that are covered under the RTA including:

- Households living in community housing that receive Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI) assistance
- Newly build units occupied for the first time as of November 15, 2018
- Purpose-built rental apartments, condos, houses and basement apartments
- Rented sites on mobile home parts and land lease communities
- Care homes, including retirement homes
- Affordable housing units created through various federally and/or provincially funded programs



Co-operative Housing Providers

- Co-ops are governed by the Co-operative Corporations Act and are not subject to the RTA
- If the membership approves an annual housing charge increase, co-ops can implement them through 2021
- RGI households residing in co-ops will *not* have their housing charges increased through 2021



RGI Calculations

Annual Reviews

- Providers will still be required to complete an Annual RGI Eligibility Review during 2021

Mid-Year Changes

- Providers will still be required to complete mid-year calculations for any reported changes in household composition, income or assets
- Tenant/members are required to report changes in household composition, income or assets within 30 days



Notice of Decision Effective Dates

Annual Calculations

- Increase Effective January 1, 2022
- Decrease Effective the month following the calculation
- Market Effective January 1, 2022

Mid-Year Calculations

- Increase Effective January 1, 2022
- Decrease Effective the month following the change
- Market Effective January 1, 2022



Notice of Decision: Ineligible for Subsidy

Change in Income

- **Up until June 30, 2021** the Notice of Decision letter should inform the ineligible household that:
 - They will retain their RGI status for 12 months
 - They will need to re-apply to the Centralized Waiting List if they require RGI assistance in the future
 - If their income decreases during this period & they qualify for RGI, their rent can be recalculated
- **After July 1, 2021** (when RGI simplification comes into effect), the timeframe increases to **24 months** and notices need to reflect this change.

The letter must state that Bill 204 has frozen all rent increases throughout 2021 & the market rate will take effect January 1, 2022.



Notice of Decision: Ineligible for Subsidy

Failure to Provide Information or Report Changes

- The letter must state that Bill 204 has frozen all rent increases throughout 2021 & the market rate will take effect January 1, 2022
- The letter must inform households that they have the right to appeal this decision to the Service Manager within 30 days



Impact on Minimum Rent

- Minimum Rent Implementation came into effect on July 1, 2020 and will be affected by Bill 204
- Minimum rent will *not* increase July 1, 2021. This applies to:
 - Minimum rent of \$93.00
 - Minimum rent of \$129.00

Questions





Additional Resources

- Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association (ONPHA) <https://www.onpha.on.ca/>
- Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada(CHF) <https://chfcanda.coop/>
- Helping Tenants and Small Businesses Act, 2020 – Bill 204
<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/s20023?search=helping+tenants+and+small+businesses+act>
- Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
<https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/58396/ontario-introduces-legislation-to-freeze-residential-rent-in-2021>



MANAGEMENT REPORT

Date:	November 10, 2020
To:	Social Services Sub-committee
From:	Angie Juarez, Supervisor of Social Services, Housing Division Kim McElroy, Director of Social Services
Report#:	SOC20-011
Attachments:	None

Title: Delegation of Authorities for Housing Division Agreements, including properties owned by The Corporation of the City of Stratford and Perth & Stratford Housing Corporation

Objective: To update the delegation of authorities for the City of Stratford Consolidated Municipal Service Manager's Housing Division, to reflect current roles and responsibilities within the Social Services Department.

Background: In December 2000, the Province passed the *Social Housing Reform Act*, 2000 (Act), which required municipalities to assume responsibility for social housing programs previously administered by both Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) and the Province. The Province designated 47 regional Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (Service Managers), who also deliver such other services as social assistance and childcare, to administer social housing programs at the local level. In bigger cities, the municipal government itself is the Service Manager; in smaller centres, a single Service Manager administers services for a combined group of municipalities and counties. As part of devolution, the City of Stratford Consolidated Municipal Service Manager assumed responsibility of the properties previously administered under Ontario Housing Corporation. These properties now make up the Local Housing Corporation - Perth & Stratford Housing Corporation (PSHC).

Analysis: In 2019 the Housing Division entered into a total of 203 Agreements including leases for the Perth and Stratford Housing Corporation, leases for Britannia Affordable Housing Project, Housing Allowance agreements, and Rent Supplement agreements with tenants, landlords and service providers.

The signing of the lease is an act that binds the Corporation. Historically, in the Housing Division there have been different positions that have assumed this responsibility. In a review of the Delegation of Authority it was determined that it would be beneficial to update the delegation of authority and ensure that it was reflective of current practice.

The purpose of delegating authority to certain staff in this matter is to streamline the administrative process of signing leases and rent support (rent supplement, portable housing allowance) agreements. There are policies and procedures already in place that set out the process for entering into these leases. The authority to sign these types of leases is the subject of this report.

Financial Impact: There is no immediate financial impact to the Corporation, liability remains the same. Customer service will remain a priority.

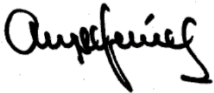
Alignment with Strategic Priorities:

Strengthening our Plans, Strategies and Partnerships

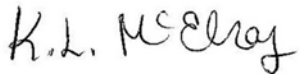
Partnering with the community to make plans for our collective priorities in arts, culture, heritage and more. Communicating clearly with the public around our plans and activities.

Staff Recommendation: THAT the report "Delegation of Authorities for Housing Division Agreements, including properties owned by The Corporation of the City of Stratford and Perth & Stratford Housing Corporation" (SOC20-011) be received for information purposes.

AND THAT Council delegate authority to the Director of Social Services, or Manager of Housing or Supervisor of Social Services, Housing Division to sign agreements between prospective tenants, program recipients, housing providers/landlords and The Corporation of the City of Stratford and/or the Perth & Stratford Housing Corporation.



Angie Juarez, Supervisor of Social Services,
Housing Division



Kim McElroy, Director of Social Services



Joan Thomson, Chief Administrative Officer



MANAGEMENT REPORT

Date:	November 10, 2020
To:	Social Services Sub-committee
From:	Alex Burgess, Manager of Ontario Works Kim McElroy, Director of Social Services
Report#:	SOC20-009
Attachments:	N/A

Title: Social Assistance Recovery and Renewal Plan Update

Objective: To provide information to Council on recent announcements from the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) on Social Assistance Recovery and Renewal.

Background: On September 30, 2020, MCCSS announced changes to the Ontario Works program that would be forthcoming as part of their Social Assistance Recovery and Renewal plan.

These first phase of the plan is focused on four primary areas:

Accelerated Digital Delivery Solutions, which focuses on the launch of a new Social Assistance Digital Application and expansion of the MyBenefits platform;

Centralized and automated delivery, which focuses on a new centralized intake process that will be piloted across several municipalities in Ontario before expanding to the rest of the Province;

Risk-based eligibility determination, which focuses on the use of federal and third-party sources to make financial assistance processing faster while strengthening program integrity; and

Access to employment and training, which focuses on partnerships with the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development to support people getting back to work as quickly as possible.

Analysis: Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Ontario Works participants have seen multiple changes to the program which were aimed at continuing to support the most

vulnerable members of our community while reducing the administrative burden put on caseworkers. With the enhancement to digital solutions, it is anticipated that clients will have greater access to information pertaining to their files and be able to submit documents and communicate with their caseworker through the MyBenefits portal.

Centralized and automated delivery refers to a central unit, managed by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, that will manage applications for Ontario Works assistance that are submitted through the Social Assistance Digital Application (SADA) platform. Applications that are deemed appropriate will be processed by the centralized unit, known as the Intake and Benefits Administration Unit (IBAU) and will utilize the Risk-Based Eligibility Determination (RBED) process. The RBED process will be built in partnership with federal and third-party sources and will look at auto-granting “No risk, low risk and medium risk” applications before connecting participants with their local office. It is anticipated that this will reduce the administrative burden on local offices as the current Ontario Works intake process can be quite lengthy and cumbersome based on the client’s situational needs. “High risk” and complex cases will be referred to the local office for review and will still be processed as per current business processes.

These changes are quite significant, given that all OW intake functions are currently performed locally by Ontario Works staff. The centralized intake program will roll out to seven prototype municipalities in 2020 before it is rolled out across the Province in March of 2021. It is anticipated there will be further engagement and collaboration between MCCSS and Ontario Works delivery agents as the plan for recovery continues to be developed and implemented across the Province.

Financial Impact: There is no financial impact for the municipality currently and no impact on the 2021 Ontario Works budget. Any changes that directly impact the 2022 Ontario Works budget will be presented in a further report but cannot be anticipated or estimated at this time.

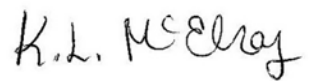
Alignment with Strategic Priorities: Not applicable

This report highlights changes to the Ontario Works program that are forthcoming from the Provincial government and does not highlight any of the four strategic priorities. This report focuses solely on the provision of information to inform Council about the Social Assistance Renewal and Recovery Plan, and how it will impact service delivery locally.

Staff Recommendation: THAT the report titled “Social Assistance Recovery and Renewal Plan Update (SOC20-009)” be received for information.



Alex Burgess, Manager of Ontario Works



Kim McElroy, Director of Social Services



Joan Thomson, Chief Administrative Officer