



City of  
**Peterborough**

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**To:** Members of the Joint Services Steering Committee

**From:** W. H. Jackson  
Commissioner of Infrastructure and Planning Services

**Meeting Date:** June 14, 2018

**Subject:** Report IPSHDJSSC18-003  
Portable Housing Benefit – Special Priority Policy program

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## **Purpose**

A report to provide information on the Portable Housing Benefit – Special Priority Policy Program.

## **Recommendation**

That the Joint Services Steering Committee approve the recommendation outlined in Report IPSHDJSSC18-003 dated June 14, 2018, of the Commissioner of Infrastructure and Planning Services, as follows:

That the report on the Portable Housing Benefit for Special Priority Policy program be received for information.

## **Budget and Financial Implications**

There are no budget or financial implications as a result of this report. The Portable Housing Benefit for Special Priority Policy program is 100% provincially-funded.

## **Background**

### **Special Priority Policy**

Under the **Housing Services Act, 2011**, households who are fleeing family violence, or who are victims of human trafficking may be eligible for the Special Priority Policy (SPP) on the centralized waiting list for Rent Geared to Income (RGI) housing. When an RGI unit becomes available that is appropriate to their household size, Special Priority Policy households are offered the opportunity ahead of other applicants.

### **Portable Housing Benefit – Special Priority Policy program**

In November 2017, the Ministry of Housing committed \$30 million over the next three years to support up to 3,000 survivors of domestic violence and human trafficking in all service areas across the Province on an ongoing basis. Beginning in July 2018, the new Portable Housing Benefit-Special Priority Policy (PHB-SPP) program will be available to SPP applicants across the Province, starting with participants in a pilot program and rolling out to applicants in other service areas on a first-come, first-served basis.

The Ministry's anticipated outcomes for the PHB-SPP program include:

- Receiving housing assistance more quickly than households in the SPP category who are waiting for RGI assistance;
- Having more choice of suitable housing (types, quality, locations, etc.);
- Having a reduced rent burden (lower percentage of income spent on shelter costs);
- Being less likely to return to an emergency shelter;
- Improved household financial well-being; and
- Improved quality of life.

### **Program Design and Eligibility**

Applicants for RGI who are eligible for the Special Priority Policy may choose to participate in the PHB-SPP. The PHB-SPP is paid directly to eligible applicants by the Ministry of Finance and is not tied to a specific tenancy or cost of accommodation. It is 100 per cent provincially-funded and delivered and is fully portable across the province. If successful, applicants for the program must remove their name from the Centralized Waiting List for social housing.

The amount of the PHB-SPP is roughly the difference between 30 per cent of monthly Adjusted Family Net Income (based on the most recent Canada Revenue Agency notice of assessment) and 80 per cent of the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) average market rent for the area where the recipient lives. For example, if a household paid \$1,000 in rent, and monthly income of \$1,750 they would receive a \$265 monthly benefit. This would reduce their rental costs to \$735, or 42% of their monthly income.

In addition to the ongoing monthly benefit, applicants may be entitled to first and last months' rent to secure accommodation.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

Housing Access Peterborough (HAP) has delegated responsibility for the administration of the waiting list for social housing, which includes determining eligibility for Special Priority Policy. HAP will administer applications for the PHB-SPP, including identifying eligible applicants who are interested in the program, assisting applicants to apply, calculating the potential benefit and reporting quarterly to the province. The Ministry will provide a \$250 administrative fee for each successful applicant.

The Ministry of Housing will approve applicants for the benefit, calculate benefit amounts and make payments directly to applicants. Once enrolled, the Ministry will provide information and support through Service Ontario.

### **Needs Assessment**

Special Priority households only make up 2% of the households on the Centralized Waiting List, but they represent approximately 20% of those who get housed in Rent Geared to Income housing. At the end of April 2018, there were approximately 33 applicants on the RGI waiting list who are eligible for Special Priority Policy and would be eligible for the PHB-SPP. The majority of these households are waiting for one-bedroom units. Increasing housing options for Special Priority households may increase movement on the RGI waiting list, but Peterborough's low vacancy rate may be an obstacle for applicants who wish to use the benefit locally.

### **Timeline and Next Steps**

HAP staff have contacted Special Priority Policy applicants on the centralized waiting list to provide information and application forms. Any new applicants for SPP will have the option of applying for the PHB-SPP as an alternative to waiting on the Centralized Waitlist for RGI housing. The Ministry of Finance will start receiving and approving applications in June 2018. First payments to applicants will begin in July, 2018.

Information sessions have been held with agencies that assist households to navigate the Special Priority Policy process, including the Housing Resource Centre, the YWCA Peterborough Haliburton and Victim Services for both Peterborough Police Service and the Ontario Provincial Police (Peterborough-Northumberland).

Submitted by,

W. H. Jackson, P. Eng.  
Commissioner of Infrastructure and Planning Services

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