



## RENFREW COUNTY HOUSING CORPORATION

Wednesday, November 30, 2011

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A meeting of the Renfrew County Housing Corporation Board of Directors was held in the Council Chambers, County of Renfrew Administration Building, Pembroke, Ontario on Wednesday, November 30, 2011 at 9:30 a.m.

Directors Present: Peter Emon, Audrey Green, Ed Jacyno, Richard Rabishaw, Bob Sweet, David Thompson, Harold Weckworth, Jack Wilson

Officers Present: W. James Hutton, Chief Executive Officer  
James Kutschke, Treasurer  
David Anderson, Chief Operating Officer

Also Present: Carol Neill, General Manager, Renfrew County Housing Corporation  
Reeve Walter Stack, Town of Arnprior  
Karen McManus, Administrative Assistant

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Chair Emon called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. The roll was called and no pecuniary interests were disclosed.

Chair Emon explained that this special meeting had been called to discuss the issue of standardized water utility charges to Renfrew County Housing Corporation tenants, specifically in the Town of Arnprior. A report from Carol Neill, General Manager, Renfrew County Housing Corporation was circulated to the Committee (attached as Appendix A).

Mr. Anderson, Chief Operating Officer, explained that RCHC has 594 adult tenants paying rent with utilities included. This method is easy for tenants to understand and it further allows for consistent rent calculations methods across the RCHC portfolio.

The balance of the portfolio is made up of 384 RCHC family households paying rent. In some of these tenants pay rent with utilities included, some pay rent with utilities excluded, and some pay rent with one utility and not another included. For example, Pembroke family tenants generally pay rent with utilities included, Renfrew family tenants pay for heat and hydro only, Arnprior family tenants pay for all utilities (heat, hydro, water/sewer).

Discrepancies between the various ways in which rents are calculated is an obvious inequity in the service provided by RCHC and this is a direct result of having three separate and distinct housing corporations in Renfrew County prior to the download of this service to the County of Renfrew. Specifically, tenants in Renfrew and Pembroke family units do not pay water/sewer charges.

Family tenants living in Arnprior are receiving a water allowance, which is deducted from their basic rent amount to pay their municipal water/sewer bill, unfortunately their water/sewer bill is considerably higher than the allowance. If you are a tenant living in Pembroke or Renfrew your municipal water is included in your rent with no additional cost to the tenant.

Renfrew County Housing Corporation would like to standardize the process effective January 1, 2012 by assuming responsibility for the 125 Town of Arnprior family unit water bills and including water/sewer utility charges in the rent. It was noted that there were some outstanding water bills by RCHC family tenants and RCHC staff are currently in discussions with the Town of Arnprior to settle these accounts in 2011. The Renfrew County Housing Corporation is negotiating with the Town of Arnprior to pay off the arrears owing by RCHC tenants by paying 50 cents on the dollar of the amount in arrears. Reeve Stack advised that the finance department at the Town of Arnprior are currently working on determining the exact amount owing, but he advised that a guestimate at this point is approximately \$40,000.00 at 50 cents on the dollar.

**RESOLUTION NO. RCHC-C-11-11-57**

Moved by: Mayor Wilson  
Seconded by: Mayor Rabishaw

THAT the Renfrew County Housing Corporation Board of Directors recommends to the Social Services Committee and County Council that Renfrew County Housing Corporation make the necessary changes to include all municipal water charges inclusive of rent in the Town of Arnprior.

CARRIED.

**RESOLUTION NO. RCHC-C-11-11-58**

Moved by: Mayor Wilson  
Seconded by: Mayor Rabishaw

THAT the meeting adjourn. Time: 9:39 a.m.

CARRIED.

**COUNTY OF RENFREW  
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

**RENFREW COUNTY HOUSING CORPORATION**

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TO: Renfrew County Housing Corporation Board of Directors

FROM: Carol Neill, General Manager

DATE: November 30, 2011

SUBJECT: Standardized Water Utility

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The Renfrew County Housing Corporation (RCHC) rent charges are based on the assumption that the unit is “fully-serviced”. The fully-serviced rent charge assumes that only the cost of specific utilities and services are included in the geared-to-income rent charge. These utilities and services include: heat; water; hot water; refrigerator; stove.

If the cost of providing the above five items is included in the rent charge, without any additional utilities being included, no utility adjustments are made to the geared-to-income rent. If the cost of providing the above five items falls to the tenant to pay, RCHC must reduce the geared-to-income rent by the amount of the standardized allowance. Keeping in mind that allowances cannot reduce a tenant rent below the minimum rent amount of \$85.00 per month.

The allowances and charges are set out in O.Reg. 298/01 of the Social Housing Reform Act (2000), and are not negotiable. Allowances for water and for hot water heater are varied only by unit size and have no relationship to geographic location.

Table 7 of O.Reg. 298.01 sets the water allowances at:

2 bedroom	3 bedroom	4 or more bedroom
\$15	\$18	\$20

Charges and allowances pre-date the Social Housing Reform Act, 2000 (SHRA), as does the decision of “who pays what”. RCHC has 594 adult tenants paying rent with utilities included. This method is easy for tenants to understand and it further allows for consistent rent calculation methods across the RCHC portfolio.

The balance of our portfolio is made up of 384 RCHC family households paying rent. Some tenants pay rent with all utilities included, some pay rent with some utilities excluded. For example: Pembroke family tenants generally pay rent with utilities included, Renfrew family tenants pay for heat and hydro only, Arnprior family tenants pay for all utilities (heat, hydro, and water).

Discrepancies between the various ways in which rents are calculated is an obvious inequity in the service provided by RCHC. The biggest inequity is the treatment of water charges. The different treatments of how tenants pay utilities was a direct result of having three separate and distinct housing corporations in Renfrew County prior to the download of this service to the

County of Renfrew. Family tenants living in Arnprior are receiving a water allowance, which is deducted from their basic rent amount (see chart) to pay their municipal water bill, unfortunately their water bill is considerably higher than the allowance. If you are a tenant living in Pembroke or Renfrew your municipal water is included in your rent with no additional cost to the tenant.

There is a need to standardize treatment of water bills in family units across the housing portfolio.

Rationale:

RCHC is aware of different treatment to water/sewer providers in Pembroke/Renfrew/Arnprior. RCHC is aware of the inequity that has been created between the treatment of tenants who live in Arnprior versus Renfrew and Pembroke and have an opportunity to standardize the practice.

RCHC is aware that this inequity may lead to a human rights claim.

RCHC is aware that legally, the landlord is ultimately responsible for essential services, which includes water, in accordance with the *Residential Tenancies Act Section 21 (1)*.

RCHC is aware that the Municipal Act, 2001 allows the municipality the right to add debt to the property owners' taxes. Municipal Act, 2001 s. 398(2) (legal opinion attached).

Rent-Geared-To-Income (RGI) tenants living in fully serviced units have been protected from the rise in energy costs, as the scales have not changed in over 10 years. Utility scales were not adjusted with the Social Housing Reform Act, 2000 (SHRA), nor were they addressed in the new Housing Services Act to be effective January 1, 2012.

The concern is that RGI tenants who are responsible for paying their own utilities are paying more than 30% of the gross family income in rent, and possibly making their rent unaffordable. Tenants that are responsible for their own utilities have borne the full brunt of all cost increases.

All tenants of Renfrew County Housing Corporation, regardless of geographic location, should be treated the same.

Effective January 1, 2012, Renfrew County Housing Corporation would like to standardize the water billing process by assuming responsibility for the 125 RCHC Town of Arnprior family water bills. Family unit bills being assumed by Renfrew County Housing Corporation will have a balance forward of zero effective December 31, 2011.

Renfrew County Housing Corporation understands that there may possibly be some outstanding water bills by RCHC family tenants in Arnprior and is in discussions with the Town of Arnprior to settle these accounts. Benefits to the Town of Arnprior include: a guarantee to receive 100 % payment of their water/sewer bills, the reassurance that any excessive water use (leaks) will be checked on by RCHC maintenance staff in a timely fashion, and the rent-geared-to-income families living in Arnprior receive that same water benefit as rent-geared-to-income families living in the Town of Renfrew and the City of Pembroke.

Annual increase in water expenses	\$101,604 (approximately)
Annual increase in rent revenue	\$ 23,880 (approximately)
Net Change – increase in water expenses	\$ 75,564 (approximately)

The water expense is based on information collected directly from various RCHC tenants.

Tax levy is not impacted by this change as other utility charges to be reduced as a result of utility system upgrades/energy efficiencies.

**Recommendation:** That the Renfrew County Housing Corporation Board of Directors recommends to the Social Services Committee that Renfrew County Housing Corporation make the necessary changes to include all municipal water charges inclusive of rent in the Town of Arnprior.

Report respectfully submitted.

# MCNAB, STEWART & PRINCE

BARRISTERS - SOLICITORS  
NOTARIES PUBLIC

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Renfrew County Housing Corporation,  
Renfrew County Place,  
450 O'Brien Road, Suite 105,  
Renfrew, Ontario.  
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Attn: Carol Neill

Dear Ms. Neill:

**Re: Water Rates**

This is further to our telephone conversation of November 22<sup>nd</sup>.

I wish to advise that the treasurer of a local municipality may add fees and charges imposed by the municipality to the tax roll for the property in the local municipality and collect them in the same manner as municipal taxes for the supply of a public utility (which includes water). This is pursuant to s.398(2) of the *Municipal Act, 2001*.

I trust this is satisfactory for your purposes, however, should you have any questions, kindly contact me.

Yours truly,

MCNAB, STEWART & PRINCE.



David A. Stewart.

DAS/jv