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DATE 17 May 2000

TO/DEST. Co-ordinator,
Community Services Committee

FROM/EXP. A/Director, Social Housing

SUBJECT/OBJET **ANALYSIS OF THE SOCIAL HOUSING WAITING LIST IN
OTTAWA-CARLETON**

RECOMMENDATION

That the Community Services Committee recommend Council receive this report for information.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of the analysis of the social housing waiting list data, undertaken by the Social Housing Registry of Ottawa-Carleton.

BACKGROUND

The Social Housing Registry maintains the co-ordinated access system for social housing throughout the Region. The Registry opened its doors as a pilot project in November 1996 with the combined waiting lists of five social housing providers. Incorporated in December 1997, the Registry now takes applications and maintains the waiting list for over 40 providers including Ottawa-Carleton Housing (as of 1998), municipal and private non-profits and provincially funded co-ops in the Region.

In the fall of 1999, the Region contracted with the Registry to undertake an analysis of the waiting list similar to that provided in the Golden Report on Homelessness. The project was undertaken in two phases: first to refine and upgrade the data; and second, to complete an analysis of that data as of December 1999. Because the Registry has continued to add new providers over the past several years, and because this project involved significant expansion and refinement of the database, it was not possible to complete a comparable review of earlier waiting lists. However, a base has now been established for comparable analysis to be undertaken in future years.

Highlights of the analysis are provided below. The full report is attached.

SUMMARY FINDINGS

- As of December 1999, there were over 15,300 active applications on the Registry's waiting list. The majority are on the chronological waiting list. However, there are more than 1800 applicants identified as 'special priority' (victims of abuse) and 'disadvantaged by chronology' (newcomers, youth and the homeless). Applicants declaring themselves as homeless comprise nearly seventy percent of these special categories.
- There has been a continued increase in new applications since the Registry opened - 2,654 in 1996, 2,911 in 1997, 5,138 in 1998 and 6,407 in 1999.
- Households with children account for over one half of the waiting list; over 7,800 applicants are single parents and other households with children. Single adults account for almost one third and seniors, nine percent, of demand.
- Applicants between the ages of 30 and 49 account for approximately half the waiting list.
- Approximately three quarters of applicants on the waiting list have an annual income of less than \$20,000. Special priority applicants and newcomers generally report incomes of \$5,000-\$15,000 and homeless applicants, incomes of \$5,000-\$10,000. Among the youth (aged 16 and 17) none reported an income of greater than \$15,000 and more than half were parents with children in their care. Although an exact number is not available, it appears that the majority of applicants earning less than \$20,000 annually are in receipt of OW, ODSP or federal government insurance programs, the latter including the majority of seniors applicants who are in receipt of CPP and/or OAS.
- While Ottawa is most frequently identified as the area of preference by applicants, there is also significant demand for rent-geared-to-income housing in Nepean, Gloucester, Kanata and Cumberland, areas with relatively few units available.
- The length of time on the waiting list averages five to eight years although this varies by applicant status and by household type and size. For example, the ten percent of applicants requiring five or more bedrooms can expect to wait longer due to scarcity and low turnover in these units.
- Just over 5,000 applicants have been housed since the Registry's inception. In 1999, 2,006 applicants were housed. Of these, 734 were drawn from the chronological waiting list, 552 were victims of abuse and the remainder, disadvantaged by chronology.

CONCLUSION

In part, the waiting list analysis confirms what is already known, namely, that there is a serious shortage of affordable rental housing in the Region of Ottawa-Carleton. But more than that, it begins to provide us with a picture of who is on the list and the type of housing that is required to meet their needs.

The number of applicants is growing both absolutely, and relative to the providers ability to offer housing. The average length of time on the waiting list noted above represents real day-to-day hardships and challenges for those in need of affordable housing. A number of local initiatives are underway and will provide a small but welcome addition to the stock. However, these units do not begin to touch the accumulated need.

*Approved by
Marni Cappe, A/Director
Social Housing*