

## **Any Each Other Anything: COVID-19 Response March 26, 2020**

Q&A from Webinar Discussion amongst MNPHA Members

### **What are the changes regarding Rent Increase?**

For those with agreements with Manitoba Housing, Manitoba Housing will delay anticipated changes in program income limits and utility rates for the social and affordable housing programs and continue using the rates from 2019. Fixed shelter (EIA, affordable, market and rent supplements) rates will remain unchanged until further notice. All landlords (including the non-profit sector) are asked to implement this change for April 1.

For those who fall under Residential Tenancies Branch rent regulations, any rent increase effective April 1, 2020 must be rescinded. RTB is putting together further clarification and will provide it soon. From MNPHA's conversations with RTB, we understand that no one will be exempt from this decision (including Life Leases).

### **Are meal programs continuing?**

Bethania, Lions Manor, and Manitoba Housing: are delivering meals to doors.

As of March 29, Shared Health has announced that it is suspending congregate meal services for the Support Services to Seniors program. Alternative ways to deliver meals to vulnerable seniors must be put into place. Each program is encouraged to work with their local Regional Health Authority on potential alternatives.

### **How are you maintaining connections with tenants virtually to maintain social outlets?**

Ten Ten Sinclair: has been talking to people on the phone mostly

Sagemace Housing: via Facebook messenger

Stonewall Lions Manor: Bulletin Board Notes, Phone system info message system

UWCRC: looking at using Zoom for face time for tenants who have that service

Bethania: a couple of IPADS are available that people can arrange appointments with their family member

### **What are you doing about vacancies, move-ins, showing units, signing leases?**

Rapid City Housing: the person who is meant to be moving in is moving from BC. Now, her family isn't picking her up yet; but we're not sure what to do when she does eventually arrive?

Ten Ten Sinclair: anyone that has a letter of approval to move in as of April 1, we have been letting those proceed. We typically have a face-to-face entrance inspection. Now, we're doing it in advance with maintenance. We leave a key for the tenant to pick up. Once the tenant comes in, they can take a picture with their phone if they see any issues. We haven't done any face-to-face meetings; we're not committing to any new showings.

IRCOM: we have moved in people scheduled for April 1. We try to continue with turnovers. We have a room set-up for lease signing and documents, that has really good social distancing set-up, hand sanitizers, a separate table for lease signing, etc. We want to fill the building and not leave people stranded without a place.



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Interlake Eastern Health Authority: we are calling people on the phone to discuss leases and sending them in the mail or faxing them. We're also asking screening questions before people move in. If people were moving from outside of the province, I would discuss it with my director and VP team to discuss, as there would have to be self-isolation.

Winnipeg Housing: we are filling suites for April 1 that were committed; we're not showing any new suites.

Bethania: we are not doing new showings, unless we get a call from Hospital for a discharge needing a suite.

SAM Management: we are doing the same as everyone else, only trying to get emergency housing if we are able.

Stonewall Lions Manor: we are committed to the new move-ins. Tenants must book a move in date and we are following and cleaning behind them. We are not taking new, uncommitted move-ins at this time.

Kinew Housing: people aren't moving as much, so there are not many vacancies right now.

Springfield Seniors: are not doing any building tours at this time.

### **What if tenants can't pay rent due to loss of income or employment?**

New Journey Housing: will be helping people access the federal resources. They don't start until April 6, so we'll be learning how to do that.

Downtown Commons: will be using mediated agreements for now; will work with tenants who can provide proof of layoff on a case-by-case basis.

Sagemace Housing: will provide rent adjustments and charge minimum rent of \$50 for those with subsidy agreements. We allow for e-Transfer.

SAM Management: we are doing the same trying to find out their situation and see if they can take advantage of Government programs. We will see after April 1st how bad it will be and try to work with tenants. Don't want them to have a lot of debt when this is over.

Bethania: we would also charge the minimum \$50 until either EIA is in place or support from the federal funding program is in place. This was the recommendation from Manitoba Housing.

Manitoba Housing: Manitoba Housing has also revised its policy and is only requiring one of the following as proof of change of income: Record of Employment (ROE), letter from employer on letterhead or verification to confirm EI benefits.

MNPHA: has been in touch with the Professional Property Managers Association who are supporting a rent bank. This will remove debt from the housing provider, and put it on the government, however may still leave tenants in debt that they won't be able to pay back. MNPHA will support this initiative so long as it is only used if tenants can pay back the rent when other income programs/employment is in place and there are other supports available to tenants who will not be able to pay back a loan.

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### **What are people doing about late payment fees?**

Ten Ten Sinclair: assumes they will be scrapping them for now, but have not decided yet.

Manitoba Housing: is waiving late payment fees.

Bethania: if the fees are related to lost employment, we would likely waive the fees.

Winnipeg Housing: is waiving fees for now.

IRCOM: We are giving tenants more time, would work with tenants, things changing daily.

### **What are organizations doing about common areas?**

MNPHA: Has seen an exchange with RTB, who said that a tenant can make a complaint about closed common areas, or a landlord can make a complaint about tenants ignoring common area rules, however they are not hearing these complaints at this time. Therefore, it's essentially up to tenants and landlords to communicate and try to problem solve together for now.

Bethania: have removed about 50% of tables and chairs, spaced everything out. Cancelled all activities. Are wondering if they may need to close the rooms because people bring the chairs together and ignore the posters about social distancing. The problem is that there are tvs and computers that people rely on, yet if people aren't following the social distancing rules we worry we may need to close them.

Winnipeg Housing: people are moving chairs together still, so it continues to be a tenant education issue.

Ten Ten Sinclair: have closed off community room and are not renting out common rooms, have removed chairs.

Downtown Commons: have lowered temperatures to make gathering in the common areas less comfortable, and have closed common rooms where possible to focus cleaning on other high use areas.

SAM Management: have posters for social distancing; tenant associations have cancelled programs; have put information under doors to remind tenants of the self-isolation.

IRCOM: have closed common areas, put posters all over areas.

New Journey Housing: there is a fact sheet in multiple areas that can be used (<https://manitoba.ca/covid19/factsheets.html>)

Stonewall Lions Manor: have closed all areas, or removed chairs. All programs have been discontinued.

MB Housing: stopped all scheduled tenant group activities; put up posters and increased sanitation.

Arms of the Cross: programs are all closed. No visitors allowed to Common areas. Our bingo is cancelled by the Lotteries until April 19. Very little tenants are using the common room at the moment and are sitting appropriate distances apart.

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### **How are you enforcing self-isolation for people returning from out of country or province?**

MNPHA: Spoke with RTB who recommended against singling out particular individuals who landlords may know have returned from travel, but putting notes under door of everyone with information about self-isolation. It's important to tell people why self-isolation matters and how it impacts their neighbours and communities. To help with the isolation, the province has created an App - *MB Next Door* - that matches people in need with volunteers; property managers can help people connect with volunteers via the app rather than picking things up themselves.

(<https://helpnextdoormb.ca/>)

Ten Ten Sinclair: have been recommending that people stay put; we know that there is a need for people to get supplies, so we have been sharing information about how to get groceries delivered. It's important to think about the essentials people need to be able to stay in isolation.

SAM Management: We have put information under doors to remind tenants of the self isolation.

Stonewall Manor: is following people into their unit and sanitizing behind them: door handles, elevator buttons, etc. The Manor is allowing grocery delivery, and delivery can be left outside of the door.

### **What are people doing if you know that someone has tested positive for COVID-19? In particular, what about common areas including outdoor smoking areas?**

Stonewall Manor: three people have tested positive; we have a note on their door regarding self-isolation.

Ten Ten Sinclair: assume everyone has tested positive and act accordingly.

Bethania: it may be appropriate to let people know if a neighbour is in self-isolation but not if they have tested positive.

Winnipeg Inner City Missions: exercise caution and social distancing; may put a note in the elevator restricting it to one person at a time. Is worried that people will really panic if they knew that someone tested positive.

Winnipeg Housing: a person in one of their buildings has tested positive. All tenants have been notified that someone in the building has tested positive; the person is in self-isolation. We have been notified of all the locations the person has visited. But that's all the information we are able to share from a legal standpoint. We cannot give any personal details.

### **Who are you letting into the building? How are you monitoring visitors? What about health care workers, contractors, etc.?**

Bethania: it is impossible to monitor as we are not on-site 24/7. The signage is becoming more strict encouraging people not to visit.

Ten Ten Sinclair: attendant care and health care workers absolutely have to get to the tenants they are supposed to see. There are ways to mitigate, such as cleaning behind people, but they need to get there.

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Interlake Health Authority: Home care workers have contacted all clients and are screening. Home care staff have been educated and are asking clients during every visit if someone has symptoms. We are certainly letting everyone in and haven't seen any issues. We are letting families know that they don't need to visit, they shouldn't. We have been working with grocery stores to support delivery and access.

Westman Seniors Housing Coop: only allowing in essential services: Home care, meals on wheels, oxygen delivery.

MNPHA: spoke with RTB – in an independent living building, you cannot disallow visitors. You can lock the door to make sure tenants are gatekeepers for visitors, but they need to be able to access visitors and support.

SAM Management: all our buildings are independent living and we also have posters encouraging minimal visitors. Caretakers are doing their best to concentrate on keeping common areas sanitized. We hope visitors are taking all the precautions, not touching doors where possible, just get in and out, etc.

#### **What about capital projects? Does social distancing apply to contractors as well?**

Sagemace Housing: The capital project in our community consists of renovations in 16 of our 105 houses. We are not too sure what to do.

Bethania: we have a couple of projects in one of our buildings that are ongoing, but they are not impacting tenant suites. Initially, contractors didn't want to enter because they saw someone with a mask. We have provided some assurances, as they are working on a central kitchen renovation project. They are not going into tenant suites and common areas do not have many people in them. Anything in suites if they are not emergency repairs are being postponed.

IRCOM: Annual fire inspections need to continue.

Manitoba Housing: Is only doing necessary repairs at this time, no unit inspections.

Winnipeg Housing: many contractors have personal protective equipment; work with them and with tenants to communicate and decide what people are comfortable with.

Kinew Housing: are not doing any inspections; are postponing everything we can. Focusing on keeping houses operational and safe.

#### **What are people doing about pest control?**

Kinew Housing: not spraying for bed bugs right now as there usually isn't a place for tenants to go if they need to be out of their unit.

Winnipeg Housing: Bed bugs are not considered a health risk, so we are not spraying. If there are cockroaches, we are still figuring out how to deal with this.

Bethania: IPMG were going to spray only active infestations, but that is now eliminated. Other buildings with other contractors, we continued as usual, but that was one week ago. That may change.

SAM Management: if tenants need to be out for six hours, we are dealing with this on a case-by-case basis.



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Manitoba Housing: has suspended chemical treatment for bed bugs.

MNPHA: Purpose Construction provides advice or information on reducing or preventing bed bugs without spraying. You may want to share information with tenants as this time.

### **How are people dealing with cleaning and sanitation?**

Kinew Housing: cleaning once per week as usual; preparing to have more cleaning on hand rails and doors

Bethania: have increased the number of times cleaning elevators and hand rails

Downtown Commons: normally have staff 5 days per week, have hired contractors so that we can clean twice per day. Cleaning elevators and doors three times per day. This adds about \$200/week in labour for the service. Bleach solution is being used, it should be put on a rag then used to wipe walls, rather than sprayed directly onto walls.

Arms of the Cross Housing: using lots of bleach and water solution; other cleaning supplies are on back order.

Sagemace Housing: We are having trouble finding sanitizing products such as alcohol hand sanitizer and lysol wipes.

SAM Management: Our caretakers are concentrating on entry ways, elevators and deferring all other work unless an emergency.

Interlake Housing Co-Op: Our cleaners come once a week for common area cleaning, I personally am doing elevator and doorknobs several times daily, as I live in the building

### **Are people still taking applications for housing?**

Arms of the Cross: yes, they are taking applications.

Bethania: are taking applications but letting them know that showings are not taking place.

Winnipeg Housing: are taking applications but not showing units.

UWCRC: taking applications, no showings.

Ten Ten Sinclair: not currently taking new applications.

Westman Seniors Housing Co-op: only by mail, not face to face.

### **Are people concerned with eviction freeze?**

MMF: We feel a bit trapped by the "eviction freeze" and wonder how we are supposed to respond to non-payment of rent or non-compliant tenants who have serious pest infestations that are affecting others. Any advice?

Bethania: if an eviction is needed for a safety issue, those notices can still proceed. For example, there is a person with hoarding issues and we have an order from the fire department. We will continue with the order.



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MNPHA: If there are problems with how the eviction freeze is being handled, please let MNPHA know so we can advocate to ensure you can continue to keep people safe.

### **Is anyone using the mortgage deferral process?**

Ten Ten Sinclair: is wondering what might happen if a deferral for longer than 6-months is necessary?

SAM Management: has taken advantage of the program to defer the mortgage and reduce costs in the short term while seeing what impact this will have on their revenues.

