

Halton Region Reimagining the Waitlist



ONPHA Presentation
November 16, 2014

Halton Region: Profile

- Situated between Hamilton and Peel Region
- Population (2013): 518,311
- Number of Households (2013): 187,696
- Average Income per household: \$119,403
- Average market rent-one bedroom: \$1,034
- Vacancy Rate: 1.6 % (one of lowest in GTA)
- Cost of development/land acquisition prohibitive
- Planning targets
- Over 4,300 government assisted units
- Rent Supplements in private marketplace



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Comprehensive Housing Strategy

- CHS (2014-2024) our housing roadmap
 - 26 actions that are achievable and measurable
- 3 overarching themes:
 - Create new housing opportunities
 - Preserve the existing stock of government assisted housing
 - Provide coordinated services to Halton residents who need support to obtain or maintain their housing
- \$107M in Halton Region's own funding committed
- Progress already being made in delivering upon the CHS



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CHS Key Drivers

- Impact the waitlist (provide permanent not transitional housing opportunities)
- Implement process improvements to Centralized Wait List and improve customer service
- Optimize resources
- Contain administration costs (maximize amount of funding flowed to clients)
- Provide Centralized Wait List (CWL) clients with choice and vest them in their housing decision
- Modernize housing operations – move staff away from routine transactional activities to value add activities



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Halton In-situ Program (HIP)

Commitment in CHS to *“implement a program to assist qualified Halton residents with their rent by providing financial assistance directly to clients where they currently reside.”*

2 critical aspects of HIP:

1. Assist Halton residents where they currently reside (flow payments directly to them, not landlords)
2. Source HIP clients from Centralized Wait List as HIP is a permanent, ongoing offer of housing



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HIP – Why Now?

- Growing waitlist
- HIP provides immediate solution
- Significantly lower cost than new capital development
- New development across Halton is cost-prohibitive
- Low vacancy rate - 1.6% - stock of private rental accommodations is limited
- Purpose built rental property stock continues to decrease
- Gains from traditional rent supplement initiatives have been limited. HIP leverages existing tenant/landlord relationships across Halton



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HIP – Good Public Policy

- Yearly update letter sent to all Halton Residents on the Centralized Wait List to determine interest in HIP

“Favourable response rate of 75%”

- Applicants already successful in private market can remain where they are with HIP assistance.
- Frees up bricks and mortar housing for those applicants that struggle in the private market place



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Halton In-situ Program Design Features

- Halton partnered with MMAH/MOF to administer program under IAH
- Leveraging IAH framework provides a number of benefits:
 - Income tax exemption for clients;
 - Mitigated reduction in claw backs;
 - Maximized program funding to eligible clients;
 - Robust program administration through established data sharing agreements
- **HIP amount:** based on a tiered system (\$250 - \$850 per month based on household size and NOA net income on a yearly basis)
- Offered as a replacement for RGI on voluntary basis
- Clients sign informed consent removing themselves from waitlist.



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Halton In-situ Program Lessons Learned

- Know your Community
- Intergovernmental Good Will & Collaboration
- Leverage Economies of Scale
- Seize the Opportunity
- In-situ Part of a Broader SM toolkit



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Move In Readiness

- **CHS action:** Improve waitlist processes to enable Halton residents to access the service in a more efficient manner.
- **Why Move in Readiness?** Empirical data revealed a high number of refusals of offers prior to accepting housing.
- Also resulted in increased vacancy losses/increased operating costs for the Region and housing providers.
- **Strategy:** Reduce number of refusals through pro-active made-in-Halton waitlist management/client engagement (Move In Readiness was born!)



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Halton Move In Readiness

- Move In Readiness assessments were designed to address barriers to moving for waitlist applicants.
- MIR attempts to expedite placement of applicants into RGI Housing units and have them accept their next offer by:
 - Narrowing building selections;
 - Refocusing client expectations;
 - Proactively working with clients to mitigate any obstacles that may hinder them accepting their next offer of housing; and,
 - Proactively working to match them with support services if required.



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Halton Move In Readiness - Goals

- Goals of MIR:
 - Decrease time units sit vacant and associated costs
 - Decrease administrative time related to filling vacant units
- MIR Process:
 - Run a filtered wait list from the CWL that captures both those applicants nearing top of the list in addition to buildings with highest turnover
 - All approved SPP applicants have a MIR completed



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Halton Housing Metrics Dashboard

- Halton has created a housing dashboard that provides monthly and quarterly evidence-based numbers of the true state of housing.
- It includes among other elements:
 - Overall number of applicants on the centralized wait list
 - Percentage of Halton vs. Non Halton applicants
 - Number of housing refusals
 - Number of applicants that have selected one building only
 - Demographics - percentage of seniors, SPP, all ages, etc.
 - Number of housed and percentage housed in each community
 - Number of buildings/communities selected



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