

Community Housing and Access

FACT SHEET



HOMELESSNESS

EMERGENCY SHELTER

TRANSITIONAL HOUSING

SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

COMMUNITY HOUSING

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

MARKET HOUSING

In Waterloo region, agencies work together to help people find and keep a home. This **Community Housing and Access Fact Sheet** shares information about:

- What community housing is;
- The different programs that make up community housing;
- How people can access community housing and how long they may wait; and
- Waiting list trends.



What is Community Housing?

Community housing is affordable rental housing for people who have a low to moderate household income. It is offered through three programs, including Rent-Geared-to-Income, Rent Assistance, and Below Average Market Rent. There are over 10,000 units provided through these programs across the region:

- **Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI):** Tenants pay about 30 per cent of the combined household after tax income towards rent. Rent can change as the tenant's income changes. There are approximately 5,700 RGI units in Waterloo Region, including units provided by Not-For-Profits and Co-operatives, and Waterloo Region Housing.
- **Rent Assistance:** Tenants pay an affordable rent based on their income, and live in units owned by landlords in the private market. The Region pays the landlord the difference between the affordable rent and market rent for the unit
- **Below Average Market Rent:** These are private landlords who have a certain number of units in their buildings that they charge lower rent for.



How to Access Community Housing?

Access to community housing is coordinated through the Region of Waterloo Community Housing Access Centre. People may apply to the community housing waiting list at any time. Being eligible for community housing is different than getting it right away. There is currently a waiting list for community housing. Starting July 1, 2020, changes in provincial regulations allow for one offer of community housing before being removed from the list if the offer is declined.



How long is the wait for Community Housing?

The wait for community housing depends on things like the type of housing applied for, how many units in the region are a good match, and the application date. The average waiting time ranges from three to eight years, with the longest wait for a one-bedroom non-seniors unit. There are provincial and local priorities and statuses that affect the length of time an individual or family will wait.

The Special Priority Program (SPP) falls under provincial

housing legislation (the Housing Services Act), and offers households with current or recent experience of domestic violence or human trafficking first access to affordable housing. Applicants may access these provincial priorities by completing a local request form for victims of domestic violence or victims of human trafficking.

Households may be eligible for a local status where they have lived in the Region of Waterloo for the last 12 months and have a low income. Local statuses include homeless, separated families, and escaping violence. The terminally ill status is for applicant households where a member has a terminal illness with a life expectancy of two years or less.



Waiting list trends

As many people need affordable rental housing, demand for community housing in Waterloo region is high. The number of households on the waiting list has increased, while the number of new vacancies in community housing has declined. The combination of more households applying and fewer being housed means that the waiting times increase. Due to increases in the average wait times for community housing over the last decade, accessing community housing is no longer a quick solution to a housing crisis. Many communities are dealing with this problem. In Waterloo region, we are reviewing the

waiting list in an attempt to provide more timely access to housing and support to those who need it the most.

The Region manages the community housing waiting list for anyone that applies for community housing in the region. During 2020, this included over 6,000 households, approximately one third of which live outside the region at this time. Community housing contributes to the quality of life and well-being of residents by helping to make housing affordable to people with low to moderate household incomes. When our community has more affordable housing options, we become more inclusive to all.



Waterloo Region Housing

The Region of Waterloo is a community housing provider known as Waterloo Region Housing (WRH), operating and managing 2,814 community housing units across 65 sites in the region. With 30 per cent of the total community housing units across Waterloo region, WRH is the largest community housing provider in the region.

Regional Council approved a Master Plan for WRH in 2019, which maps out a 20-year timeline to create at least 600 new WRH units over the next 10 years, maintain WRH units in a state of good repair, and to explore options to divest and partner as opportunities become available to the region.

