



Federal Community Housing Initiative



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This reference guide is effective September 1, 2020 and is to be applied throughout the duration of the program. CMHC reserves the right to amend and enhance this document. It is the responsibility of the housing providers to ensure that they are using the most up-to-date version of this guide, which will be available on the CMHC website.

cmhc.ca/fchi

Upon request, CMHC will be able to provide a hard copy of this guide.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction of the reference guide

The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) has developed this guide for housing providers that have entered into an agreement under the Federal Community Housing Initiative – Phase 2.

The guide is an operational tool developed to:

- provide a better understanding of the operational guidelines surrounding the administration of the program; and
- show how to properly calculate the rental assistance amounts.

This guide is not part of the agreement and its schedules. This guide may be updated by CMHC as often as needed to clarify any program guidelines. Housing providers must ensure they use the most recent version available on the CMHC website. If you have a printed version, please ensure that your copy is up to date by comparing its date with the date appearing on the main page of the online version.

1.2 Program overview

The Federal Community Housing Initiative – Phase 2 (FCHI-2) is a new rental assistance program for community housing providers reaching the end of a federally administered operating agreement. FCHI-2 is neither an extension of an existing agreement nor a continuation of a past program. FCHI-2 is available for the period until March 31, 2028, meaning all agreements under the program will therefore end no later than March 31, 2028.

The FCHI-2 rental assistance program will provide financial assistance based on the amount needed to fund the difference between the occupancy charge and the rent-geared-to-income for low-income households. The households will not pay more than thirty per cent (30%) of their income for housing accommodation.

The program includes a secondary component reserved for housing providers having difficulty transitioning to the new program model. A limited amount of financial assistance is available through the Transitional funding stream for more vulnerable housing providers. This component provides financial assistance to cover specific eligible operating expenses and will be offered for the first twenty-four (24) months following the expiration of the agreement under a past eligible CMHC program.

1.3 Eligibility

FCHI-2 is intended for non-profit housing providers and housing co-operatives whose federal operating agreements with CMHC have ended or will end naturally between April 1, 2016, and March 31, 2028. An exception exists for ILM co-operatives where, they are eligible for FCHI-2 as soon as the first mortgage has been repaid and federal assistance (for the operating expenses) has ceased to be paid.

Throughout the program, CMHC will identify eligible non-profit housing providers and housing co-operatives and send them an enrolment form at least six months before the end of their agreement in effect with CMHC.

Eligible community housing providers are those who have entered into an agreement under one of the following social housing programs:

- Section 95 (Pre-86) non-profit, co-operative, urban native
- Section 95 (Post-85) non-profit, co-operative, urban native
- Section 95 (Post-85) Index-Linked-Mortgage (ILM) co-operatives
- Section 27, 61 non-profit and co-operatives
- Section 26 non-profit
- Section 95 Rent Supplement (units currently leased from a private landlord and rented to those in need).

Note that housing providers who have a rent supplement agreement, or who have another subsidy agreement with their province or municipality can submit a request only for units not covered by those other agreements.

Units covered by another agreement are not eligible for FCHI-2 as long as the subsidy agreements are in effect. Once these agreements have expired, the units may be eligible for FCHI-2, subject to need and available funds at that time.

1.4 Rental assistance

Rental assistance is financial assistance calculated based on the amount needed to fund the difference between the occupancy charge and the rent-geared-to-income for low-income households.

The rent-geared-to-income will not exceed thirty per cent (30%) of the household's adjusted monthly income. If the funding allows, a provider may use a rent-geared-to-income level of less than thirty per cent (30%) but not less than twenty-five per cent (25%).

The amount of federal rental assistance is confirmed by CMHC through the FCHI-2 agreement.

1.5 Transitional funding

Transitional funding is reserved for housing providers experiencing difficulty in transitioning to the new program model. This funding will be reserved for the most vulnerable groups, such as deep subsidy or urban indigenous projects. It will be granted for twenty-four (24) months upon the effective date of the FCHI-2 agreement.

Transitional funding will be provided concurrently with rental assistance as a separate, additional form of assistance. After the transitional funding has ended, the housing provider will continue to receive rental assistance until the end of the FCHI-2 agreement.

If CMHC determines that your group has been identified as being most in need for this funding, you will receive an additional communication that will introduce the program and invite you to submit an application before the expiration of your agreement.

A CMHC representative will be assigned to each group. This person will work with the housing provider or their representative to ensure that measures are taken to achieve financial viability after the twenty-four (24) month temporary funding period.

1.6 Definitions

The following is a list of the main definitions of this program. Other definitions and their official version are provided in the agreement.

Action plan: the plan submitted by a housing provider which demonstrates how the housing provider will progress and strengthen in four areas: social inclusion, financial viability, governance, and asset management.

Adjusted rent: rent indicated on the lease agreement (for households in Quebec) or the full occupancy charge (for households in other provinces) from which certain services are deducted such as cable services, internet services, etc. The adjusted rent is used to calculate the amount of rental assistance.

Annex: form to be completed upon joining the program. The information will be used to assess the housing providers needs for rental assistance and to determine the initial amount of rental assistance and initial number of assisted households.

Annual household declaration: form that must be completed at least annually by households requesting rental assistance.

Base number of assisted households: the number of households, as confirmed after the housing provider's first annual review, that will receive rental assistance under the FCHI-2 program, provided that the terms and conditions of the agreement are respected and rental assistance is required. CMHC is committed to cover the rental assistance needs for this number of households so that they will not pay more than thirty per cent (30%) of their income for housing accommodation.

Gross household income: the combined gross income of every person residing in an assisted housing unit, excluding any financially dependent individuals.

Guaranteed rental assistance amount: the annual amount of rental assistance, as confirmed through review and acceptance of the first reconciliation submitted by the housing provider under the FCHI-2 agreement, that the housing provider will receive until the end of its FCHI-2 agreement with CMHC, provided that the terms and conditions of the agreement are respected and the rental assistance is required. The guaranteed rental assistance amount will be increased as needed to ensure the base number of assisted households will not pay a rent-geared-to-income housing charge greater than thirty per cent (30 %).

Household: a person or a group of persons who occupy the same private dwelling, and do not have a usual place of residence elsewhere in Canada.

Household's share: the difference between the occupancy charge to be paid and the calculated amount of rental assistance, after adjustments. This is the monthly amount that the household will have to pay if it's not over-housed and if the amount exceeds the minimum occupancy charge.

Initial amount of rental assistance: the initial amount of rental assistance that the housing provider will receive based on a review of the annex and based on a needs assessment and prioritization assessment completed by CMHC.

Initial number of assisted households: the number of households that initially qualify for rental assistance based on the review of the annex and based on a needs assessment and a prioritization assessment completed by CMHC. This number shall be equal to or less than the number of assisted households the housing provider indicated in the annex.

Minimum occupancy charge: the lowest occupancy charge that a household can pay, which is twenty-five per cent (25%) of the amount indicated on the lease agreement (used for households in Quebec) or the full occupancy charge (used for households in other provinces). This applies to the assisted households under FCHI-2. An household must pay the higher of household's share or the minimum occupancy charge.

Occupancy charge: the monthly housing charge paid by non-assisted households.

National Occupancy Standard: (NOS) determines the occupancy standards relating to the size of the dwelling and the household composition. For the rental assistance program, occupancy standards establish the minimum and maximum number of people living in the same dwelling and are based on the National Occupancy Standard (NOS).

Over-housing: a situation in which an assisted household is residing in a unit where the number of bedrooms is greater than the number of persons as established under the National Occupancy Standards (NOS).

Over-housing charge: the difference between the occupancy charge for the household's current dwelling and the occupancy charge for the dwelling for which they are eligible per the National Occupancy Standard (NOS).

Rental assistance amount: the financial assistance needed to cover the difference between the occupancy charge and the rent-geared-to-income charged to the assisted household, while considering adjustments for services and an over-housing charge, if applicable.

Rent-geared-to-income: the monthly gross household income multiplied by the rent-geared-to-income level as determined by the housing provider. The rent-geared-to-income is used in the rental assistance calculation.

Shelter component: Social Assistance allowance meant to cover the assisted household's housing expenses.

2. FEDERAL RENTAL ASSISTANCE AMOUNT

2.1 Initial amount of rental assistance

The initial amount of rental assistance is the amount determined by CMHC using the information indicated in the enrolment form's annex at the time of the housing provider's enrolment in the program. This amount takes into account the needs of households according to their income and other calculation parameters such as the occupancy charge, utilities and even the minimum housing charge.

The initial amount of rental assistance is effective between the execution of the FCHI-2 agreement and the end of the housing provider's first fiscal year under this program. This amount appears in schedule B of the agreement.

This amount will be revised by CMHC at the time of the first financial statements review under FCHI-2 with the most recent calculation worksheets. Following this first review, a guaranteed amount will be confirmed.

2.2 Initial number of assisted households

The initial number of assisted households refers to the number of households that qualify for rental assistance based on a review of the enrolment form's annex and based on a needs assessment and a prioritization assessment completed by CMHC. This number is therefore equal to or less than the number of assisted households the housing provider indicated in the annex.

The initial number of assisted households is effective between the execution of the FCHI-2 agreement and the end of the housing provider's first fiscal year under this program. This number appears in Schedule B of the agreement.

During the agreement, the housing provider may offer rental assistance to a higher number of households if it can meet the rent-geared-to-income level of thirty per cent (30%) for all households. This could happen if the financial situation of households improves. In addition, the number of households receiving rental assistance could be lower than this number if fewer households qualify for rental assistance. **In other words, without limiting itself to the initial number of households, the housing provider could offer the entire amount paid by CMHC to a lower or higher number of households.**

2.3 Guaranteed rental assistance amount

The guaranteed rental assistance amount is the annual amount of rental assistance the housing provider will receive under the FCHI-2 agreement during its term, provided that the terms and conditions of the agreement are respected and the rental assistance is required.

The guaranteed amount is determined by CMHC during the housing provider's first fiscal year review under the FCHI-2 program. The housing provider will submit the most recent calculation worksheet for each assisted household at the same time as their financial statements. The base number of assisted households will also be determined at that time (see Section 2.4)

Once established, the guaranteed amount will be confirmed in Schedule B of the agreement. An amended Schedule B will be issued to the housing provider.

2.4 Base number of assisted households

The base number of assisted households is the number of households that is used to determine the guaranteed amount of rental assistance. CMHC is committed to providing an amount of rental assistance that meets the needs of the base number of assisted households.

This number is determined at the same time as the guaranteed amount (see Section 2.3). It cannot be greater than the initial number of assisted households.

The base number of assisted households will be fixed for the term of the agreement and will be the basis of future reviews of guaranteed rental assistance amounts.

Once established, the base number of assisted households will be confirmed in Schedule B of the agreement. An amended Schedule B will be issued to the housing provider.

2.5 Review of federal rental assistance

When the amount of federal assistance paid by CMHC is insufficient to apply a maximum rent-geared-to-income level of thirty per cent (30%) to households receiving rental assistance (without exceeding the initial or base number of assisted households), the housing provider may, at any time, request a review of the amount of federal rental assistance from CMHC.

To do this, the housing provider will have to complete the form “Request for review of the rental assistance amount” and send it to CMHC as soon as possible for analysis and approval. CMHC is committed to meeting a thirty (30) day response time and adjusting the rental assistance amount retroactively, and Schedule B will be amended.

CMHC recommends housing providers submit a request as soon as the calculation shows that the rental assistance amount is insufficient. The housing provider must complete the “Request for review of the rental assistance amount” form and attach the supporting calculation worksheets. If the housing provider does not submit a request, then CMHC or its representative will review the housing provider’s guaranteed rental assistance amount at the time of the financial statement review. In order to complete the review of federal rental assistance, CMHC will require the most recent calculation worksheets.

If the housing provider has offered rental assistance to a higher number of households than the base number of assisted households and a change in situation for one or more households means that the amount of rental assistance is greater than the guaranteed rental assistance amount and the maximum rent-geared-to-income level of thirty per cent (30%) can no longer be applied, then two (2) options are available to the housing provider:

Option 1: Finance from its own funds the amount necessary to restore the rent-geared-to-income level to thirty per cent (30%) for all households.

Option 2: Reduce the number of households receiving rental assistance to the base number of households. Unfortunately, this option will result in a loss of rental assistance for one or more of the additional assisted households. CMHC will not offer directives regarding surplus households but the board of directors will need to adopt a clear policy to this effect and ensure that assisted households are well aware of the policy.

CMHC may from time to time, subject to the availability of program budget, invite eligible housing providers to submit an application to increase the base number of assisted households (see Section 2.6).

2.6 Increase to the base number of assisted households

It will not be possible to increase the base number of assisted households during the term of the agreement except when CMHC, subject to the availability of program budget, invites eligible housing providers to submit an application to increase the base number of assisted households in situations where there are additional households in need of rental assistance.

In such a situation, a call for applications will be sent to eligible housing providers.

Note that a housing provider may decide to assist more households using its own funds. This decision only involves the housing provider and CMHC has no commitment towards this funding.

2.7 Decrease of rental assistance needs

Each year, the rental assistance need is confirmed through the reconciliation of federal assistance during the financial statement review. Any excess of funds is reimbursed to CMHC.

In the event that there is a decrease in the rental assistance need, the housing provider or CMHC may choose to open a dialogue about decreasing the base number of assisted households and/or the guaranteed rental assistance amount.

CMHC could suggest a decrease if there is a substantial reimbursement of rental assistance after several financial statement reviews.

3. RENTAL ASSISTANCE APPLICATION

3.1 Eligible households

In order to receive rental assistance, a household must be in housing need. This means that a household must spend more than thirty per cent (30%) of its gross income on housing.

The household must have at least one occupant eighteen (18) years or older or otherwise emancipated, in accordance with applicable laws. In addition, all household members must be entitled to reside in Canada, and the dwelling must be the primary residence of all the occupants (except for children in shared custody situations).

Households will not be able to receive financial support from another source for rental assistance if they wish to be eligible to receive rental assistance from FCHI-2 (i.e. Rent supplement program). If the household receiving rental assistance were to receive any funding (municipal, provincial, federal or other), including any amount, support or rental assistance similar to the type of assistance provided under FCHI-2, the assisted household would have its FCHI-2 rental assistance amount suspended.

Lastly, household eligibility is defined and changes based on two main criteria: mainly household income and household composition.

3.2 Household composition

A household can consist of several types of occupants:

- A person living alone;
- A person and spouse (of each family in the household, if the household is formed by more than one family);
- Any parent residing with a child or person legally responsible for a child;
- Any relatives sharing a housing unit;
- Any unrelated persons sharing a housing unit;
- Any current signatories to the lease or occupancy agreement.

Individuals who are financially dependent on the occupants are not considered occupants for the purposes of calculating rental assistance. These people are the following:

- an individual who is attending a recognized learning institution on a full-time basis and under the age of twenty-six (26);
- a child (under the age of eighteen (18)), without dependents, who is not attending a primary, secondary or post-secondary institution as a full-time student; and
- an adult or child with a severe and permanent recognized disability which requires constant and daily care.

3.3 Included income

The included sources of income of all household occupants must be considered and totaled for the purposes of the calculation. **The gross amounts**, meaning the amounts before all tax or other deductions, must be considered. The income of financially dependent individuals must not be included.

The total gross household income is equal to the sum of the following income items:

- Employment earnings and income (including pensions and employment benefits)
- Investment income
- Other government transfers
- Other cash income

Employment earnings and income (including pensions and work annuities)

- Employment earnings and income from gross salary, payment of overtime, tips, commissions, bonuses, vacation bonuses, other bonuses and other taxable allowances.
- Gross income from self-employment (or a small business) less the tax deductions provided for by the Canada Revenue Agency, excluding depreciation costs. If the work is done in the household's dwelling, the rent, parking and utility expenses, included in the operating expenses, must be added to the total income. Child care expenses are not recognized as an operating expense.
- For the purposes of the calculation, this income cannot be negative. If it is negative, it is deemed to be zero. In this situation, it is suggested that the average of the last three (3) years be used to estimate the income.
- Disability benefits, meaning the short or long-term disability insurance amounts received on a regular and periodic basis, including any amounts received retroactively.
- Also included are payments received relating to an occupational accident, an illness or a disability and paid by a workplace health and safety body (excluding lump sum payments).
- Amounts received from membership in a pension plan of one or more employers. This includes pensions paid to widows or other relatives of a deceased with pension rights as well as annuities and pensions received from Canada, the provinces and/or territories, an insurance company or other sources, pensions received under a registered retirement savings plan in the form of a life annuity, a fixed-term annuity, a registered retirement income fund (RRIF) or an income-averaging annuity contract. Pensions received from overseas must also be included in income.
- Amounts received as Employment Insurance (EI) benefits.

Investment income

- The interest and dividends received for bank deposits, bonds, debentures, securities, stocks, insurance policies, mortgages, investment securities or any other type of investment.
- The net rental income from real estate or agricultural property and investment earnings.

Other government transfers

- Amounts received under social assistance programs, including allowances for employment limitations.
- Age-related government benefits, such as the federal Guaranteed Income Supplement program, spousal allowances and income supplements paid by the provinces.
- Government benefits received for a severe and prolonged disability or illness.

Other income

- Amounts received as alimony, separation or maintenance allowances. Alimony or maintenance allowances must be included in the gross annual income even if they are not declared as taxable income. Household occupants who pay alimony or a maintenance allowance can deduct the amount paid from their gross income if they can prove, with supporting documents, the payments to their spouse and/or child.
- Periodic support from people who are not household members.
- Income of people who take care of children in their own home.
- Income of people who offer room and board to unrelated people (for example, Airbnb).
- Withdrawals from a registered retirement savings plan (RRSP) or other registered investment fund, lump sum payments or received on a periodic basis.

3.4. Excluded income

The following income must not be included in the calculation of gross household income:

- Income of children or individuals aged under twenty-six (26) if they are studying full time at a recognized educational institution;
- Scholarships and non-repayable bursaries (educational or other);
- Student loans;
- Allowances or subsidies for the payment of child care services, transportation, tuition fees and academic materials, as well as allowances for living outside of the primary residence paid to participants in employment and skills development programs;
- Subsidies paid under a registered education savings plan (RESP) for a child in the household;
- Interest, dividends or other income generated by investments in a Registered disability savings plan (RDSP) or RESP for a household member;
- Benefits paid to a parent or a guardian for the benefit of a child whose parent is disabled or deceased;

- Allowances for work away from home (including travel);
- Inheritances and death benefits from the Canada Pension Plan;
- War service grants;
- Lottery winnings;
- Earnings from the sale of personal items;
- Capital gains;
- Insurance benefits (such as reimbursement for care received, medications, etc.);
- Federal, provincial and territorial family allowances;
- Allowances for children placed in foster care;
- Sales tax credits (provincial and federal taxes, if applicable);
- Income tax refunds;
- Lump sum settlement from an insurance company;
- Lump sum amounts received from a workplace health and safety body;
- Amounts awarded by a court (apart from alimony and separation and maintenance allowances);
- Donations received from a religious, charitable or benevolent organization;
- Investments that are locked in until retirement;
- Refunds of pension plan contributions;
- Severance pay;
- Home care allowances;
- Gifts or occasional payments of little value;
- Loans;
- Payment received pursuant to the Indian Act (Canada) under a treaty between Her Majesty in right of Canada and a band, other than funds for post-secondary education;
- Payment received as a special allowance as part of the Resettlement Assistance Program established under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (Canada);
- Special disability allowances paid to a beneficiary as part of a government support program for persons with disabilities;
- Allowances paid to a child with a disability or for the child's benefit;
- Disability benefits if paid in a lump sum (other than the retroactive payment of a periodic benefit);
- Subsidy paid by the Government into a registered disability savings plan (RDSP) established for a household member;
- Benefit received as a Canadian war veteran;
- Payment received under the federal Extraordinary Assistance Plan (Canada).

3.5 Proof of occupancy and income

In order to verify a household's eligibility for rental assistance, the housing provider will be responsible for gathering all proofs of household composition and income at least annually in addition to having the annual household declaration signed. This requirement may be more frequent if the households declare changes to their composition and/or income. Households must notify the housing provider immediately of any changes to their composition or income.

IMPORTANT: For variations in income less than twenty-five (\$25) dollars per month, the housing provider is not required to recalculate the amount of rental assistance immediately. However, calculations and adjustments must be made before the end of its fiscal year end.

The "Annual household declaration-request for rental assistance" form will allow the housing provider to collect this information. This form is available on the CMHC website cmhc.ca/fchi.

The housing provider must keep on file all documents received from households that demonstrate their eligibility.

Note that proof of attendance at an educational institution must be provided for children between the age of eighteen (18) to twenty-six (26).

3.5.1 Proof of occupancy

Through the annual household declaration, households must supply the housing provider with the following information:

- The names of all occupants and the relationships between them. This information is also needed to determine the occupants' dependency. It will also be needed to determine if the household is over-housed (see section 4.8).
- The dates of birth of the children and students. This is necessary to establish exceptions involving the incomes of students.
- A declaration that all the information provided is accurate and complete, including a commitment to immediately declare any change in the household composition and an authorization to disclose personal information to CMHC and its representative.

Note that any adult whose name does not appear in the annual household declaration may not reside in the dwelling.

3.5.2 Proof of income

All members of the household, except those identified as financially dependent, must submit sufficient proof of their current income. Note that any income paid retroactively must be considered as paid in the year of receipt.

Households must provide an annual declaration confirming that the information provided with respect to income is accurate and complete, including in particular a commitment to immediately declare any change in their income, whether it be increases or decreases, and an authorization to disclose personal information to CMHC and its representative.

As a reference, the following list indicates the eligible and sufficient proof for the main types of income:

| Type of income | Verification required |
|--|---|
| Employment income | <p>The most recent pay slips covering a two-month period and showing the name of the employee, the name and contact information of the employer, the payroll period covered, and the gross income earned.</p> <p>An employment confirmation letter providing the same information signed by a company officer may be accepted. This letter may also be sufficient if the job has been held for less than two months.</p> |
| Income from self-employment or a small business | <p>The audited financial statements for the most recent fiscal year prepared by a certified auditor or a copy of the most recent notices of assessment and the company's income statement, along with all other information needed to calculate business deductions. The proof of income statement (option "C" print) from the Canada Revenue Agency is also acceptable.</p> <p>If the self-employment work is recent and the above-mentioned documents are not available, a solemn declaration of income and expenses forecast for the year will be sufficient.</p> <p>Self-employment and small business income must be verified retroactively each year to confirm the estimated income amounts.</p> |
| Employment Insurance | An Employment Insurance slip, identifying the recipient, gross income, and payment dates and frequency. Copies of cheques or a detailed deposit notice may be sufficient. |
| Benefits | All benefit slips must identify the recipient, gross income, and payment dates and frequency. |
| Social Assistance | A copy of the letter of eligibility or other official document identifying the recipient, the number of beneficiaries and information on the amounts. |
| Pension/ annuity income | A statement identifying the recipient, gross income, and payment dates and frequency. Copies of cheques or a detailed deposit notice may be sufficient. |
| Alimony or other family support income | A copy of the legal agreement, court order, copies of cheques, lawyer's letter, letter from a competent authority identifying the beneficiary, amounts paid, and the payment frequency and dates. |
| Interest and earnings | Copies of bank and investment statements identifying the beneficiary, amounts received, and the payment frequency and dates. |

To ensure that all the household members' income is accounted for and accurate, the most recent notice of assessment from the Canada Revenue Agency must be required for comparison purposes during the annual review of the calculations. It may be used in the following situations:

- Need to confirm income from tips, bonuses, commissions and/or overtime work
- Need to confirm income declared in the past and to make retroactive adjustments for overpayment of rental assistance
- Cases where no income was declared
- Suspicion of false declaration

The most recent notice of assessment from the Canada Revenue Agency cannot be used alone as proof of income.

In cases where household income varies widely from month to month, as happens with seasonal workers, salespeople paid on commission or temporary workers, the housing provider must use a reasonable and sufficient calculation method to account for these variations throughout the year. The same method must be used for all households in these situations.

4. RENTAL ASSISTANCE CALCULATION

4.1 Determination of monthly household income

The rental assistance calculations must be done at least once a year. If household income increases, the rental assistance amount will decrease and vice versa. If households declare inaccurate income amounts during the year, the rental assistance amounts must be adjusted retroactively at the time of the annual review of the calculation with the notice of assessment from the Canada Revenue Agency.

As previously mentioned, in order to determine the monthly household income, the housing provider must receive an annual household declaration from the household, including the proof of occupancy and monthly income from all occupants.

The following data conversion table based on the frequency of income collection will help you determine monthly income.

| Income frequency | Factor |
|------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Annual | Divide by 12 |
| Weekly | Multiply by 4.333 |
| Every two weeks | Divide by 2 and multiply by 4.333 |
| Twice a month | Multiply by 2 |
| Daily | Multiply by 21.66 |

Example: If the household income is \$28,000 a year, its monthly income is:

$$\mathbf{\$28,000 \div 12 = \$2,333.33}$$

If the household income is \$800 every two weeks, its monthly income is:

$$\mathbf{\$800 \div 2 = \$400}$$

$$\mathbf{\$400 \times 4.333 = \$1,733.20}$$

4.2 Income from Social Assistance

There are two kinds of income from Social Assistance:

1. income with an explicit shelter component
2. income without an explicit shelter component

The shelter component (so named) is meant to cover the assisted household's housing expenses.

4.2.1 *With a shelter component*

Where the household's only income is from Social Assistance with a shelter component, calculate its rent-geared-to-income by taking the maximum housing allowance for that unit size. Then determine what the household will pay by reducing or increasing this amount according to the services included and not included (such as heat, hot water or electricity) in the occupancy agreement or lease.

When the household has both income from Social Assistance with a shelter component and income from other sources, the housing provider must make three (3) calculations:

1. Calculate the rent-geared-to-income by multiplying the rent-geared-to-income level (twenty-five per cent (25%) to thirty per cent (30%)) by the household's gross monthly income from sources other than Social Assistance.
2. Then add the result of this calculation to the maximum shelter component for a unit of that size.

Example: Take a household consisting of one worker and one person who receives Social Assistance. The worker's gross monthly income is \$800, while the Social-Assistance recipient has a shelter component of \$390. The household's rent-geared-to-income is calculated like this:

$$\text{Step 1) } \$800 \times 30\% = \$240$$

$$\text{Step 2) } \$240 + \$390 = \$630$$

3. Increase or decrease this amount according to the services included and not included (such as heat, hot water or electricity) in the occupancy agreement or lease.

4.2.2 Without a shelter component

Where the household receives income from a provincial Social Assistance program that does not include a shelter component, the housing provider must make two (2) calculations:

1. Calculate the household's rent-geared-to-income by multiplying the rent-geared-to-income level (twenty-five per cent (25%) to thirty per cent (30%)) by their income from Social Assistance.
2. Increase or decrease this amount according to the services included and not included (such as heat, hot water or electricity) in the occupancy agreement or lease.

4.3 Rent-geared-to-income level

The total monthly income will be multiplied by the rent-geared-to-income level that can vary between twenty-five per cent (25%) and thirty per cent (30%) depending on what the amount paid by CMHC to the housing provider allows. Note that at all times the rent-geared-to-income level must be the same for all households assisted by FCHI-2, without discrimination. At no time can the rent-geared-to-income level exceed thirty per cent (30%) for any household and must never be less than twenty-five per cent (25%).

The rent-geared-to-income level may vary from one period to another. The housing provider is responsible for calculation adjustments and must be able to demonstrate beyond any doubt that households benefited from the same rent-geared-to-income level at all times.

In the event that the amount paid by CMHC is not sufficient to meet the maximum rent-geared-to-income level of thirty per cent (30%) for all households included in the base or initial number of households per Schedule B of the FCHI-2 Agreement, a request to increase the amount of federal assistance should immediately be sent to CMHC. To do this, a "Request for review of the rental assistance amount" form is sent, accompanied by the most recent calculation worksheets for all applicable households (see section 2.5).

4.4 Determination of rent-geared-to-income

The rent-geared-to-income is calculated by multiplying the rent-geared-to-income level by the monthly gross household income.

It is important to remember the distinctions mentioned above with regard to income from Social Assistance with a shelter component (see section 4.2).

Example 1: If a household has a monthly gross income of \$2,200 and the housing provider applies a rent-geared-to-income level of thirty per cent (30%), the rent-geared-to-income is \$660:

$$\mathbf{\$2,200 \times 30\% = \$660}$$

Example 2: If the household consists of a worker and a Social Assistance beneficiary, and the worker has a monthly gross income of \$800 and the Social Assistance beneficiary has a shelter component of \$390, the rent-geared-to-income is \$630:

$$\mathbf{\$800 \times 30\% = \$240}$$

$$\mathbf{\$240 + \$390 = \$630}$$

Example 3: If the household consists of a worker and a Social Assistance beneficiary and the worker has a monthly gross income of \$1,600 and the Social Assistance beneficiary receives a monthly amount of \$644 that does not include a shelter component. If the rent-geared-to-income level is thirty per cent (30%), the rent-geared-to-income is \$673.20:

$$\mathbf{\$1,600 + \$644 = \$2,244}$$

$$\mathbf{\$2,244 \times 30\% = \$673.20}$$

4.5 Utilities

For the purposes of calculating rental assistance, heating and hot water services are deemed to be included in the rent. This means that if the rent includes these services, no adjustment will be made to the rent-geared-to-income. However, if the costs of heating and hot water are not included, an amount for these services must be deducted from the rent-geared-to-income.

Other services, such as electricity, rental appliances, water, etc. are not subsidized services.

In view of the calculation adjustments relating to services, CMHC will determine and make available the amounts relating to services based on dwelling size and regions/provinces. In their annual calculations, housing providers must be sure to use the most recent utility allowances available on the CMHC website. The utility allowances can be found in the calculation worksheet available on the website cmhc.ca/fchi.

In the case of service fees for which CMHC has provided no amounts, the housing provider must determine a fair and equitable amount for these services. The rent-geared-to-income adjusted for utilities determines the household's share.

Here are examples of adjustments, to the rent-geared-to-income, for services, based on the following basic fictional information:

- Monthly gross household income: \$1,600
- Rent-geared-to-income level: 30%
- 2 bedroom apartment, rent of: \$800
- Designated monthly cost for electricity: \$17.43
- Designated monthly cost for heating: \$53.12
- Designated monthly cost for hot water: \$12.45

Example 1: Heating and hot water are included services in the occupancy agreement or lease. Electricity costs are paid by the household. Since the services included are the two (2) services deemed to be part of the cost of rent for the purposes of calculating rental assistance, there is no adjustment to be made.

The rent-geared-to-income is:

$$\mathbf{\$1,600 \times 30\% = \$480}$$

In this example, the rent-geared-to-income of \$480 represents the household's share.

Example 2: Heating is included in the occupancy agreement or lease, but the costs of electricity and hot water are paid by the household. In this case, the costs related to hot water must be deducted from the rent-geared-to-income.

The rent-geared-to-income is:

$$\mathbf{\$1,600 \times 30\% = \$480}$$

We must deduct the cost of hot water \$12.45 from the rent-geared-to-income:

$$\mathbf{\$480 - \$12.45 = \$467.55}$$

The household's share is: \$467.55

Example 3: Electricity, heating and hot water services are included in the lease agreement. In this case, only the electricity costs must be added to the rent-geared-to-income since the other two (2) services are those deemed to be part of the cost of rent for the purposes of calculating rental assistance.

The rent-geared-to-income is:

$$\mathbf{\$1,600 \times 30\% = \$480}$$

Electricity costs of \$ 17.43 must be added to the rent-geared-to-income:

$$\mathbf{\$480 + \$17.43 = \$497.43}$$

The household's share is: \$497.43

4.6 Minimum occupancy charge

The minimum occupancy charge that a household must pay is equal to twenty-five per cent (25%) of the rent amount appearing on the current lease agreement for Quebec, or full occupancy charge elsewhere in Canada regardless of whether the amount includes services.

If the household's share is less than the minimum occupancy charge, the household's share will be equal to the minimum occupancy charge. The amount charged must be the higher of the household's share or the minimum occupancy charge.

Example: If the rent on the lease is \$1,000, the minimum occupancy charge is \$250.

$$\mathbf{\$1,000 \times 25\% = \$250}$$

Therefore, if the household's share is \$200, the household must pay the minimum occupancy charge of \$250.

Note: For co-operatives in Quebec that offer a member discount, the minimum occupancy charge is calculated based on the *rent on the lease*. *The "member rent" must not be used for calculation purposes.*

4.7 Adjusted occupancy charge

Adjusted occupancy charge is a concept that will be used to calculate the amount of rental assistance. The adjusted occupancy charge is the full occupancy charge from which we subtract the costs included related to certain services that could be included depending on the situation of each housing provider. To determine the adjusted occupancy charge, the services to be subtracted from the occupancy charge are, but not limited to:

- Cable service;
- Internet service;
- Parking;
- Equipment rental (washer-dryer, refrigerator, oven, etc.);
- Air conditioning.

Electricity, heating and hot water services must not be deducted from the occupancy charge (rent). The adjustment for these services will be made to the rent-geared-to-income.

4.8 Occupancy standards

The occupancy standards are standards relating to the size of the dwelling and the household composition. For the rental assistance program, occupancy standards establish the minimum and maximum number of people living in the same dwelling.

Suitable housing has enough bedrooms for the size and make-up of resident households, according to National Occupancy Standard (NOS) requirements. Enough bedrooms based on National Occupancy Standard requirements means one bedroom for:

- each cohabiting adult couple;
- unattached household member 18 years of age and over;
- same-sex pair of children under age 18;
- and additional boy or girl in the family, unless there are two opposite sex children under 5 years of age, in which case they are expected to share a bedroom.

A household of one individual can occupy a bachelor unit (i.e. a unit with no bedroom).

In summary, the basic rule of the occupancy standard is minimum one (1) occupant per bedroom and maximum two (2) occupants per bedroom.

4.8.1 Exceptions to the minimum occupancy standard

- A. Two (2) adults living together as spouses may have separate bedrooms in the case of a justified medical condition.
- B. A household may also request an additional bedroom to meet the needs of a person in the household living with a disability. In line with Canadian human rights legislation, there is an adaptation requirement that obliges housing providers to adjust their rules, policies or practices for discrimination reasons. The housing provider must therefore assess the needs brought to its attention and have reasonable proof to justify them. The housing provider must record in its files any exception to the minimum occupancy standard, including the reason for the exception.

For example, exceptions may include the use of a second bedroom for:

- storing essential equipment (depending on the disability); or
 - providing a bedroom to an individual who is not a household member but who regularly provides care at night, full time, to one of the household members.
- C. A parent with joint legal custody of one or more children may request the appropriate number of bedrooms for them on the condition that the parent provide satisfactory proof of the custody agreement.
 - D. A parent who does not have legal custody of his/her child(ren) but can provide the housing provider with satisfactory proof of the right to visit, may request one or more additional bedrooms if he/she must host them for the night to exercise or enforce his/her right to visit. A parent who is entrusted with custody of one or more children by a court order may request an extra bedroom. A certified copy of the order must be given to the housing provider.
 - E. A pregnant woman may request a dwelling with an additional bedroom provided she supply medical confirmation of her pregnancy.
 - F. A household preparing to host a child as a foster or adoptive family may request an additional bedroom. The housing provider must receive a document confirming the hosting or adoption.

4.8.2 Over-housing

Over-housing occurs when an assisted household lives in a unit in which the number of bedrooms is greater than the number authorized under the program guidelines.

4.9 Over-housing charge

When the number of occupants in the household decreases and no dwelling of the correct size is available, no additional charge will be applied.

As soon as a suitable dwelling is available in an over-housing situation, the housing provider must offer that dwelling to the household. The household will have a maximum of thirty (30) days, starting on the date of the letter offering the suitable dwelling, to accept or refuse the offer. A household that accepts the offered dwelling will not be charged any additional amount from the time when the household is over-housed until the time the household moves into the suitable dwelling offered.

A household who refuses the offer of a suitable dwelling will have a period of six (6) months, starting from the date of the offer from the housing provider, with no additional charge. If the household is still living in the dwelling after this period, the additional charge must be added to its household share immediately. It is important to remember that this additional charge is not part of the lease/ occupancy agreement and that the household is responsible for making the necessary arrangements with the housing provider.

IMPORTANT: If the housing provider has no unit sizes that match the occupancy standard, the unit of the closest size will be considered the one that applies for the purposes of this policy. For example, a household lives in a three-bedroom unit and according to the occupancy standards the household should be living in a one-bedroom unit but the housing provider only has two and three bedroom units, the household will live in the two-bedroom unit without having to pay an over-housing charge.

The amount of the additional charge is calculated as the *difference between the occupancy charge for the dwelling that is occupied and the occupancy charge for the dwelling the household should be occupying per the occupancy standards*. For example, if the household lives in a two-bedroom unit and, according to the occupancy standards, the household should be living in a one-bedroom unit, the housing provider must do the following calculation:

$$\begin{aligned}
 &\text{The additional charge} = \\
 &\quad \text{the occupancy charge for the two-bedroom unit} \\
 &\quad \quad \quad - \\
 &\quad \text{the occupancy charge for the one-bedroom unit}
 \end{aligned}$$

When the occupancy charges vary for the same unit size, the housing provider must determine the average occupancy charge. For example, if there are three (3) one-bedroom units, the housing provider must calculate the average occupancy charge for these three (3) units and use it in the formula above.

Example: A household lives in a two-bedroom unit and the occupancy charge is \$765. According to the occupancy standards, the household should live in a one-bedroom apartment. The one-bedroom units' occupancy charges are \$685, \$680 and \$700.

Average occupancy charge for one-bedroom units:

$$(\$685 + \$680 + \$700) \div 3 = \$688.33$$

Calculation of the additional charge:

$$\$765 - \$688 = \$77$$

The additional charge is \$77.

Note: The average is calculated by adding up the occupancy charges of all dwellings of the same size and dividing the total by the number of dwellings of this size.

4.10 Minimum number of assisted households

Under the agreement, the number of assisted households may not be less than one (1). This is the minimum number of households needed to keep the agreement in effect

If the number of assisted households is zero for a period of twenty-four (24) months or more, CMHC reserves the right to terminate the agreement. The housing provider may nevertheless apply again for the program at a later date when they become aware of an eligible household. CMHC's commitment in this case will depend on the program budget available at that time.

4.11 Annual household declaration

When requesting annual rental assistance, the household must complete the "Annual household declaration- request for rental assistance" form. In this form, the household must sign a declaration to the effect that the information transmitted to the housing provider, for the purpose of calculating the amount of rental assistance to which it is entitled, is true and complete and that any change in the household composition and/or income, whether it be increases or decreases, will be communicated to the housing provider without delay.

As mentioned in the annual household declaration form, the housing provider has the responsibility of informing the assisted household of the FCHI-2 guidelines, such as reporting requirements, any policies that may impact them such as the over housing charge. The housing provider must also outline the assisted household's responsibilities with regards to FCHI-2 and ensure that the household is aware of the federal investment in their housing.

This form is available on the CMHC website cmhc.ca/fchi.

4.12 Incorrect statement by a household

The household is responsible for providing accurate information related to all parameters of the rental assistance program. As stated in the form “Annual household declaration – request for rental assistance”, in the event that the information provided to the housing provider was incorrect and led to a miscalculation of rental assistance, the household will be responsible for reimbursing any amounts received in excess.

A false declaration can lead to suspension or even termination of rental assistance for this household under the FCHI-2 program, as managed by the housing provider.

5. REPORTS

5.1 Financial statements

Annually, the housing provider will submit financial statements, including a reconciliation of the federal assistance under FCHI-2, to CMHC or its representative within four (4) months following the end of the fiscal year. For the first fiscal year under FCHI-2, the housing provider will submit calculation worksheets for each assisted household in order for CMHC to determine the guaranteed rental assistance amount and the base number of assisted households.

The financial statements and the annual reconciliation of the federal assistance will be subject to an audit engagement performed in accordance with the Canadian Auditing Standards.

These financial reports must be presented as per the format established by CMHC or its representative. Housing providers administered by the Agency for Co-operative Housing can ask their auditors to continue to file an Annual Information Return (AIR).

5.2 Annual report on the use of federal rental assistance

The housing provider must submit a detailed report on the annual reconciliation of federal assistance received under FCHI-2 at the same time as its annual financial statements.

If the reports are not submitted as requested, CMHC and its representative, reserves the right to suspend the federal rental assistance until the duly completed required documents are provided. CMHC or its representative will provide at least thirty (30) days of written notice prior to suspending the payments.

5.3 Annual reconciliation of federal rental assistance

CMHC or its representative will annually reconcile the rental assistance with the annual report on the use of federal rental assistance. This consists of comparing the monthly payments of federal assistance with the amounts of rental assistance granted to the households.

If any provided information is insufficiently clear, CMHC or its representative may request additional information in order to verify that the calculations were done according to the program guidelines.

Any unused amounts will be subject to an adjustment to one or more subsequent monthly payments. In certain cases, the amounts may be requested to be reimbursed via a payment by the housing provider.

CMHC reserves the right to request the refund of amounts that were incorrectly calculated and used to assist households.

5.4 Records and confidentiality

5.4.1 Records

The housing provider is responsible for collecting and keeping personal information about the households relating to their eligibility, household composition and various income sources. These documents may be in electronic or paper form. They must be kept in a secure location and in the strictest confidence for a period not less than seven (7) years, in accordance with the agreement signed with CMHC. They shall then be disposed of securely.

Files on households receiving rental assistance should contain the documents listed below:

- Copy of the lease or occupancy agreement
- All notices of changes in occupancy charge
- All rental assistance calculations by date and accompanied by verified proof of income
- All annual household declaration forms
- Proof of status in Canada for all household members (if applicable)*
- Documents justifying any exception to the occupancy standards (if applicable)
- Court or other documents concerning agreements about the custody or right to custody of any children (if applicable)
- Documents concerning the status of students (if applicable)
- All other correspondence with the household that may relate to the federal assistance

* The annual household declaration will include a statutory declaration to the effect of the right of residence in Canada. If the housing provider has reasonable doubts about the veracity of the information reported, proof of Canadian status may be required.

5.4.2 Confidentiality of information

All information given by households to the housing provider is strictly confidential and must be treated as such. It must be disclosed only to the individuals in charge of performing the calculations. It may be submitted, upon request, to the members of the board of directors, for verification purposes.

All information gathered must be made available to any legitimate authorities that so request, such as the auditor, duly authorized agents of the provincial and federal governments, CMHC representatives, etc.

6. TRANSITIONAL FUNDING

6.1 Allocation of funding

The allocation of transitional funding will be based on criteria in order to serve the housing providers with the greatest needs. Transitional funding assistance is calculated based on the needs of the housing provider and the program funds that are available.

Since program budget for transitional funding is limited, priority will be given to housing providers where there is more risk to financial viability if no such additional temporary operating funding is provided. These groups are considered to be housing providers under the Urban Indigenous housing programs as well as “Deep Subsidy” providers (projects in which the majority of units are assisted and intended mainly for vulnerable individuals).

Transitional funding is offered only once for a period of up to two (2) years.

6.2 Eligible costs

The eligible expenses are operating expenses. Examples include maintenance, utilities, insurance, legal fees and clients' special needs. Other expenses, such as fees for consulting services and professional fees, may be eligible.

This list is not exhaustive and other operating expenses may be considered, at the sole discretion of CMHC.

6.3 Non-eligible costs

Expenses relating to development or renovation projects are not eligible. Examples include construction or renovation costs.

Moreover, advances or deposits paid to consultants or professionals for work to be completed in the future are not eligible, nor are expenses relating to advertising, promotion or fundraising.

6.4 Duration of funding

Transitional funding will be available for two (2) years after the expiration of the existing operating agreements.

6.5 Frequency of payments

The payment frequency will be determined by CMHC following a review of the housing provider's needs.

Payments may be made on an annual basis or as a lump sum. The housing provider can request payments be made on a monthly basis, if it considers that it will benefit from it.

6.6 Business case

In order to determine the funding allocated, housing providers will be called to demonstrate its financial needs in the short and medium term, through a three-year (3) budget.

The housing provider will also be asked to submit the following documents:

- Current year budget
- List of rents (including the list of rents related to the three-year (3) budget)
- Most recent tax account (property and school)
- Most recent Insurance invoice
- The last three (3) approved financial statements , if not already received by CMHC

If the three-year (3) budget includes operating expenses other than the usual expenses, the housing provider must provide explanations in writing when submitting their file.

The three-year (3) budget also allows an opportunity for the housing provider to reflect on actions to be considered and support needed in order to achieve sustainability beyond the two (2) years covered by the transitional funding.

7. ACTION PLAN

7.1 Frequency and approval

The action plan is required throughout the term of the FCHI-2 agreement. Each housing provider who signs an agreement under FCHI-2 must submit a three (3) year action plan within twelve (12) months following the effective date of the agreement. The action plans must be updated every three years, four (4) months before the expiration of the action plan in effect. Housing providers who join within three (3) years of the end of the program must submit an action plan for the period remaining in the program.

After receiving the action plan, CMHC or its representative will review the proposed action plan and will contact the housing provider if there are questions or concerns with the submitted plan.

Housing providers are expected to participate actively and in good faith to support strengthening the community housing sector by improving their own long-term operational practices. While the funding under the FCHI-2 agreement is not conditional to the progress demonstrated in the action plan, it is required that the action plan be kept up-to-date throughout the term of the FCHI-2 agreement by reporting annually on the achievement of the milestones, to allow CMHC or its representative to review progress. More details on the annual review are described in section 7.3.

The progress made throughout the agreement will help achieve the program's overall objectives of strengthening and stabilizing community housing and increasing the operational efficiency of housing providers. This provides an opportunity for housing providers to maximize the use of the resources made available to them, for example, CMHC's National Housing Strategy programs and access to services and funds from the Community Housing Transformation Center.

7.2 Content of action plan

The action plan must demonstrate how the housing provider will progress and strengthen its practices in relation to the four areas described below:

1. Governance

Governance refers to the oversight provided by a housing provider's board of directors with the aim of ensuring that the organization remains economically viable and achieves its social mission. A housing provider is well governed when its board fulfils its fiduciary duties, operates in a transparent and accountable manner and sees to it that effective management is in place.

This can include such things as effective decision-making practices, prudent and efficient management of resources and regular updates to procedures (non-exhaustive list).

2. Social inclusion

Social inclusion refers to process of improving the terms on which individuals and groups engage in the community improving the ability, opportunity, and dignity of those disadvantaged on the basis of their identity. It is a situation in which individuals have the resources and opportunities to be involved in society to an extent that is satisfactory to them. Working towards social inclusion means finding and using measures to reduce barriers that restrict the resources and opportunities of disadvantaged groups.

This can include barrier-free design, inclusivity to vulnerable groups, mixed income/tenure models and a dynamic community life (non-exhaustive list).

3. Financial viability

Financial viability refers to the ability for the housing provider to generate sufficient income to meet its operating expenses and debt commitments and saving for future capital needs to maintain housing in good condition.

This can include activities such as adequate rent revenues and financial planning and operating cost control (non-exhaustive list).

4. Asset management

Asset management refers to the sound practices in place to manage the assets from which the Housing Provider derives its income

This can include activities such as member or tenant relations, budgeting, rent setting, filling units in the property, collecting rents and other income, systematic building condition assessments and maintenance programs to ensure units conform to minimum health and safety standards and that the housing units and project are in a satisfactory state of repair; planning for and carrying out capital repairs and replacements; and protecting the Housing Provider's assets against financial loss (non-exhaustive list).

The action plan does not need to cover all these aspects of the management of a community housing provider. Its content would be heavily based on where gaps have been identified. There are self-assessment tools available to identify areas for improvement.

7.3 Annual review

The achievement of the action plan's milestones will be reviewed annually by CMHC or its representative. The housing provider must submit the results of its achievement of its milestones in an annual report filed at the same time as its financial statements. A template for this annual reporting will be made available by CMHC or its representative.

If an action plan objective is not achieved, the housing provider must identify the corrective action to be taken and the time needed to achieve the objective.

Following the review of the annual financial statements and progress on action plan annual milestones, CMHC or its representative could send recommendations to add or modify objectives identified in the action plan.

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