

Q: What is public housing?

Public housing was established to provide safe, affordable rental housing for eligible low-income families and seniors, and for persons with disabilities, subsidized by public funds

- Tenants pay a monthly rent they can afford based upon gross household income
- The rent paid is for a fully serviced unit
- Units are self-contained, and include stove/refrigerator, heat/hot water

Some units are barrier-free and fully accessible for people with physical disabilities.

Q: Who administers & manages public housing?

Housing Nova Scotia is the government agency that administers the public housing program and provides funding to its five regional housing authorities to manage the public housing program. The housing authorities' primary responsibilities are to:

- Maintain the properties and housing units;
- Determine program eligibility;
- Maintain a wait list management system;
- Verify income of applicants/tenants;
- Calculate rents for tenants using the appropriate rental scale;
- Inspect units before move-in/move out;
- Administer the rent supplement agreements with co-ops, non-profits and private landlords;
- Answer inquiries concerning applications and processing

Q: Do I get to choose between public housing and rent supplement housing?

You can select buildings and locations for public housing, but not specific units or whether you are housed with the housing authority (public housing) or with another landlord (rent supplement).

There is only one standard application form for public housing. The housing authority will offer the next vacant unit (either public housing or rent supplement) to the next eligible, approved applicant on the waiting list.

Q: How long will I have to wait for a public housing unit?

The amount of time applicants remain on the waitlist depends on many factors including applicants' preferred locations to live, readiness to move and the applicant's specific needs.

Applicants who have priority status will be housed sooner than those without this status.

APPLICATION INTAKE, SELECTION & PLACEMENT

Q: Who is eligible for public housing?

Anyone can apply for public housing and should meet the following criteria:

- All household members are legal residents of Canada or landed immigrants;
- Meet municipal residency requirements;
- Fall within the set household income limits;
- For seniors' housing, at least one member of the household is 58-years-old or older.

Applications are available from your local housing authority office. Staff will assist you in completing an application in person or answer questions over the

telephone. Completed applications can be dropped off, mailed, faxed, or e-mailed to the local housing authority office. For contact information, please see the last page of this document.

Q: If I don't meet eligibility criteria, can I still apply?

Yes – housing authorities may accept applications for buildings with vacancies provided that certain conditions are met. The main conditions include:

- The applicant is compatible with residents in a senior citizen building;
- The application is approved by the housing authority board.

Q: How is an applicant selected for a unit?

The housing authority selects applicants based on the following process:

- Once an applicant is approved, their name is added to the housing authority wait list;
- Applicants are placed in order by the date an application was received at a Housing Authority office;
- When a vacancy occurs, a unit is offered to the next approved applicant on the wait list;
- Some applicants with unique circumstances receive priority access.

Q: How are applicants selected for rent supplement?

Unless the rent supplement agreement allows otherwise, applicants are offered rent supplement homes as follows:

- Private landlords – When a unit is available, the housing authority will refer the names from their public housing wait list to the landlord.
- Co-ops – Applicants must be selected from both the housing authority's wait list and the co-op's approved wait list, in alternating fashion.

Q: What if I need a barrier-free unit?

Some housing authorities have accessible units for persons with disabilities. Depending on your disability and circumstances, you may be offered a barrier-free unit. For information on availability of accessible units, contact your local housing authority office.

Q: What is “Priority Access”?

There are specific criteria to be eligible or qualify for priority status. If you are applying for this status, there are standard forms and documentation required to verify your situation.

Special priority may be given to your application if you are moving to escape family violence living in inadequate housing that causes an immediate health or safety risk, or need to live closer to medical services to maintain life-sustaining support services.

Q: How will I be notified about the status of my application?

The housing authority will write to you to confirm if your application is complete and if you are eligible. If you are not eligible for public housing, an explanation is provided in the written notice.

INCOME VERIFICATION, RENT & LEASE

Q: What income do I declare?

You are required to declare gross household income (before deductions), from all income sources, for all household members. However, some income sources may not be used to calculate your rent-geared-to income (RGI).

The housing authority will make any allowable exclusions and adjustments to your source(s) of income in calculating your rent subsidy. All income used in the calculation is verified by the housing authority. The rent calculation is reviewed with the applicant or tenant.

Contact the housing authority for further information on allowable income deductions and adjustments.

Q: Is there an annual review of income for public housing?

Yes - tenant's income is reviewed on an annual basis with rents adjusted to reflect household income changes and to ensure that the household remains eligible. Documentation and verification of income and family composition are required from the tenant in the time and form requested by the housing authority.

Q: How much rent can I expect to pay?

The housing authority will calculate the amount of rent you will pay based on your gross household monthly income.

Tenants pay rent for a self-contained unit, which includes heat, water, hot water, stove and refrigerator. The tenant pays for electricity costs, either through direct payment to Nova Scotia Power or as a surcharge on the monthly rent.

If you are receiving income assistance from the government, the amount of rent is based on the Income Assistance scale. Other adjustments may apply that could increase/decrease the rent you pay.

Q: How does the rent supplement tenant pay their rent?

A rent supplement tenant pays an affordable rent each month directly to the landlord based on the appropriate rate or rent scale, according to the rent supplement program in effect, which includes:

- Social Housing Agreement – rent-gear-to-income (RGI) according to the public housing graduated rental scale or provincial income assistance rate.
- Affordable Housing Agreement - rent-gear-to-income (RGI) at 30 per cent; provincial income assistance maximum shelter component; or student flat rate charge.

The monthly rent supplement paid by the housing authority to the landlord is the difference between the rent charged by the landlord and the tenant's portion of the rent. The tenant should not expect to pay the landlord more than what was calculated by the housing authority.

Q: What is a public housing lease?

Tenants enter a standard lease with the housing authority as prescribed in the Residential Tenancy Act in Nova Scotia. The lease sets the terms and conditions of the agreement between the tenant and the landlord.

Q: What is the requirement(s) of a rent supplement lease?

Tenants enter in a standard lease with the private landlord as prescribed in the Residential Tenancies Act in Nova Scotia.

GENERAL RULES FOR APPLICANTS/TENANTS

Housing authorities' regulations and policies are intended to ensure the health & safety of all tenants and meet the specific circumstances of its buildings. Tenant rules are attached to your Standard Lease Form.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Cape Breton Island Housing Authority

Serving Cape Breton, Richmond, Inverness & Victoria Counties

18 Dolbin Street,

Sydney, NS B1P 6K3

Phone: (902) 539-8520

Toll free: 1-800-565-3135

Fax: (902) 539-0330

Eastern Mainland Housing Authority

Serving Antigonish, Guysborough & Pictou Counties

7 Campbell's Lane

New Glasgow, NS B2H 2H9

Phone: (902) 752-1225

Toll Free: 1-800-933-2101

Fax: (902) 752-1315

Cobequid Housing Authority

Serving Cumberland & Colchester Counties

Amherst office

144 Victoria East

Amherst, NS B4H 4B9

Phone: (902) 667-8757

Toll Free: 1-800-934-2445

Fax: (902) 667-1686

Western Regional Housing Authority

Serving the counties of Annapolis, Kings, Hants West, Lunenburg, and Queens Regional Municipality. Also the Counties of Digby, Yarmouth and Shelburne

New Minas

25 Kentucky Court

New Minas, NS B4N 4N1

Phone: (902) 681-3179

Toll Free: 1-800-441-0447

Fax: (902) 681-0806

Metropolitan Regional Housing Authority

Serving Halifax Regional Municipality

MacDonald Building

2131 Gottingen Street, 5th Floor

Halifax, NS B3K 5Z7

24-hour Switchboard: (902) 420-6000

For Applications: (902) 420-6017

Toll Free: (902) 800-565-8859

Fax: (902) 420-6020