Housing charge assistance

**Purpose of the policy**

1. To set out members rights and responsibilities for receiving housing charge assistance, and
2. To establish a framework for:
	* managing and allocating the subsidy pool in a fair and consistent way.
	* monitoring and assessing the impact of any policy application on all member households and on the economic viability of the co-op, and
	* planning for changes in subsidy and housing charges in response to household changes.

**Policy**

The process for members and the co-op

1. The co-op will verify household income and assess housing charges (income testing) once per year for households with a fixed income and three times per year for other households or when households make new applications for assistance.
2. Households applying for assistance must complete the co-op's housing chargeassistance application form and provide the required proof of household income.
3. Households that do not submit an application form will be assessed the maximum housing charge for the unit.
4. The co-op may ask for further proof of income as required.
5. Households may become eligible for subsidy assistance only after residing in the co-op for one year.
6. The finance assistant will:
* verify that applicants qualify for assistance
* check with membership committee regarding participation
* calculate the amount required for each applicant
* notify the applicant of the assessed housing charge, and
* administer the subsidy waiting list.
1. After the annual income testing, the co-op will give 30 days notice of the assessed housing charge.
2. The co-op may stop providing housing-charge assistance to a household for any or all of the following reasons:
* an increase in income disqualifies the household
* failure to report increases in household income at the annual income testing or the four-month verification period
* willful falsification of the housing charge assistance application form or proof of income
* failure to abide by the housing charge assistance policy, and
* flagrant non-participation.
1. Any member denied assistance or disputing the amount of assistance granted may appeal the decision to the board. The decision of the board is final.

Planning and managing housing charge assistance

1. The co-op will use the annual income testing and an estimate of members' changing needs and demographics to develop annual and longer-term plans for:
* use of housing charge assistance
* ability to fill vacant units with members requiring assistance, and
* possible ways to create more funds for the subsidy pool.
1. The co-op will monitor the subsidy status reports monthly. The financecommittee will make recommendations to the board about the amount of funds available in the subsidy pool.
2. If there is not sufficient subsidy available, the co-op will consider changes to the housing charge assistance policy to limit use of the subsidy and/or to create more funds for the subsidy pool. 30 days notice will be given to members regarding changes to assessed housing charges.

Assessing housing charges

1. The co-op will use a percentage of gross annual household income or a minimum housing charge based on a percentage of the market housing charge to calculate assessed housing charges. The assessed housing charge will be the higher amount of the two figures. If there is not sufficient subsidy available, these percentages may be changed with the approval of the general meeting.
2. The assessed housing charges will not be adjusted for utilities.
3. Member households receiving social assistance or family benefits shall pay the shelter component of the assistance or family benefit.

Changes in income

1. Members must advise the co-op of any change in source of income or any increase in gross household income within 14 days of the change or increase.
2. Members have the choice of advising the co-op of any decrease in gross household income so that their housing charge may be decreased, provided that there are sufficient funds in the subsidy pool.
3. For an increase in housing charge: 30 days notice, the time being calculated from the last day of the month in which the income increase occurred. For example, if a household's increase in income was in mid-September, the housing charge increase would take effect on November 1.
4. For a decrease in housing charge: the decrease will take place on the first day ofthe month after the change is reported.

Subsidy waiting list

1. When there are not sufficient funds in the subsidy charges fund pool and households paying full housing charge apply for assistance, the co-op will establish a subsidy waiting list of members who are eligible for assistance.
2. Households on the subsidy waiting list will be considered for assistance when it comes available. (2007-9-18)

**Procedures needed to carry out this policy**

1. System for collecting, using, filing, sharing and protecting personal information in compliance with PIPA and PIP policies.
2. Forms and documentation required to comply with PIPA.
3. Required proof of income (see CMHC Income Definition Handbook).
4. Co-op's income eligibility guidelines (see CMHC operating agreement, including Schedule B).
5. Schedule for annual income testing and housing charge assessment notices.
6. Grievance process for members to follow when they think their assessed housing charge has been miscalculated.
7. The amounts of mid-year increase and decrease in income specified by the board (Points #15 and 16).
8. Information sheet on eligibility requirements for housing charge assistance.
9. Utility allowances supplied annually by CMHC.
10. Method to annualize income before decreasing or increasing housing charges.
11. Other relevant policies such as the over- and under-housing policy.
12. Method of communication with membership committee, board and management staff.
13. Subsidy status reporting format, including overall monthly and cumulative use of the subsidy pool and status of the subsidy surplus fund.
14. Review any policy changes with management staff prior to approval.

Note: You can find a guide by CHF Canada, *Members helping members how internal subsidy works,* at [**http://members.chfc.ca/eng/pdf/ResourceDocs/subsidy%20web.pdf**](https://web.archive.org/web/20100404121702/http%3A/members.chfc.ca/eng/pdf/ResourceDocs/subsidy%20web.pdf).