

Examining Tenant Disputes at Capital Region Housing: Finding the Most Appropriate Approach to Dispute Resolution.

Julianne Jonas, MADR Candidate

School of Public Administration, University of Victoria

November 2017

Client: Esther de Vos, Director of Policy Research and Strategic Initiatives, Capital Region Housing, Edmonton, Alberta

Supervisor: Dr. Kimberly Speers, Assistant Teaching Professor and MPA Master's Project Advisor, School of Public Administration, University of Victoria, Victoria, B.C.

Second Reader: Dr. James McDavid, Professor, School of Public Administration, University of Victoria, B.C.

Chair: Dr. Astrid Pérez Piñán, Assistant Teaching Professor, School of Public Administration, University of Victoria, B.C.

Acknowledgments

I would like to extend immense gratitude to all those who have assisted me in the completion of my coursework, cooperatives and Capstone for this degree including:

My wonderful classmates, for your words of wisdom, encouragement, and bringing the fun.

My project supervisor, Dr. Kim Speers for making this project possible and for your support, thoughtful review and commitment to my Capstone completion.

To the many teams who supported me at Capital Region Housing, in particular, my Client and Co-op Supervisor Esther de Vos, for creating many valuable learning opportunities and for your inspiring mentorship.

To Superintendent David Veitch for being in my corner from the moment I asked.

To my incredible friends and family for your patience and support, specifically Bruce Mendrikis, for your commitment to my sleep schedule.

Executive Summary

Introduction

Adequate, affordable housing has a tremendous impact on the safety, security, health, and well being of individuals and families internationally (Pomeroy & Marquis-Bissonnette, 2016, p. 9). Affordability issues, compromised physical and mental health, and access to housing remain key factors contributing to core housing need (Fertig & Reingold, 2008, p. 488; Rea et al., 2008, p. 15). Social housing providers are recognizing an increased need for additional housing stock and increased support services for those who face barriers that can make success in tenancy a challenge, putting them at an increased risk of eviction and homelessness (Goldblatt et al., 2011, p. 24; Beer et al., 2006, p. 1-2).

Capital Region Housing (CRH) is a not-for-profit, social housing provider operating in Edmonton, Alberta that offers affordable and community housing programs and rent subsidies to people experiencing housing need. In 2015, they began looking to implement policies and procedures in line with a customer service and eviction prevention focus to ensure vulnerable individuals can remain stably housed. This project, which looks at client dispute approaches, is one component of a number of new initiatives CRH, the client for this project, is implementing to contribute to these efforts.

The majority of the disputes CRH faces with their tenants arise out of the organization's governing legislation in the *Residential Tenancies Act* (RTA) and the *Social Housing Accommodation Regulation* (SHAR). The RTA outlines the rights and responsibilities of tenants and landlords who share a legally binding tenancy agreement. This includes legal termination of tenancies based on the rights of each party and on breaches of the responsibilities of each party, including issues with rental payments, document provision, unit maintenance, and disturbances.

Capital Region Housing is looking to develop a dispute resolution (DR) framework that better addresses the complex needs of clients and reduces the number of evictions that move through Residential Tenancy Dispute Resolution Services and court. This study has been initiated by CRH to provide insight into the most appropriate approach to dispute resolution to create efficiencies for staff and more positive housing outcomes for clients. The research questions are as follows:

Primary research question:

1. What is the most appropriate approach for dealing with client disputes at Capital Region Housing?

Secondary questions are:

1. Are existing dispute processes meeting the complex needs of clients and reducing evictions?

2. How do the dispute systems at CRH affect tenants and various CRH departments?
3. What do other social housing providers do to handle tenant disputes?
4. What do smart practices regarding tenant management entail?
5. What is the most effective and efficient staff resourcing capacity to support a client centered approach to dispute resolution?

Methodology and Methods

The methodology utilized for this project is a formative evaluation of the current client dispute systems operating at Capital Region Housing (CRH). This method was selected as it can be used to analyze processes to determine their effectiveness, and discern where further efficiencies can be created within an existing framework (McDavid, Huse & Hawthorn, 2013, p. 114). In using this methodology, this project aims to reduce financial expenditures, time costs for staff, and assist CRH in adhering to a new organizational culture.

A narrative review of the literature was conducted before and during the research process to help formalize the research aims and objectives, interview questions, and to expand the scope of the study to include smart practices in social housing internationally. The literature serves to inform the recommendations section of the report in conjunction with the findings from the qualitative data. The review included examining scholarly and professional materials on the demographics of social housing clients and the barriers they face in accessing and maintaining their tenancy, common challenges faced by social housing providers with respect to verifying income and managing challenging tenant behavior, as well as smart practices in dispute management and eviction prevention. Literature from Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia is included in the review.

Research methods were qualitative and included interviews and focus groups with CRH staff, community stakeholders, and other Canadian social housing bodies. An online survey was also conducted with participants from the latter two groups. Eighteen qualitative interviews and four focus groups were conducted in total. Each group provided a detailed overview of their dispute process as it pertained to their work and the impacts of these processes on their agency operations, staff, and clients. The questions asked were semi-structured and centered on procedures for dealing with various kinds of disputes, the perceived fairness of these procedures, tenant demographics and challenges, necessary supports to maintain a successful tenancy, and supports needed to proceed through informal and formal dispute processes.

The online survey was intended to expand the scope of the study. The survey questions covered similar content discussed in the interviews and focus groups. Web links were provided to interviewees from the community stakeholder group and Canadian social housing bodies other than CRH, to pass on to others at their organizations they believed would have relevant knowledge and experience to contribute to the research. The survey received a limited number of responses totaling eight, which did not elicit any new themes from the other data collected.

The themes arising from these lines of evidence were used to inform strategic options for the CRH to apply to their existing dispute resolution framework.

Findings and Analysis

The literature provided several resources detailing common barriers that put individuals from diverse backgrounds in need of social housing, challenges for housing providers, and smart practices in social housing management to improve services for clients and prevent evictions. Common barriers for clients are physical and mental health challenges, trauma due to violence and abuse, poverty, and systematic barriers in accessing services. Many challenges for housing providers arise as a direct result of the barriers clients face, including non-payment of rent, compromised or delayed income reporting, non-compliance with maintenance, complaints, and criminal activity. The literature revealed a need for increased supports in organizations dealing with populations experiencing barriers. It also indicated that increased interaction with clients as well as collaboration within and between agencies leads to more successful tenancies for vulnerable individuals and families.

The qualitative data gathered from the interviews, focus groups, and surveys, revealed four key themes, including increasing communication and engagement with tenants, increasing consistency in policy and procedure, addressing tenant barriers, and addressing organizational barriers. The data indicated a need for consistent policy and procedure as well as increased staffing and applicable trainings to ensure a more even distribution of work and to provide staff skills and resources with which to best support their clients.

Examples of effective interpersonal communication between clients and staff were discussed as a key avenue through which to improve service delivery and encourage successful tenancies. These included consistent follow up procedures and staff dedicated to tenant relations, who would perform an increased number of site visits to determine barriers clients may be facing and establish trust relationships as a component of addressing and accommodating these barriers. Referral systems between housing bodies and other social service providers also arose as a theme in the qualitative data.

Options to Consider and Recommendations

A total of seven themes emerged in the literature review, interviews, focus groups, and surveys.

Themes arising in the literature were:

- 1) Common barriers for social housing clients
- 2) Common challenges for social housing providers
- 3) Smart practices in social housing.

Themes emerging from the interviews, focus groups and surveys were:

- 1) Increasing communication and engagement with clients
- 2) Increasing consistency in policy and procedure

- 3) Addressing client barriers
- 4) Addressing organizational challenges

The themes from both lines of evidence had a significant amount of overlap and were condensed into three umbrella themes used to inform the recommendations section of the report. The final three themes include:

- 1) Increasing communication and engagement with clients
- 2) Addressing organizational challenges
- 3) Addressing client barriers.

From these themes, four strategies emerged that have the potential to reduce disputes and evictions at CRH. These are:

- 1) Increasing communication and engagement with clients
- 2) Streamlining policy and procedure
- 3) Implementing adequate staffing and applicable trainings
- 4) Establishing referral and information sharing programs with other service agencies

From these solutions three options were suggested for the organization to consider in innovating their dispute resolution framework as follows:

- 1) Monitor and further evaluate current customer focused initiatives
- 2) Create a tenant relations department
- 3) Establish formal partnerships with community agencies

The costs and benefits of each approach are evaluated in Section 7. The option recommended for implementation at CRH, given the organization currently has limited funding, time, and staff, is Option 3.

Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	II
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	III
INTRODUCTION.....	III
METHODOLOGY AND METHODS	IV
FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS.....	V
OPTIONS TO CONSIDER AND RECOMMENDATIONS	V
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 PROJECT CLIENT	1
1.2 DEFINING THE PROBLEM: CHALLENGES FACING CAPITAL REGION HOUSING	2
1.3 CURRENT STATE: DISPUTE PROCESSES AT CAPITAL REGION HOUSING	3
1.4 RATIONALE FOR PROJECT RESEARCH.....	4
1.5 PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	4
1.6 ORGANIZATION OF REPORT	5
2. LITERATURE REVIEW	6
2.1 INTRODUCTION TO HOUSING VULNERABILITY	6
2.2 COMMON BARRIERS OF SOCIAL HOUSING CLIENTS.....	7
2.3 COMMON CHALLENGES FOR SOCIAL HOUSING PROVIDERS.....	9
2.4 SMART PRACTICES IN SOCIAL HOUSING	11
2.5 SUMMARY OF THE LITERATURE	13
3. METHODOLOGY AND METHODS.....	14
3.1 METHODOLOGY	14
3.2 METHODS.....	14
3.3 DATA ANALYSIS	16
3.4 LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS.....	16
4. FINDINGS: INTERVIEW, FOCUS GROUP AND SURVEY RESULTS.....	17
4.1 THEME 1 - INCREASING EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT WITH CLIENTS.....	18
4.2 THEME 2 - INCREASING CONSISTENCY IN POLICY AND PROCEDURE.....	20
4.3 THEME 3 - ADDRESSING CLIENT BARRIERS.....	22
4.4 THEME 4 - ADDRESSING ORGANIZATIONAL BARRIERS.....	24
4.5 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS	26
5. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS: STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS.....	28
5.1 STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS.....	28
5.2 SUMMARY	32
6. OPTIONS TO CONSIDER AND RECOMMENDATION.....	33
6.1 OPTIONS TO CONSIDER.....	33
6.2 RECOMMENDATION	36
7. CONCLUSION	37
REFERENCES.....	40
APPENDICES	46
APPENDIX 1 - INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT – INTERVIEWS.....	46
APPENDIX 2 - IMPLIED CONSENT DOCUMENT SURVEY.....	52
APPENDIX 3 - SAMPLE INTERVIEW / FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS	57
APPENDIX 4 - SAMPLE SURVEY QUESTIONS.....	60

1. Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the services offered by Capital Region Housing (CRH), their background in the Edmonton community, as well as future objectives of the organization as they innovate policies and procedures considered to be out-of-date. This chapter also provides the context and rationale for the aims and objectives of this research, and informs how this project will be of benefit to the organization moving forward.

1.1 Project Client

Capital Region Housing (CRH) is a not-for-profit, social housing provider operating in Edmonton, Alberta that is incorporated by a Ministerial Order under the *Alberta Housing Act in 1995* (Capital Region Housing, About Us, 2016; Alberta Housing Act, 2000). Previously, the organization was known as the Edmonton Housing Authority (EHA), which was established in 1970 to manage residential properties built and operated with funding from three orders of government (Capital Region Housing, 2010). The growth of social housing projects in Edmonton through the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s created opportunities for the EHA to expand its management services as a contractor of the government.

When the new *Alberta Housing Act* came into effect in 1994, it dissolved housing authorities in favour of housing management bodies and the EHA transformed into Capital Region Housing Corporation (E. de Vos, Personal Communication, January 7th 2017). The organization currently offers affordable and community housing programs and provides rent subsidies to assist individuals who cannot afford market rent and who may otherwise be at risk of occupying sub-standard housing or of homelessness (Capital Region Housing, Programs, 2016).

It is Capital Region Housing's mission to ensure Edmonton citizens have safe, stable, affordable, housing. In 2016, CRH served over 25 000 people comprised of individuals who were tenants, who received housing placements, who applied for housing or were on the waitlist, and those who received rent subsidies (Capital Region Housing, 2016). Internal reports show that as of September 2017, the organization manages approximately 5100 units in over 120 locations in the greater Edmonton area. They currently house 13 980 people in their Community Housing Program, comprised of 7201 children (up to the age of 18), 6505 adults, and 274 seniors. 5741 people are receiving rent subsidies through CRH's two rent supplement programs, and 831 people are residing in affordable housing managed by the organization (Capital Region Housing, 2017).

While the subjects of this research are the staff and stakeholders of Capital Region Housing, the architect and Client of this project is Esther de Vos, the Director of Policy, Research and Strategic Initiatives at CRH. Part of Esther's role at the organization is to develop and monitor research initiatives that will enhance the agency's ability to fulfill its mission and mandates. This includes oversight of CRH departments engaging in research, policy development, education and overseeing the development and reporting of the organization's business plans. Esther has

curated this research to contribute to a wider set of objectives as the organization endeavours become more client focused.

1.2 Defining the Problem: Challenges Facing Capital Region Housing

Due to the strict income cut-off that tenants must meet to be eligible for CRH programs, many are considered vulnerable and face other significant barriers that can impact the success of their tenancy (Goldblatt et al, 2011, p. 14; Social Housing Accommodation Regulation, 1994). This can lead to disputes between tenants and staff arising from a lack of income reporting, breaches of tenancy agreements, and other challenging issues related to mental and physical health and well-being (S. Smok, Personal communication, October 17, 2016).

Capital Region Housing's clientele is diverse, comprised of newcomers to Canada, Convention Refugees, persons who have suffered life changes that have impacted income attainment such as retirement, illness or injury, and persons who were born into poverty who may not have had opportunities for upward mobility (S. Smok, Personal communication, October 17, 2016; M. Redmond & D. Monkhouse, Personal Communication, February 23, 2017; M. Hoosein & E. de Vos, November 17, 2016; Capital Region Housing, 2013, P. 4; Capital Region Housing, 2014, p. 13; Capital Region Housing, 2015, p. 12). These individuals possess a complex set of needs and are often involved with numerous other community agencies receiving income assistance, education, employment training, medical and mental health care and many forms of rehabilitation (Goldblatt et al., 2011, p. 15). These needs can be difficult for CRH to manage from a customer service perspective and as a landlord.

Many clients are challenging to work with due to behavioural and psychological conditions, which can lead to noise complaints and issues such as hoarding (M. Redmond & D. Monkhouse, Personal Communication, February 23, 2017). Others have trouble abiding by rules set out in the *Residential Tenancies Act* (RTA) and CRH lease agreements based on their comprehension levels or barriers that are language and culture based (S. Smok, Personal communication, October 17th, 2016). These barriers can result in non-compliance with the client's responsibilities as a tenant, increasing their risk of eviction.

One of the biggest issues facing CRH is the misrepresentation of documents or income to remain in social housing (M. Hoosein & E. de Vos, November 17, 2016). The organization has a legislative requirement in the *Social Housing Accommodation Regulation* (SHAR) to verify income annually. If household income exceeds the low-income threshold, by law, the individual or family must move out of CRH housing (SHAR, 1994). Many tenants delay providing adequate documentation of their finances to their housing clerks, which is time consuming and frustrating for CRH staff. Others work illegally to avoid documentation of additional income. Illegal work has encompassed a range of activities including under the table labour or service work to more serious criminal activity, an issue common in the social housing sphere and with low-income populations (S. Smok, Personal communication, October 17th, 2016; Kirkcaldy & Brown, 2000, p. 115).

Capital Region Housing has a Crime Free Multi-housing Mandate in partnership with the Edmonton Police Service, which aims to mitigate illegal activity occurring in CRH properties (Capital Region Housing, Crime Free Multi Housing Program, 2016). All tenants must sign an addendum agreeing that they will not partake in any illegal or criminal activity while occupying a CRH unit. According to the addendum, doing so is deemed a substantial breach of the tenancy and the CRH lease agreement, resulting in eviction and any necessary police involvement (Residential Tenancy Addendum Agreement, Capital Region Housing).

Despite these challenges, the organization has a duty to accommodate the needs of their clients and do their best to manage challenges so they can remain in housing. For vulnerable clients, a loss of housing with CRH can mean they are unlikely to find housing elsewhere, putting them in an increasingly precarious position that could end in homelessness. It is up to CRH in conjunction with the other support agencies to help foster successful tenancies for Edmonton's vulnerable citizens.

1.3 Current State: Dispute Processes at Capital Region Housing

The majority of the disputes CRH faces with their tenants arise out of the organization's governing legislation in the *Residential Tenancies Act* (RTA) and the *Social Housing Accommodation Regulation* (SHAR). The RTA outlines the rights and responsibilities of tenants and landlords who share a legally binding tenancy agreement. This includes legal termination of tenancies based on the rights of each party and on breaches of the responsibilities of each party, including issues with rental payments, unit maintenance, and the right to quiet enjoyment of the premises (Residential Tenancies Act, 2004). The main disputes arising out of the *Social housing Accommodation Regulation* are non-reporting or false reporting of income due to SHAR's strict eligibility and continued eligibility requirements (SHAR, 1994). Tenants may not provide adequate documentation of their income, delay provision of their documents, or lie about their current financial condition due to a fear of losing housing (M. Hoosein & E. de Vos, November, 17, 2016; J. Cartwright, Personal Communication, March 15, 2017). It is up to CRH to determine the cause of these issues and whether or not the tenancy can be saved. If the tenant did not understand what was expected of them or they require more time to collect the appropriate documents they can often be accommodated and remain in housing (J. Cartwright, Personal Communication, March 15, 2017).

In 2009, CRH created a Verification Compliance Unit (VCU) made up of licensed investigators to address these issues. Their work is complex spanning disciplines of finance, law, criminal justice, and housing management (S. Smok, Personal communication, October 17th, 2016; Justice and Solicitor General, 2013). Up to this point, there has been no standard set of rules or procedures determining how these inquiries are to be carried out at CRH. There is also no indication whether licensing of the investigator role is still necessary as the organization continues to evolve its practices.

Currently, duties of the investigative team involve contacting and following up with clients who struggle to comply with their lease agreements and/or rules in the legislation. It is the

investigators role to bring them into compliance where possible (S.Smok Personal Communication October 17, 2016; J. Cartwright, Personal Communication, March 15, 2017). Investigators monitor clients and follow up usually over the phone, via letters and occasionally in person, to alert the client of non-compliance, find out why issues are arising and what can be done to save the tenancy as issues escalate. Clients who disregard requests made by investigators, or who remain non-responsive are given a number of formal warnings before being served eviction notices, however, there is little consistency regarding the number of notices they receive prior to eviction and the frequency of contact with the investigators up to this point (M. Redmond & D. Monkhouse, Personal Communication, February 23, 2017). Many of the disputes dealt with by the investigative team result in eviction of the tenant, leading to generous amounts of time spent in Residential Tenancy Dispute Resolution Services (RTDRS) or in court where the tenant can object to the eviction (RTA, 2004). Investigators represent CRH as a landlord, ensuring tenants are held responsible for any legal issues, property damages, payment of rental arrears, and maintenance fees (S. Smok, Personal Communication, October 17, 2016). While these processes may relieve the organization of troubling individuals, they are distressing, time consuming and expensive for all persons involved, and potentially result in vulnerable persons being left without stable housing.

1.4 Rationale for Project Research

Capital Region Housing is interested in determining how the various disputes arising out of the legislation are dealt with in more detail. Despite an eviction prevention mandate, CRH feels too many cases are resulting in this outcome (M. Hoosein & E. de Vos, November, 17, 2016). The RTA has a formalized dispute resolution process through the Residential Tenancy Dispute Resolution Service, to mediate issues between tenants and landlords prior to proceeding to court (RTA, 2004). No formalized process exists for the disputes arising out of SHAR, allowing the organization to deal with them as they see fit (E. de Vos, Personal Communication, November 17, 2016). This project aims to assist the organization in determining if the formal and informal processes in place are best serving their tenants and what actions could be taken to mitigate disputes before they proceed to RTDRS or court to prevent eviction.

Another consideration for this project is the fact that other housing providers deal with tenant disputes in various ways, allocating work relating to tenant fraudulent behaviour, criminality, or complaints to trained officers similar to police, or to specialized audit teams (Ontario Ministry of Housing; B.C. Non Profit Housing Association, 2015). In innovating their tenant dispute processes, Capital Region Housing wants to ensure they are following smart practices from comparable social housing providers. This project will provide the organization a chance to determine what practices are working well in Canadian and international contexts, promote potential partnerships with other organizations, and enhance their programs and policies to best serve vulnerable clients.

1.5 Project Objectives and Research Questions

Capital Region Housing is currently undergoing organization-wide innovation to re-establish its reputation within the Edmonton community by increasing collaboration to maximize operational efficiencies. In August 2015, CRH began looking to implement policies and procedures with a customer focus to ensure fair and respectful treatment of clients during the application process and during their tenancy, prioritizing eviction as a last resort (Capital Region Housing, 2015). This culture shift has prompted research into the way client disputes are dealt with and to determine if these procedures are harmonious with a client-focused culture and a duty to accommodate individuals under the *Alberta Human Rights Act*.

This report is the culmination of research conducted to answer the following questions

Primary research question:

1. What is the most appropriate approach for dealing with client disputes at Capital Region Housing?

Secondary questions are:

1. Are existing dispute processes meeting the complex needs of clients and reducing evictions?
2. How do the dispute systems at CRH affect tenants and various CRH departments?
3. What do other social housing providers do to handle tenant disputes?
4. What do smart practices regarding tenant management entail?
5. What is the most effective and efficient staff resourcing capacity to support a client centered approach to dispute resolution?

The objectives of this project are to inform the executive management team at CRH about the processes utilized and outputs generated by the investigation team and other staff dealing with tenant disputes. It examines the current systems in place to deal with tenant disputes that arise from the *Residential Tenancies Act* and the *Social Housing Accommodation Regulation*, to determine what framework could best serve the organization and its clientele. The literature review conducted for this project provides insight into the challenges social housing tenants face and the operations of comparable housing management bodies to see what their dispute resolution procedures entail. This will assist in determining what efficiencies could be created for CRH should they choose to augment their existing framework.

1.6 Organization of Report

This report is comprised of seven sections including a comprehensive description of the background and challenges facing Capital Region Housing, the methodology and methods used to gather data and an overview of the findings from the literature and subsequent interviews, focus groups and surveys. These sections are followed by a series of recommendations for the organization to consider in innovating their dispute resolution framework. One recommendation is selected as the most beneficial and implementable.

2. Literature Review

This section provides an overview of existing academic and professional data related to the research questions posed. A systematic review of the literature was conducted before and during the research process to help formalize the research aims and objectives, interview questions, and to expand the scope of the study to include smart practices in social housing internationally. A systematic review involves comparing findings from a number of published and professional works closely related to the research topic and discipline to determine common themes arising across the data set (Grant & Booth, 2009, p. 94). The literature serves to inform the recommendations section of the report in conjunction with the findings from the qualitative data.

The literature includes an overview of the demographics of social housing clients and the barriers they face in accessing and maintaining their tenancy, common challenges faced by social housing providers with respect to verifying income and managing challenging tenant behavior, as well as smart practices in dispute management and eviction prevention. While searches were conducted to find data on informal dispute resolution practices used by various social housing bodies, findings were limited, highlighting a gap in the literature. Some of this data could be found on provider websites and in tenant handbooks, though many did not discuss specific informal procedures used by staff and more often highlighted the tenant's right to move through a formal tribunal process to dispute arrears and evictions. Literature from Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia is included in the review. These countries were selected for inclusion based on similar political and administrative systems, regulations, and demographics in need of housing, as well as having a dedicated research discipline on housing policy and practice.

Searches for data were conducted through the University of Victoria library portal and Google Scholar using search terms including but not limited to: social benefit fraud and housing, low income housing - public housing - social housing and crime, managing challenging tenants, social housing and income audits, social housing and tenant management, eviction prevention and social housing, and meeting tenant needs and social housing. Databases of use for this report were Sociological Abstracts, The International Encyclopedia of the Behavioral and Social Sciences, Social Services Abstracts, Social Work Abstracts, Human Rights and Humanitarian Law Collection, Taylor & Francis Online, Sagepub and JSTOR. Various other online publication portals were accessed for information including the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's (CMHC) publication portal, the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute's (AHURI) research library, Housing and Urban Development's User search engine and EDGE Magazine archives, as well as the Cambridge Center for Housing and Planning Research publication archives.

2.1 Introduction to Housing Vulnerability

Adequate, stable, housing has a substantial impact on the health and economic stability of individuals and families. It contributes to positive family dynamics, increased workforce

participation, increased school attendance, and stronger community connections and supports (Pomeroy & Marquis-Bissonnette, 2016, p. 18). For these reasons housing continues to be a key issue for governments and affiliated stakeholders dedicated to improving and preserving the well being of their citizens.

Shelter is one of the largest expenditures for households. While the majority of people in developed nations access rental and ownership housing through the private market, many struggle to afford market rent, increasing their likelihood of living in inadequate housing (Rea et al., 2008, p. 15; Carliner & Marya, 2016). Historically, social housing programs have been developed to address issues of affordability through subsidies and providing rental units at rates based on household income. Because eligibility criteria is based largely on income, demographics of social housing clients can be diverse including individual, family, and senior households of various composition, ethnicities and cultures. However, research indicates that the majority of social housing clients are women and women headed households, which puts them at a far higher probability of exceeding housing affordability benchmarks and experiencing core housing need (Rea et al., 2008, p. 22)

‘Core Housing Need’ is a Canadian term characterizing housing that is unsafe, unsuitable for the size of the household, and unaffordable, defined as payments for housing over 30% of the households income before taxes. This percentage is used internationally as a threshold for housing affordability and is a key indicator of housing need in multiple countries (HUD – “Defining Housing Affordability”, 2017; CMHC - “What is Core Housing Need?”, 2017; New South Wales Affordable Housing Ministerial Guidelines, 2016-17, p. 9). Living in core housing need heightens levels of stress for all persons in the household, which can compound other challenges. Research indicates that while affordability is a leading factor in accessing adequate housing, other supports are necessary to address non-financial barriers to maintain a successful tenancy and maximize positive housing outcomes (Pomeroy & Marquis-Bissonnette, 2016, p.13).

2.2 Common Barriers of Social Housing Clients

Many factors contribute to housing vulnerability including the onset of sudden crises, physical and mental health challenges, shifting life circumstances, impaired cognitive function, addictions, intimate partner violence and several accompanying systemic barriers (Fertig & Reingold, 2008, p. 504; Hinds et al., 2016, p. 1233; Barnaby et al., 2010, p. 29; Clough et al., 2013, p. 680). Persons considered vulnerable often experience more than one of these issues at a time, all of which can be catalyzed and exacerbated by housing instability.

Living in inadequate housing, can result in physical and mental health problems due to increased exposure to environmental threats and maintenance issues that may go unaddressed for long periods of time (World Health Organization, 2010, p. 3-4). Research by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation indicates that stress onset by housing that is unpredictable, unsafe, and unpleasant, can heighten emotionality in adults and lead to abnormal behavior in children (Gifford & Lacombe, 2006, p. 188). Families facing affordability crises may have to

move frequently as their needs change or housing conditions worsen, which can lead to further deterioration of health and cripple their access to support services.

A study by Hinds et al. (2016) indicated that persons applying and on the waitlist for public housing in Manitoba were largely young to middle-aged females, who experienced a higher incidence of chronic illness, mental health disorders and more frequent hospitalizations when compared with a matched cohort from the general population. The study indicated that incidence of health service use correlated highly with applications to social housing and that additional physical and mental health supports could lead to better success in tenancy for vulnerable women (Hinds et al., 2016, p. 1233). Clough et al. (2013) explores Intimate Partner Violence as a cause of increased mental and physical trauma for families accessing public housing. The study indicates that survivors of violence experience ongoing trauma and many related health events that can take a significant amount of time to heal. It further reveals a need for trauma informed supports to best assist vulnerable women and families in accessing housing and maintaining successful tenancies as they cope with existing physical and psychological injuries (Clough et al., 2013, p. 682)

Trauma is a key barrier for persons coming from homelessness, abusive households in youth or adulthood, and refugees and immigrants who have experienced violence and unrest in countries abroad (Booth et. al, 2002, p. 430; Netto 2011, p. 296). Trauma stemming from extended exposure to distress and violence can devastate sense of self, well-being and safety, impacting self efficacy, control, and the ability to manage daily functions (Hopper, Bassuk & Olivet, 2010, p. 80). A study by Collard, Lewinson, & Watkins (2014) suggests persons coping with trauma often have an increased incidence of physical and mental health issues and in some cases self medicate to relieve symptoms and manage anxiety. This can result in addictions, which make them increasingly hard to house and reintegrate into mainstream society (Collard, Lewinson & Watkins, 2014, p. 469). The study also indicates that private market landlords and social housing providers perceive persons with addictions to be high risk given the impact of substance abuse on stable employment and resource management.

Another important theme arising in the literature are barriers created by overburdened, flawed, systems. Vulnerable persons may not know how or where to access the services they need and navigating multiple organizations is time consuming and stressful (Goldblatt, et al., 2011, p. 14-16; National Institute for Health and Care Excellence, 2014). Many providers require personal information and consistent follow up to administer services. This is problematic, as vulnerable and low income individuals may not have personal phones, computers, permanent addresses, or identification. This impacts the ability to collect and securely store personal records, making document provision a critical challenge (Woolley, "How does a lack of ID impact housing?", 2016). Eligibility criteria can also be a barrier for people accessing housing. Persons with existing criminal records, who are under the age of 18, or who qualify for other assistance such as subsidies in the private market, may have their applications cancelled despite qualifying based on income (Goldblatt et al., 2011, p.12).

Providers of social services experience stress and dissatisfaction when they are unable to best assist persons in need. Overwhelming case-loads and a lack of available resources make their work challenging and unrewarding, which can impact the nature of interactions with clients (Johnson et. al 2005, p. 180). Current research indicates it is in the best interest of social housing bodies and other service providers to become more responsive and adaptive to the complex barriers clients face to best assist them in overcoming personal and financial vulnerability (McClellan Grey & McCracken, 2007, p. 298; Meschede, 2011, p. 86).

2.3 Common Challenges for Social Housing Providers

Given the discussion of barriers above, it is clear providers of social housing and other social services experience significant challenges in working with vulnerable populations. The most common challenges are rental arrears, non-compliance with maintenance, disturbances, and disputes among tenants, all of which are leading causes of eviction internationally (Beer et al. 2006, p. 31-32; Goldblatt et al., 2011, p. 13; Clark et al., 2017, p. 17). Other common problems arise from failing to produce documents for eligibility and continued eligibility purposes, misrepresenting income, and committing criminal acts.

Because the majority of social housing residents have little income, many do not pay rent in a timely manner or at all. Though many receive social benefits, this is often not enough to cover rent and other necessary expenses as the cost of living continues to increase. Others may not have the self-efficacy to put rent money aside due to addictions, compromised cognition or health challenges (Beer et. al 2006, p. 52). Nonpayment of rent is a breach of the tenancy agreement, resulting in eviction if the tenant remains non-compliant. It is difficult for many providers to be lenient on such black and white issues as this can result in an unmanageable build up of arrears for the tenant and financial losses for the agency. Non-compliance with maintenance produces similar tensions for social housing providers. This issue can arise due to misunderstandings regarding tenant responsibilities, especially for new immigrant populations, or inability to comply due to compromised health and well-being (Rodriguez et al., 2012, p. 2; Netto, 2011, p. 296).

A study by Rodriguez et al. (2012), explores hoarding as a precursor to eviction, indicating that many people with Hoarding Disorder often experience evictions or threat of eviction (p. 2). Hoarding obstructs critical exits and can cause damages to the unit resulting in significant distress for housing providers who must maintain units in accordance with legislation. However, evicting clients with disabilities such as Hoarding Disorder can be considered a human rights violation. Compounding stress and negative social outcomes for vulnerable people violates key health principles of housing according to the World Health Organization (1989, p. 14) and Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Act (1948). It is therefore imperative that housing bodies find ways of balancing the accommodation of challenging tenants and protection of their assets.

Complaints are commonplace in the private and social housing sectors. Tenant Handbooks outline complaints procedures and encourage tenants to document disturbances and issues

with neighbours, however this can be challenging to enforce (Ottawa Community Housing - Tenant Guide, 2017; Queensland Government – “Complain about Noisy Neighbors”, 2017). Common practice for providers is to encourage tenants to work out the issue, make referrals to mediation or other forms of dispute resolution, or escalate their complaint to a Landlord Tenant Advisory Board or municipal council should the issue persist (Capital Region Housing, “Tenant Relations”, 2016; Jacobs et al., 2003, p. 7-8, 11-12).

Little academic literature exists on fraudulent activity in social housing specifically. However, the existence of international strategies for dealing with housing benefit fraud indicate misrepresenting income, misrepresenting persons living in the household, or subletting in breach of ones tenancy agreement, are common challenges. In 2013 the UK introduced the *Prevention of Social Housing Fraud Act* after the government probed into the issue and found approximately 100 000 residences to be the subject of fraudulent offenses. The Act has made dishonest subletting and failure to maintain the unit as the primary residence criminal offenses, punishable by fines and jail time (Prevention of Social Housing Fraud Act, 2013). Individual housing providers regulate investigations into these activities. Your Homes Newcastle utilizes multiple teams and staff to verify income, including their Anti-Social Behavior Team, Tenancy Management teams, and the City Council Housing Benefit Audit and Fraud Investigation Team (Your Homes Newcastle, Tenancy Fraud Policy, 2015).

In Canada, B.C. Housing verifies tenant income through an auditing process, which can occur through random selection, a request made by a housing provider, or by someone calling in a tip (B.C. Non-Profit Housing Association, 2015). If the audit finds errors in income reporting, the tenant may face eviction or back payments for rental arrears. The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) implemented an online income verification system called Enterprise Income Verification, which stores personal employment and income information, including social benefits, for residents in public housing programs. The system alerts public housing authorities if a resident has provided a false SSN or if they failed to report accurate income information based on the stored records (HUD, “Enterprise Income Verification System”, 2010). The online system limits the ability of persons to misrepresent income and eliminates potential human error associated with miscalculating rent. Many providers indicate the importance of accurate income reporting in their Tenant Handbooks and indicate that non-reporting of income or purposeful misrepresentation of income will jeopardize their tenancy. This is an important issue for housing providers whose job is to serve those in core need of housing. Evicting households who have adequate income to pay market rates ensures the persons receiving social housing are those who need it most.

High crime rates in social housing were previously linked to centralization of public housing projects creating large, poverty stricken, areas that were often poorly maintained (Hartley, 2014, p. 1). A study by Lens (2013, p. 31) on linkages between crime rates and public housing in the United States, indicates that criminal activity and victimization rates in subsidized housing are more closely related to the inherent disadvantages experienced by vulnerable populations. This includes persons who may have come from homelessness who are adjusting to life in housing who may be triggered to commit criminal or other indecent acts by their guests or in

relapse. Others may commit non-violent acts such as shoplifting to acquire food and supplies as income levels remain very low. Many social housing providers still use criminal record checks to weed out tenants with a history of criminal behavior which is increasingly controversial as an existing criminal record does not indicate the likelihood of reoffending and does not indicate a person will harm or disturb other residents (HUD - "Supporting Re-entry of Formerly Incarcerated Individuals", 2016, para. 7).

The United States developed the One Strike rule in attempts to eradicate the use drugs and drug related criminal activity in public housing, however issues with discretion and the definitions of criminal activity in the policy made it difficult to enforce (Moye, 2003, p. 287-288). Australia has recently adapted this policy to include both One and Three Strike rules, where the Three Strike rule can be applied to any breach of tenancy documented by the landlord that can be disputed by the tenant up to three times before they are evicted (Martin, 2016). The One Strike rule is similar to a "without notice" termination procedure, which applies to offenses related to drug trafficking, serious illegal activities and violent acts causing harm to landlords or other residents (Martin, 2016, p. 264). Landlords can implement criminal conduct as a breach in the lease agreement, giving the provider the right to evict based on criminal activity. While evicting tenants for criminal behaviour remains their right, it is important to consider the level of harm created by the acts committed and outcomes of eviction for persons who may have few housing options left open to them.

2.4 Smart Practices in Social Housing

The literature surrounding smart practices in social housing addresses many concerns for clients and providers, including maintenance and asset management, accommodating challenging client barriers and fairness in terminating tenancies (Kenley et al., 2010, p. 12; Horvath & Mydin, 2012, p. 1539; McClean Grey & McCracken, 2007, p. 298-299; Dunn, Greenberg & Sundarraj, 2008, p. 135-136).

Maintenance has been raised as a key challenge for both providers and clients of social housing. Issues with maintaining units are common precursors to eviction, which can violate the rights of individuals and social housing mandates.

A study by Horvath and Mydin (2012) provides an overview of best practices in maintenance management as one of the most essential and challenging components of public housing service. They explore avenues to incorporate tenant feedback to better inform providers about what is working and where gaps remain, indicating that the voice of the tenant is an important component in streamlining operations to be satisfactory. They suggest bulletins and simple surveys to obtain feedback as well as increased communication and engagement with tenants through site visits and public meetings to be effective avenues to respond to tenant concerns and source suggestions for improvement (Horvath & Mydin, 2012, p. 1539). The study also touches on the need for housing bodies to understand what is required to maintain their stock specifically, taking into consideration the physical layout and design, condition, and age, to better understand associated costs and timelines for repairs (p. 1540). This can then be

communicated to tenants as well as other housing bodies in an information sharing capacity to allow best practices to flourish.

Kenley et al. (2010) support these strategies in a report for the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI). Their examination of international practices for managing housing assets suggests a shared research practice is necessary to improve definitions and consistency in maintenance services. They touch on the role of asset managers in governance, indicating that where discretion could be used to implement better practice based on expertise, some do not see the point under the context of the policies in place (Kenley et al., 2010, p. 4). Therefore it is important for foster communications to increase operational efficiencies at all levels of housing organizations.

Managing the needs of tenants who suffer from physical and mental health challenges as well as trauma and other difficult barriers is important to ensure they can maintain successful tenancies. When it comes to managing and best assisting clients with complex barriers the literature reliably demonstrates that increased support services are key (McClellan Grey & McCracken, 2007, p. 299; Kerman et al., 2017, p. 2; Canavan et al., 2012, p.6). A Canadian study by Kerman et al. (2017) suggests a lack of resources to be an overarching barrier in providing additional staff supports and supportive housing programs for people with complex barriers. However, they indicate that increased partnerships between mental health and housing agencies is a fundamental way to create more effective access to services for these clients to help them maintain stable housing (p. 10).

This finding is supported by Canavan et al., (2012) who examined barriers to care for homeless people with mental illness in 14 European cities. Mental health care experts interviewed in the study confirmed that increased collaboration between mental health care and homeless services; specialized mental health care teams and professionals to work with clients, and mental health outreach, assisted in solving housing problems and were crucial to improving support services and effective care for homeless populations (p. 6). Increased agency collaboration can be applied to many types of support services and client barriers and has been suggested as an avenue to benefit immigrants and refugees who face additional language barriers, which cause extreme challenges in accessing supports during resettlement (Netto, 2011, p. 296).

Increased support and referrals from knowledgeable staff may have a drastic impact on the rate of evictions for those who are challenging to house (Bleasdale, 2006, p. 39). Despite this, evictions are often warranted and must be handled promptly and fairly by housing providers to the best of their ability. All housing bodies have legislation defining eviction processes, however discretion can be used to ensure reasonable processes especially for vulnerable tenants. Dispute Resolution Tribunals have been introduced in multiple countries as a solution to reduce the stress, time and costs associated with eviction and increase fairness for tenants who can better navigate legal proceedings (Slatter and Beer 2004, p. 3; Residential Tenancy Dispute Resolution Service, 2017). Outcomes from dispute resolution tribunals may not always end in an eviction. Payment plans and other orders can be made to provide additional chances for

vulnerable parties to keep their housing and to enable providers to ensure due diligence when proceeding with eviction at a later date (Residential Tenancy Dispute Resolution Service, 2017).

A study by Dunn, Greenberg and Sundarraj (2008) on termination of voucher assistance in the US, indicates that fairness in termination procedures includes a chance for people to review and respond to the grounds for termination presented by the housing authority. It also indicates a clear need for impartiality in tribunal proceedings as hearing officers inevitably have a final say in the outcome of the dispute (Dunn, Greenberg & Sundarraj, 2008, p. 138). The article also suggests that a logical first step to ensuring fairness in any eviction or termination practice is a critical examination of the impacts of these processes on the people who undergo them (p. 147). While housing bodies have little control over these aspects of the tribunal process, they can control the rate at which they utilize dispute resolution and court proceedings for eviction purposes. Implementing eviction prevention strategies like the ones suggested above can limit the amount of time and resources spent in termination proceedings to the benefit of the organization and its residents.

2.5 Summary of the Literature

The literature provided several resources detailing common barriers that put individuals from diverse backgrounds in need of social housing, challenges for housing providers, and smart practices in social housing management to improve services for clients and prevent evictions. There is a dedicated research discipline regarding barriers and challenges faced by vulnerable populations in accessing social services and housing, however data related to specific dispute practices and eviction prevention strategies utilized by housing bodies was more limited. Common barriers for clients are physical and mental health challenges, trauma due to violence and abuse, poverty, and systematic barriers in accessing services. Many challenges for housing providers arise as a direct result of the barriers clients face, including non-payment of rent, compromised or delayed income reporting, non-compliance with maintenance, complaints, and criminal activity. The literature revealed a need for increased supports in organizations dealing with populations experiencing barriers. It also indicated that increased interaction with clients as well as collaboration within and between agencies leads to more successful tenancies for vulnerable individuals and families.

3. Methodology and Methods

3.1 Methodology

The methodology utilized for this project is a formative evaluation of the current client dispute systems operating at Capital Region Housing (CRH). This method is used to analyze processes, determine their effectiveness, and discern where further efficiencies can be created within an existing framework (McDavid, Huse & Hawthorn, 2013, p. 114). In using this methodology, this project aims to reduce financial expenditures, time costs for staff, and assist CRH in adhering to a new organizational culture.

This evaluation utilizes a mixed method framework, relying heavily on a smart practices approach to inform Capital Region Housing of what other social housing providers and social workers engaging with vulnerable populations are doing to manage their needs. Qualitative research examines the implications of certain processes and systems by gathering detailed, descriptive, data about the experiences of those using them (Patton, 2014, p. 56). This study uses multiple methods including interviews, focus groups and an online survey to collect data detailing the experiences of important stakeholder groups and CRH staff, in working with challenging clients. Smart (or what is sometimes called promising) practices encompass a review of procedures proven to work in other organizations that can be customized for use in a target organization to implement effective change (Vesely, 2011, p. 108). This will help to inform recommendations for CRH moving forward.

Interviewees were selected via purposive sampling, inviting participants to partake in the project based on having specific expertise relevant to the research objectives (Palys, 2008, p. 697). See Appendix 3 for interview questions. The project client, Esther de Vos, determined the most effective recruitment process would be to approach persons at organizations already affiliated with CRH in some capacity, increasing their familiarity with staff and the organizations objectives. Participants from other social housing bodies across Canada and community agencies in Edmonton working with a similar demographic, were contacted via email by the researcher or the project client, depending on the nature and formality of the working relationship.

The Human Research Ethics Board at the University of Victoria reviewed the proposed project prior to participant recruitment. Issues of risk and potential harms to participants were deemed minimal and the project received a Certificate of Approval on March, 13, 2017 (Ethics Protocol # 17-080).

3.2 Methods

The research methods used for this project were qualitative comprised of interviews, focus groups and an online survey. These methods are commonly used in social sciences and social work research, which places value on experiential knowledge in decision-making to empower others, sometimes referred to as empowerment evaluations (Goldblatt et al., 2011, p. 9; McDavid, Huse & Hawthorn, 2013, p. 551). For example, a study by Goldblatt et al. (2011) in

Edmonton, AB, for the Systematic Barriers to Housing Initiative, conducted 47 interviews with 20 local agencies to detail the stories and experiences of professionals working with vulnerable individuals. This evidence was used to create a mutual understanding of barriers for the agencies involved and to jointly develop solutions to improve service provision for Edmonton's vulnerable communities (p. 5). Another study by Mckeary & Newbold (2010) evaluated barriers to health care for Refugees in Hamilton, ON. They conducted 14 interviews with health care and social work professionals to determine what barriers existed and to make recommendations, which included culturally competent care and sensitivity training for health care professionals engaging Refugee populations. These studies illustrate the effectiveness of qualitative methods in obtaining rich, detailed, insights into the experiences of professionals working with vulnerable populations, and how those insights help to determine the effectiveness of the policies and procedures they utilize.

For this project, 18 qualitative interviews and 4 focus groups were conducted with 3 stakeholder groups. While interviews were the primary method selected for this project, focus groups were added due to more than one individual expressing interest in participating at some organizations. As such, there were no significant differences between the questions asked and content discussed between the interviews and focus groups (see Appendix 1 and 2 for interview questions for individuals and focus groups). Participant groups are as follows:

- Group 1 was comprised of CRH staff from multiple departments
- Group 2 was comprised of staff from community organizations in Edmonton who frequently work with CRH tenants
- Group 3 was comprised of staff from other social housing providers across Canada.

In total 51 persons were contacted across the 3 stakeholder groups to participate in the study of which 38 agreed to participate. This included 19 persons from Capital Region Housing, 10 persons from other social housing bodies, and 9 persons from various community agencies.

Originally, 20 interviews were conducted, however one participant's data was left out of the study because they failed to return their signed informed consent document to the researcher. 4 focus groups were conducted, 2 of which took place at CRH, the first of which had 5 participants and the second of which had 4 participants. The third focus group was conducted with the Calgary Housing Company in which 5 people participated. The fourth focus group was conducted with the Multicultural Health Brokers in Edmonton, AB, also with 5 participants. The length of the interviews and focus groups varied depending on the detail of the responses received. Interviews ran between 26 mins to just over an hour. Focus groups were approximately 1.5 hours long.

Each group provided a detailed overview of dispute processes as it pertained to their work and the impacts of these processes on their agency operations, staff, and clients. Questions asked during the interviews and focus groups centered on procedures for dealing with various kinds of disputes, the perceived fairness of these procedures, tenant demographics and challenges, and necessary supports to maintain a successful tenancy, including supports needed to proceed through informal and formal dispute processes. Questions were semi-structured to guide and

maintain consistency across data sets while allowing the researcher to probe for further elaboration from respondents (Patton, 2014, p. 962).

The online survey was intended to expand the scope of the study, allowing more individuals interested in contributing to the research the opportunity to do so without monopolizing a significant amount of time for them or the researcher. The survey questions covered similar content discussed in the interviews and focus groups. Web links were provided to interviewees from Groups 2 and 3 to pass on to others at their organizations they believed would have relevant knowledge and experience to contribute to the research. A limitation of this method was that the researcher was unable to follow up directly with persons who received a survey link to prompt completion of the survey. The survey received a limited number of responses totaling eight, which did not elicit any outlying themes from the interview and focus group data. The number of persons provided the survey links at other social housing bodies and community agencies is unknown.

3.3 Data Analysis

A conceptual and thematic analysis of the literature was conducted using standard data reduction procedures of thematizing and coding (Berg and Lune 2012, p.56) The conceptual analysis provides a sense of the narrative context from which the data was collected and recurring themes were analyzed to determine gaps in current dispute practices at CRH as well as possible improvements to inform recommendations for the organization (Dierckx de Casterle et al., 2011, p. 364-365). Interviews and focus groups were similarly analyzed; however, required careful transcription prior to review and thematization. Survey data was collected via Survey Monkey, which provides a statistical breakdown of the responses. Open-ended questions were reviewed and coded in the same manner as the qualitative interviews and focus groups.

3.4 Limitations and Delimitations

An initial limitation of the study is that CRH up until recently has had a limited data collection discipline. As such, not much data exists on the practice of dispute resolution or the results of efforts made by staff dealing with client disputes. This will make historical information difficult to access and because much of what is shared by staff will be pulled from memory, the reliability of this information may be compromised.

Another limitation to consider is that some staff may have been sensitive to a research presence during discussions. Preliminary introduction of this study to some CRH staff groups was received with caution. This may have altered behaviour of the teams in ways that could distort research results. The researcher was able to establish a rapport with the team to increase trust and familiarity prior to the interview process, which may have served to counter this limitation.

Important to note is that while this project only focuses on tenants living in or applying to live in CRH housing, other challenges facing the organization involve their rent subsidy clients in relation to income reporting, which may be addressed in subsequent studies.

While commencing this research the regulations stipulating eligibility requirements for social housing in Alberta were under review by the Ministry. While the changes have had important impacts regarding eligibility requirements for clients, including income assessment for eligibility, and legislative terminology shifts, they did not impact existing dispute resolution processes for housing bodies in Alberta and will not have an impact on recommendations regarding DR strategies raised in this report.

4. Findings: Interview, Focus Group and Survey Results

The following chapter highlights key themes arising from the interviews, focus groups and surveys used to inform recommendations for Capital Region Housing (CRH) regarding innovations to their dispute resolution framework. Questions asked during the interviews and focus groups centered on procedures for dealing with various kinds of disputes, the perceived fairness of these procedures, tenant demographics and challenges, and necessary supports to maintain a successful tenancy, including supports needed to proceed through informal and formal dispute processes. Survey questions were simplified but covered similar content. Data from all three methods is grouped together in the sections below as the content discussed and themes arising with the most frequency did not change significantly across the methods. The discussion of themes is instead broken into the three respondent groups, as the agencies interviewed were of varying size, tenant demographics and had different levels of expertise regarding certain subjects, which had an impact on how themes were raised and how challenges were experienced.

Overarching themes that arose with the most frequency were: increasing effective communication and engagement with tenants, increasing consistency in policy and procedure, addressing client barriers, and addressing organizational challenges.

4.1 Theme 1 - Increasing Effective Communication and Engagement with Clients

Important themes regarding communication and engagement with clients were a general lack of understanding on the part of clients and the effectiveness of various communication strategies and subsequent impacts on the success of clients in housing. All groups indicated it is imperative that clients understand what is expected of them when applying for and residing in social housing. A lack of understanding regarding documentation provision (for eligibility and during tenancy), application processes, tenant and landlord responsibilities and expectations, as well as impacts of the governing legislation, consistently arose as a primary concern for all participant groups.

Group 1 – CRH Staff

CRH staff reported communications with clients to be one of their biggest challenges due to the volume of clients in staff portfolios and inconsistency regarding follow up procedures. All CRH staff agreed communications are handled in person, through phone calls, or by letter, and that the frequency of communication varies depending on the client's needs and their level of compliance. Several Group 1 participants indicated that they feel an increase in communication with clients is important especially if they are having trouble abiding by their lease agreements and are at risk of eviction. They indicated that more emphasis on informal communications such as phone calls and site visits, have the potential to mitigate issues before they escalate to the point of issuing eviction notices. It was suggested that a team dedicated to tenant relations would be of benefit to the organization for this reason.

Many Group 1 participants commented that communication in person would be more beneficial than relying on letters to get important information to clients. Letters are a standard part of follow up communications at CRH throughout the year for various reasons including maintenance, rent adjustments, annual income reviews and eviction notifications. While a phone call often precedes a letter, it was reported that if the client does not answer the phone the letter becomes the primary method of communication regarding the issue. The majority of CRH staff interviewed feel this is ineffective and often burdensome for staff and clients as often letters are not received, or language barriers make written information difficult to interpret. Only one participant from Group 1 indicated that with effective organization and consistent follow up communications via letter is manageable.

Some Group 1 participants indicated that communication between departments was also a challenge and expressed that not all teams were on the same page regarding communication and follow up procedures due to a lack of information sharing and outdated policy and procedure. This finding overlaps with content from Theme 2.

Group 2 – Community Agencies

As an external stakeholder of CRH with a vested interest in their client's success in social housing, leading concerns for Group 2 had to do with the clarity of information clients are receiving, the consistency of messages being received, and the forms of communication being used by CRH staff. Participants from this group indicated that low literacy levels and speaking English as a second language were barriers for many of their clients. This can create problems for them in complying with agency expectations, resulting in an increased number of disputes and evictions.

Group 2 participants indicated similarly to Group 1 that letters and notices were an ineffective form of communication. Many clients experience literacy issues or fear reading letters due to content being overly authoritative. Others may not receive letters at all due to housing instability, children in the house losing mail, or a gap in understanding of the importance of a letter from CRH. Several participants indicated that using 3rd party agreements is an effective way to counter these challenges and increase the efficiency and effectiveness of communications for all parties involved. Group 2 participants also expressed interest in increasing translation services for clients who do not speak English as a first language to combat these challenges.

Several participants from Group 2 indicated that CRH staff demeanor and body language also played an important role in the ability of clients to interpret agency expectations and suggested that training to improve this area of communications would be beneficial.

Group 3 – Other Social Housing Bodies

Other social housing bodies also indicated that communications are handled in person, through phone calls, letters, and notices, however significant differences were noted in how much of

each of these forms of communication are utilized depending on the agency's specific staff compliment. Housing providers from Group 3 that employ in person communications as a primary form of contact with clients reported lower eviction rates and an increased understanding of client barriers, resulting in more successful tenancies. They also reported an increased willingness on the part of the tenant to communicate with staff as interpersonal communication was perceived as less intimidating and allowed staff members to establish a trust relationship. Several organizations in Group 3 reported having a team of staff dedicated to on site visits with tenants. These staff are referred to as Tenant Relations Officers, Tenant Community Workers, Tenant Liaisons, or more generally, staff committed to tenant relations. Organizations that reported having this staff compliment indicated that relationships with tenants were mostly positive and that a very small percentage of people end up proceeding through formal dispute procedures or eviction.

4.2 Theme 2 - Increasing Consistency in Policy and Procedure

A need for consistency in agency operations was an important theme raised by all three groups interviewed. CRH staff concerns pertained specifically to shifts in operations over the years and a lag in policy and procedure to accompany them. Community agencies were concerned primarily with simplifying the procedures for populations experiencing barriers so that clients can better understand what is expected of them. Social housing bodies echoed some of the themes expressed by CRH, that consistency between departments is imperative to ensure proficient service delivery and to aid in the success of their tenants in housing.

Group 1 – CRH Staff

Participants from CRH indicated that as policy, procedure, and staffing have shifted over the years, there have been significant gaps left in training platforms and operational procedures between and within departments and that this can lead to challenging interactions with clients. Staff touched on the fact that many programs operate at the organization and therefore clear policies and procedures for each are necessary. This will allow staff to clearly inform clients what options are available to them and help clients to apply for and secure housing that is the most appropriate for them.

Overall Group 1 expressed concerns with consistency in several areas of their work including communications with clients and external partners, correspondence and document collection, follow up procedures, training procedures, and in some cases interpretation of the legislation. Many Group 1 participants indicated updated policies and training platforms would increase organizational efficiency and effectiveness and reduce the number of disputes that arise with clients as well as the number of cases escalating to formal dispute processes. One participant expressed that management must lead by example, ensuring their interactions and advisement across departments is consistent.

Another theme raised by Group 1 was the tension inconsistency creates between staff members, impacting the ability of teams to rely on each other for support and serving to increase an already demanding workload when tasks require rework. Updated policy and training platforms would enable staff to support each other when necessary and assist teams in maintaining a unified front with clients and external stakeholders.

Group 2 – Community Agencies

Participants from community agencies have similar concerns to Group 1, indicating that procedures at CRH are very complex and time consuming. Since many clients face barriers that impact their understanding of the systems and expectations regarding social housing, consistency in the information and education they receive from CRH must be a top priority. They explained that clients lack an understanding of why certain processes occur and what their role is as they move through the application process, into, and out of housing. Many participants expressed that a gap exists due to inconsistent communication procedures and inconsistent interpretation of policy and procedure between staff members at CRH.

Suggestions to combat these challenges are for the community agencies to facilitate client education, as they have an excellent understanding of what information is most perplexing for their clients based on their specific barriers and language constraints. One participant from Group 2 indicated that in some cases legal expertise is required to assist persons moving through dispute resolution processes and evictions and indicated interest in creating a referral program to ensure CRH clients can get the help they need to understand these processes and their rights within them. Other suggestions were for social workers advocating for clients to have a singular contact at CRH to streamline communications without being bounced around, as well as an increase in the use of 3rd party agreements so that advocates are consistently contacted instead of the client.

Group 3 – Other Social Housing Bodies

Larger social housing providers from Group 3 expressed similar concerns as the first two groups. They indicated that clients do not always interact with the same staff member each time they contact the organization and therefore it is imperative that staff members be able to maintain a unified front and be able to step into each other's roles as needed to ensure clarity of information. Group 3 participants also indicated that consistency, specifically in communicating expectations to clients and in following up on issues raised, increased their ability to eradicate problems before they escalated to formal dispute procedures or evictions. For example, more than one participant indicated using a three-strike policy in which clients are informed upon move in that 3 breaches of the tenancy agreement will result in eviction. Therefore, if tenant is evicted they are aware they had ample opportunities to address issues with staff and understand the part they played in the eviction process.

Participants from other housing bodies expressed a reliance on their team for support to handle heavy caseloads and to ensure best practice is being carried out based on the needs of

the client and the standards of the organization. Several participants indicated they often have team meetings to discuss strategies for dealing with difficult tenants and that having teammates who know what is happening with their clients helps to bridge gaps in staffing.

Another subtheme raised was the occasional need for housing bodies to use discretion in order to best accommodate the needs of the client. Participants from Groups 1 and 3 suggested that there is room for discretion when dealing with various issues that can impact tenancy, however formal policy must be operationalized in such a way that discretion is not confused with inconsistency.

4.3 Theme 3 - Addressing Client Barriers

A large component of the conversations with all 3 participant groups centered on common barriers faced by clients, some of which have been touched on in the previous themes. Understanding and navigation of complex systems was the barrier raised the most consistently across all groups. The majority of participants indicated that many of their clients have differing expectations surrounding housing that have been formed by regional cultural differences and experiences of poverty and homelessness. This can create challenges when moving clients into a streamlined living environment where expectations often differ from their previous arrangements.

Group 1 – CRH Staff

Common barriers that create challenges for CRH staff are mental health and addictions issues, as well as low cognition and a lack of experience regarding Canadian housing legislation and expectations due to new immigrant status.

Group 1 participants indicated mental health is one of the most challenging barriers when it comes to keeping people housed. Many disputes arise because tenants in buildings get frustrated with frequent disturbances or feel unsafe. They indicated these issues are difficult to address informally because clients experiencing mental health challenges often refuse to let staff into their units. This limits the amount of help they can receive. However, formal forms of dispute resolution are also inappropriate as these clients are considered vulnerable and in some cases are unable to represent themselves in formal proceedings. Several participants from Group 1 indicated some kind of support worker to help de-escalate tense interactions with persons experiencing episodes related to mental health would be very useful and would likely combat some of the challenges and miscommunications experienced as they would have a higher level of expertise regarding the needs of persons facing these challenges.

Group 1 participants suggested addictions result in similar problems for tenants and between clients and staff. Often other tenants complain about the smell of drugs, raise safety concerns, or sometimes believe the person who is an addict to be engaging in criminal behavior, which is difficult for housing staff to prove without extensive investigative resources. Group 1 participants explained that persons who suffer addictions experience similar barriers to those

detailed above, oftentimes forgetting or not having the resources to pay their rent and in some cases expressing distrust towards staff who have grounds for eviction when their addictions impact their responsibilities as a tenant. Some participants expressed sympathies for persons facing these barriers and indicated a willingness to accommodate while others indicated that clients must learn to take responsibility for their choices and that oftentimes eviction is warranted.

Another common challenge facing CRH staff is working with clients whose first language is not English. Many participants indicated that often these clients are told they need translators especially upon signing a lease, however the agency cannot provide them due to lack of funding and clients rarely show up prepared. This impacts their ability to comprehend what is required of them and creates tension for CRH staff members when information cannot be properly communicated. Some suggested solutions from CRH participants are providing translation services electronically, or hiring a more diversified staff that can speak multiple languages.

Group 2 – Community Agencies

Social service providers commented at length on the influx of clients who are new immigrants and refugees and that the structure of housing can be difficult for them to acclimate to. They explained that for many the Canadian climate compounds challenges when it comes to unit maintenance. For example, some new immigrants are accustomed to leaving windows open regularly, however in a harsh winter climate this can cause the pipes to freeze and burst which they then have to pay to repair. This can lead to rental arrears that are difficult to pay back and if left too long can jeopardize a client's tenancy. Several Group 2 participants detailed the grief they share with clients who are evicted for these reasons after having waited a very long time to receive housing. Tenant education on housing responsibilities was discussed as an avenue to combat this barrier. Many participants expressed interest in programs like Ready 2 Rent, being offered by CRH and other tenant education platforms in the community. One interviewee suggested having clients complete courses as a precursor to receiving their keys and suggested if this were made mandatory clients would comply.

Group 2 participants with considerable knowledge of homelessness indicated persons who were previously homeless also face challenges in acclimating to a stable housing environment. They often do not remember to pay rent and do not understand that having guests stay for extended periods is not tolerated in social housing. Further to this, two participants indicated that persons who were previously homeless often experience survivors guilt and feel compelled to shelter friends who may still be on the street, not realizing this may jeopardize their tenancy. One provider indicated that survivors guilt increases the likelihood clients will be preyed on, having their money and property stolen and causing damage and disturbances in the unit, potentially jeopardizing the tenancy. Multiple participants suggested increased collaboration and referral services between housing providers and community organizations as a solution to reduce these barriers for clients.

All groups expressed a need to training to be trauma informed to best support clients who experience the effects of past or ongoing trauma. It was also expressed that in general creating a culture of leniency and accommodation, especially for persons who are learning to live in stable conditions is imperative to their success in housing.

Group 3 – Other Social Housing Bodies

Other social Housing bodies indicated experiencing similar challenges with regard to client barriers as Group 1. They find mental health and addictions to be common among their client base and often will make referrals to external supports to manage them. One participant from Group 3 indicated a partnership with PACT teams (police and social workers specializing in mental health) has been an effective way to address these concerns.

Participants from this group also indicated that reduced cognition and physical limitations due to age can also compromise housing. Seniors sometimes forget to pay rent and can be physically unable to clean and properly maintain their unit on their own. Organizations housing seniors must make hard calls regarding the appropriateness of housing for certain people who may need to transition into assisted living environments. One participant detailed experiences with senior clients' adult children trying to live illegally in the unit, which can also be a difficult cycle to break.

Clients who are first time renters experience similar barriers to newcomers and senior populations, they may not understand what is expected of them and need help adjusting to paying for and maintaining a unit. Frequent site visits and education has been discussed throughout the interviews as avenues to assist clients who require a better understanding of housing legislation, processes, and tenant responsibilities.

Another subtheme that arose was that social housing providers often have difficulty defining the identity of their services. Most felt they were not strictly a landlord or a social service provider. Many participants from Group 3 indicated this was a difficult line to draw and that it impacted the nature of daily decision-making. One housing provider indicated they identified as a housing organization with a social service aspect. Some Group 1 participants expressed similar feelings in their interviews.

4.4 Theme 4 - Addressing Organizational Barriers

Four main issues that stood out as organizational barriers are a lack of time, a need for increased staffing, limitations of the legislation and the lack of housing stock. Participants from all three groups explained that while many clients are low maintenance and require little contact, clients with more complex challenges require a immense amount of follow up and this can disrupt effective time management. While almost all participants indicated increased interpersonal communications with clients would be beneficial in reducing disputes, several indicated that they don't have enough time to commit to doing so. Time was also a concern in formal dispute resolution procedure. All participants provided a description of

their workday at the beginning of the interviews and it was clear that the majority of them have an overwhelming workload and are responsible for multiple roles. Many participants across the groups indicated a desire to do more in a day to better serve their clients. Many also indicated that when they feel overburdened it is difficult to be their best selves on the job and that this can impact interactions with clients, creating potential for disputes.

Group 1 - CRH Staff

Many Group 1 participants indicated that it can take a significant amount of time to prepare for and proceed through Residential Tenancy Dispute Resolution (RTDRS) and court procedures. It was also indicated that if they receive a conditional order for a client, ensuring compliance with the order takes a significant amount of follow up. For some clients compliance breaks down over time, resulting in agency staff appearing multiple times in RTDRS with the same client. CRH staff reported this to be incredibly frustrating.

While Group 1 indicated many of the inefficiencies they experience are due to inconsistencies in procedure, this was paired with a need not only for more staff to handle heavy caseloads, but the right kind of staff to ensure a certain caliber of service delivery. Participants indicated a need to develop self-care both at home and in the workplace to ensure they can better cope with tense and emotional interactions during their workday. Increased staffing was suggested as a way to combat burnout and improve interactions with clients. This would also serve to combat concerns around time management, as an increase in staff would decrease the number of clients in each portfolio. This would afford staff more time to follow up with clients and to engage them in a more interpersonal capacity.

Group 2 – Community Agencies

Group 2 participants had concerns with the complexities and outdated nature of housing legislation and procedures given the current needs and demographics of vulnerable populations. This aids in the confusion experienced by clients who may already have trouble interpreting complex legislation and for whom certain rules and regulations may not make sense for their specific case. One Group 2 participant pointed out that many low-income clients are not great record keepers and therefore providing a significant amount of paperwork to fill out an application for housing can be overwhelming and in some cases impossible. Some participants felt CRH asks for a superfluous amount of information from clients upon applying for housing and felt many procedures could be simplified to better accommodate the client.

Group 2 participants expressed that they understand what its like to be short staffed as many of their agency staff are also highly overworked. It was noted by some that they noticed when CRH has a staff shortage because the lines are longer and feedback takes much longer which causes anxiety for advocates and clients.

Another comment made by several participants was a lack of housing options for individuals and families. They expressed that many are still on the waiting list because there is a lack of

housing stock. One participant from this group expressed concern regarding aging in place, indicating that once a certain income threshold is reached they must move out of social housing, which may place them back in unfavorable circumstances if they cannot yet afford market rent.

Group 3 – Other Social Housing Bodies

Group 3 participants expressed the same concerns with time and caseload constraints as CRH staff. While the majority indicated they feel their operations are generally working well, many still indicated the volume of responsibility they have is a challenge. Referral to support services was commonly raised as a solution to deal with limited staff resources.

Many participants from this group also indicated the legislation makes it difficult to meet client needs. Income thresholds compromise the supports made in the community and can cripple the potential for upward mobility when clients move out of social housing before they are ready. Another piece of legislation creating challenges for social service and social housing providers is the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FOIP). All groups indicated support for 3rd party agreements as a way to increase the success of vulnerable persons in social housing, however information sharing has become increasingly complex creating challenges for service providers to communicate with one another regarding their clients. This was specifically raised as an issue for Social housing providers in communicating with Police. Several participants from Group 3 indicated that Police involvement is not unusual when dealing with criminal occurrences in units, however there are strict limitations on information sharing between Police and housing providers, making proceedings in RTDRS and Court less efficient and effective. No solutions were suggested to combat issues regarding legislation. Participants feel they have little control over the limitations of the legislation and in many cases feel powerless in this regard.

4.5 Summary of Findings

The qualitative data collected from research participants elicited similar findings to the literature with regard to client barriers and challenges faced by social housing providers. However, it touched specifically on the need for consistent policy and procedure as well as increased staffing and applicable trainings to ensure a more even distribution of work and to provide staff skills and resources with which to best support their clients. Specific examples of effective interpersonal communication between clients and staff were discussed as a key avenue through which to improve service delivery and encourage successful tenancies. These included consistent follow up procedures, especially for agencies using letters as a primary form of communication, and staff dedicated to tenant relations, who perform an increased number of site visits to determine barriers clients be may be facing and establish trust relationships as a component of addressing and accommodating these barriers. Referral systems between housing bodies and other social service providers also arose as a theme in the qualitative data as a way to help clients navigate complex social systems and enhance information sharing, improving service provision for all parties involved.

5. Discussion and Analysis: Strategic Implications

This section provides an analysis of key findings from the literature and qualitative data sets. Common themes arising from both lines of evidence will be examined and used to analyze strategic implications for Capital Region Housing's dispute processes. This discussion will inform recommendations for the organization outlined in the following section.

5.1 Strategic Implications

The literature review and qualitative data elicited several solutions for Capital Region Housing to consider as they innovate their dispute resolution (DR) framework. These solutions fall under three main themes, condensed from the original seven that arose from both lines of evidence as follows:

- 1) Increasing communication and engagement with clients
- 2) Addressing organizational challenges
- 3) Addressing client barriers

Suggested solutions include:

6. Increasing communication and engagement with clients
7. Streamlining policy and procedure
8. Implementing adequate staffing and applicable trainings
9. Establishing referral and information sharing programs with other service agencies

The solutions falling under each of these themes are preventative occurring informally at the front end of the DR continuum presented in Figure 1. Research participants indicated that the formal procedures of Residential Tenancy Dispute Resolution (RTDRS) and court are generally effective in getting a result once a dispute escalates to that point. While these processes can be time consuming, expensive, and distressing for staff and clients, they are the only formal processes in place outside of mediation through Landlord Tenant Advisory Boards or action on the part of external advocacy groups (CPLEA, Dispute Resolution, 2015). The literature touches on the fact that housing bodies have little control over the formal processes in place as these are the legislated under the *Residential Tenancies Act* and once in motion it is up to a hearing officer or judge to decide the outcomes of the disputes. As such, housing bodies have the most control over informal approaches to DR, which should aim to reduce the number of disputes proceeding through RTDRS and court. The implications of preventative DR solutions for Capital Region Housing are numerous and for the purpose of this discussion are broken into the three themes above.

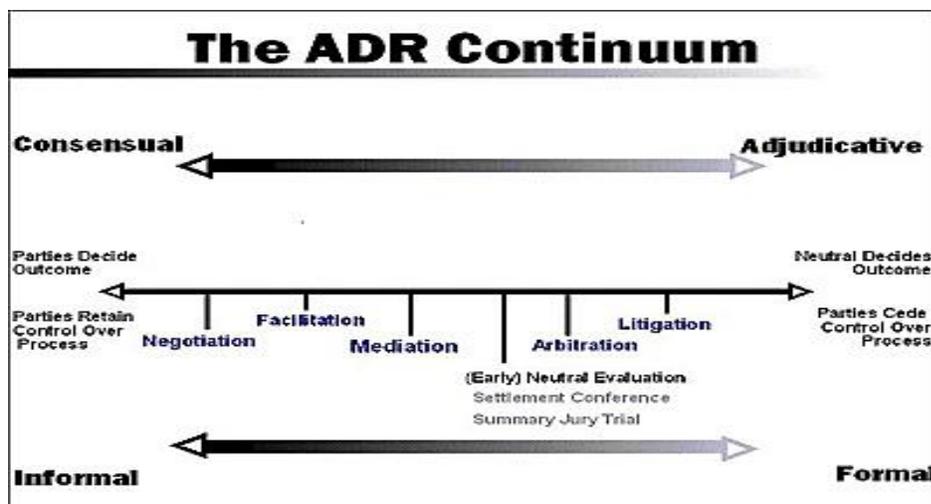


Figure 1

Source: Adapted from New York State Unified Court

System, <http://www.nycourts.gov/ip/adr/images/continuum2.j>

1. Increasing Communication and Engagement with Clients

The largest theme arising out of the qualitative data and literature was a need for more effective communication with clients as well as increased interactions between agency staff and clients. All lines of evidence indicate that interpersonal contact reduces stress and anxiety for those who struggle to navigate social service systems, and with continued compliance in social programs (Goldblatt et al., 2011, p. 7; Anonymous, Personal Communication, April 2017). Currently, CRH staff deal with very high case loads and the majority of communications between staff and clients take place over the phone and through a multitude of letters from the point of application to the end of the tenancy. Staff from multiple agencies indicated that letters are an ineffective form of communication for a number of reasons and suggest increased interpersonal communication would be more beneficial for all parties. One suggested solution is having staff dedicated to tenant relations. These staff have varying levels of interaction with clients based on their needs. Participant groups employing this staff compliment indicated an initial assessment within a few months of securing a tenancy was beneficial to determine the needs of the client and if they could be addressed by the housing provider or if referrals to other supports would be necessary to aid their success in tenancy. The purpose of staff in this role as reported by Group 3 participants, is to build relationships and trust with tenants, assist with problem solving during the tenancy, make referrals to support services should the client require them, and liaise with other departments and agency staff regarding housing concerns. CRH does not currently employ staff in this role, however the majority of Group 1 participants indicated a need for increased communication and connection with clients to assist in diffusing issues before they escalate to more formal DR processes. CRH staff indicated that they feel often disputes escalate too quickly and without enough follow up in the informal stages. Many indicated adopting a tenant relations strategy may be an effective way to reduce disputes and

potential evictions. A strategy like this would compliment the organizations emerging customer focus policies and eviction prevention mandate.

Another suggestion to improve communications for CRH clients, deemed successful by many social housing providers interviewed, is implementing translation services either electronically, using tools like Google Translate, hiring translators to attend the organization on a full or part time basis, or by hiring a diverse staff that can speak multiple languages. This would reduce communication errors attributed to language barriers, which are a common challenge for populations accessing social services and housing, especially for newcomers (McKeary & Newbold, 2010, p. 5).

Finally, consistency in communication and follow up is necessary to ensure the success of clients in their tenancy. All participant groups indicated a need for adequate trainings and updated policy manuals to ensure staff understand their role in executing effective communication. An example of a policy that positively impacted communications with tenants for some interviewees is the three-strike eviction strategy. Staff alert tenants prior to signing their lease and during their tenancies that if they receive three warnings from the landlord for breaches of tenancy they will be evicted. This system provides the client opportunities to rectify issues that may be impacting their responsibilities as a tenant and reduces confusion surrounding the termination of the tenancy once three warning notices have been served. Policies like this reduce ambiguity for staff and clients and can empower individuals to take responsibility for their actions. Utilizing policies like this as a component of CRH's DR framework could reduce the number of disputed evictions that arise. They could also be used to prompt site visits and phone calls to clients when they receive warning notices, creating an opportunity for interpersonal communication.

2. Addressing Organizational Challenges

Streamlining policy and procedure in general was raised consistently in the qualitative data as a component of effective DR. Many Group 1 participants indicated there is no consistent policy framework currently in operation at CRH and that this is a holdover from years of operational ambiguity and recent culture shifts. CRH is currently implementing customer-focused policies and updating their standard operating procedures to align with their current mandate. As discussed above, this has larger implications for the organization with regard to staffing and training. It is also critical to have a framework in place to evaluate policies, ensuring they are serving their intended purpose (McDavid, Huse & Hawthorn, 2013). Certain efforts by the organization are already being recognized by local agencies who indicated they have experienced a positive shift in their working relationships with CRH.

Many Group 2 participants reported increased transparency in their interactions with the organization and commended the commitment to new initiatives like Ready 2 Rent, a tenancy education program. While new programs are starting to take shape, concerns by CRH staff remain ensuring departments are on the same page in implementing new policies and smart practices. Consistency in execution not only ensures clients understand what is expected of

them but will enable staff to lean on each other for support in handling the needs of their diverse clientele.

Adequate staffing and skill building are a precursor the success of many of the suggested DR solutions arising in the themes. A lack of time was raised a significant barrier for housing providers impacting their ability to effectively communicate with tenants and their demeanor on the job, which can serve to escalate disputes. CRH has uncertain levels of funding year to year and it is difficult to determine the amount of resources that can be allocated to staffing. CRH currently invests time and resources in employee trainings, though many staff indicated implementing adult based learning initiatives would improve their engagement and information retention during these sessions. Important training for staff dealing with vulnerable populations that arose in both lines of evidence are trauma informed support, practical safety precautions and de-escalation techniques, and a basic understanding of legal procedure and court etiquette for staff working in RTDRS and court. Other feedback indicated that training itself is not enough but making the training applicable to the daily work of agency employees is essential in ensuring its effectiveness.

3. Addressing Client Barriers

The solutions suggested in the previous two themes serve to address client barriers in numerous ways. Streamlined communications and operational procedures, appropriate staffing, specialized skill building, and a tenant relations strategy, all have the potential to expose client barriers and provide increased support to clients in accessing necessary assistance. Another strategy deemed highly effective in the literature and interviews is fostering working partnerships with agencies commonly interacting with or providing services to CRH clients. This may include medical and mental health supports, recovery centers, counseling groups, AISH, Social Assistance and other income supports, employment and education centers, resettlement agencies, other housing providers, legal aid, and the Police. Increased information sharing and referral services would improve CRH staff's knowledge of client needs, increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of service provision for all parties. It also improves advocacy for clients, simplifying their navigation of multiple services.

Many Group 2 participants reported an interest in partnering with CRH on initiatives such as education seminars for clients and staff. Many also indicated an interest in the use of 3rd party agreements for ease of information sharing and to improve communication for clients who may not speak the language or who find agency interactions overwhelming due to trauma or health related challenges. CRH staff also indicated an interest in strengthening relationships with other agencies for additional support and expertise in their day to day work and to allow for increased options to present to clients if CRH programs are not an ideal solution for them in the short term.

Increased communication with other agencies may also brings attention to problem tenants that may be creating and perpetuating conflicts in buildings. This could increase the number of

appropriate evictions on the part of CRH, relieving the agency of persons who are not eligible to be living in social housing or who may be causing significant harm to those around them.

5.2 Summary

This section presented several solutions suggested in the literature and qualitative data that CRH could implement to reduce the number of disputes the organization deals with and to assist in preventing disputes from escalating to formal processes and eviction. These solutions demonstrate success in answering the primary and secondary research questions.

All three lines of evidence suggest that the current systems in operation for dealing with disputes at CRH are not meeting client needs and are resulting in a higher number of evictions than the organization feels is appropriate given their shifting mandate. The findings suggest dispute systems currently cost the organization and its clients a significant amount of time and money and cause stress for all parties involved. The literature and qualitative data suggest other social housing providers tend to utilize more informal communications and make a number of referrals to support services to handle challenging barriers for clients that often cause disputes. Best practices in social housing gleaned from the literature and qualitative data indicate fairness in operations and specifically in formal dispute processes is imperative. Neutrality is considered a key component of healthy tenant/landlord relationships and in tribunal processes to ensure clients are not targeted due to personality clashes.

The literature also suggests that customer service strategies that allow the clients voice to be heard are a very successful as this can expose barriers and allow providers to better meet the needs of their client base. Re-orienting how clients are communicated with as issues arise would cut down on the volume of follow up necessary by staff and enable clients to better comprehend expectations to comply with CRH requests. The best staff compliment to allow for this kind of open communication is a Tenant Relation's Department with the capacity to make frequent site visits and referrals to supports services for CRH clients.

This section has outlined the implications of the suggested solutions for CRH clients, staff and external stakeholders. While these solutions may serve to reduce the barriers clients face and improve service provision overall, it is important to consider that some clients will continue to challenge rules and regulations and may never be comfortable or successful in interacting openly with housing and social service agents. While every effort should be made to accommodate these clients, it is important to consider that the solutions presented are most effective where parties are willing to work together to improve circumstances. It is also important to acknowledge that appropriate evictions on the part of the organization should be considered an effective form of dispute resolution.

6. Options to Consider and Recommendation

The following section highlights three options for Capital Region Housing to consider in innovating their dispute resolution framework. It is important to note that each option has been selected and presented assuming the organization will receive no additional funding for implementation; however, it is possible CRH could use this project as leverage to receive additional funding for innovations of this nature. A staggered approach to implementation can be utilized to offer opportunities to evaluate progress, as well as more time to adequately staff and fund initiatives on an ongoing basis.

6.1 Options to Consider

1. Ongoing Evaluation of Current Customer Focused Initiatives

Capital Region Housing is already undertaking several steps to become more client centered of which this project is one component. The hiring of a new executive management team and the creation of a Policy, Research, and Strategic Initiatives Department in recent years has enhanced the research discipline at the organization, making staff more aware of the needs of the client base they are currently serving. This is contributing to the implementation of new initiatives that enhance service delivery to meet their needs, including tenancy training programs, customer journey mapping, customer focused policies and new sets of standard operating procedures. One option for the organization to consider is to see how the current shifts towards a customer focused model of operation impacts client relations and disputes as these initiatives become increasingly streamlined.

Next steps in implementing this option would be collecting dispute and eviction statistics to monitor how many are occurring. This could include the type of dispute, why it arose, how it was handled and by whom. This complements the agency's increasing dedication to data collection and research. Given that many new initiatives have been implemented in the past year, the agency's research team could conduct program evaluations in late 2018 to determine the effectiveness of new programs and their subsequent impacts on the well being and success of clients in housing.

Benefits of this approach:

- No additional financial costs to the organization
- No additional time costs
- No additional staff apprehension
- Current initiatives may have the effect of reducing disputes and evictions as clients and community stakeholders become aware of and engage them with more frequency.

Drawbacks of this approach:

- No added benefit to staff with regard to new trainings and opportunities outlined in this project

- Risk that current initiatives may not have a significant impact on dispute resolution systems and evictions.
- Cannot be leveraged for additional funding

2. Creation of a Tenant Relations Department

The second option, supported heavily in the qualitative data is to implement a Tenant Relations Department with a team of staff whose full time role is tenant oversight, management, and referrals. They would be a main point of contact for all clients upon move in, until move out, making frequent site visits and establishing relationships with clients to increase information sharing and address needs as they arise. These staff would encourage clients to be more forthcoming about the issues they are experiencing personally and other problems they observe in housing. This role would be educational, supportive and disciplinary, as this team would also enforce eviction protocols proceeding to RTDRS and court when disputes escalate. This would be beneficial to the tenant, as they would proceed through the formal processes with a staff member they are familiar with and who can connect them with additional legal supports if required. However, it is hypothesized that the increased interpersonal contact and trust relationships built during the course of the tenancy would reduce the number of disputes escalating to that level.

The organization could go about implementing this role in multiple ways. While hiring new staff for the creation of this department may be beneficial as they would come into the role with a fresh perspective and training based exclusively on the existing customer focus and eviction prevention mandate, it will be time consuming and expensive for the organization to proceed through a formal hiring process and locate funding for the creation of an additional department. Alternatively CRH could re-distribute current staff with an interest in the position or augment the role of the investigative team, with their consultation, to include tenant relations responsibilities. Given the investigative team is small, additional hiring may still be necessary to best support the volume of clients in CRH housing. This approach relies on the ability to dedicate a significant amount for time to clients with complex barriers; as such adequate staffing is imperative. The agency would need to conduct appropriate trainings for staff taking on this role such a trauma informed care, training related to various psychological conditions, addictions support, cultural barriers, and potentially training in legal procedures so they can better assist clients in this aspect of dispute and eviction processes. Appropriate protective apparel will also need to be provided to staff making regular site visits.

Benefits to this approach:

- High likelihood of reducing disputes and evictions
- High likelihood of improving relationships between staff and tenants
- Increased referral services to address client barriers
- The creation of new opportunities and training for staff in line with an eviction prevention mandate.
- Leverage for additional funding to innovate the DR framework and increase staffing

Drawbacks of this approach:

- Associated financial costs of hiring and training, and outfitting staff
- Associated time costs for hiring, training, policy implementation and client education
- Increased staff apprehension of new role and additional responsibilities
- Potential apprehension of tenants as site visits and interaction with CRH staff increase

3. Establish a Formal Partnership Program with Community Agencies

Another option supported in the project findings is the creation of a formal referral and support program with agencies that work with a similar client base regularly. Many service providers spoken with for this project indicated they work with CRH clients often. They also indicated support for information sharing and advocacy through increased use of 3rd party agreements, and referral services and agency cross training, would benefit staff at their organizations, staff at CRH, and the clients whom they support. CRH staff indicated that additional support and expertise from teams who specialize in mental health, trauma, and cultural support would be helpful in addressing and accommodating the complex barriers many clients face and would increase their comfort level when experiencing difficult interactions.

This option proposes CRH create formalized partnerships with the organizations their staff and clients interact with most frequently. The partnership would see various staff at CRH and stakeholder organizations sign a memorandum of understanding dedicated to collaborating on a regular basis to offer cross training and opportunities for clients such as education sessions, outreach, and advocacy. While it is recommended CRH work with a small number of staff from each agency in a more complex outreach role to increase familiarity with clients, the MoU's could extend to the organizations as whole and include updated lists of services, updated contact lists, and an information sharing component such as a monthly bulletin to inform each other of key changes in legislation, policy, and procedure. This would enable all staff avenues to improve service delivery.

Next steps in implementing this option would be to reach out to various agencies that CRH interacts with the most frequently, to determine interest and capacity to participate. Meetings would need to take place between the stakeholders to determine what kind of collaboration, training, and information sharing would be most implementable and beneficial. The creation of MoU's would need to be undertaken by the policy teams at each agency as well as potential avenues to evaluate the partnerships and amend them as needed to ensure they are as effective as possible. Trainings regarding the partnership would need to be carried out with the staff involved, to alert them of changes in processes and operations and to ensure the partnership is being implemented consistently and effectively.

Benefits to this approach:

- No additional staffing necessary
- High likelihood of improving relationships between staff and tenants, potentially reducing disputes and evictions
- Increased referral services to address client barriers

- Leverage for additional funding to innovate the DR framework

Drawbacks of this approach:

- Associated time costs to attain buy in, develop the program, and train staff
- Associated financial costs for networking, marketing and client education
- Less direct approach to eviction prevention

6.2 Recommendation

As illustrated above, option 3 allows the organization to improve relationships between staff and clients through increased partnerships and referral services with community stakeholders. This takes the burden off of CRH staff to perform a heavy support role that the organization may not have the capacity for in the immediate future and instead allow staff to support clients through referrals to other agencies who may be better equipped. This option enables CRH staff to gain critical knowledge and skills through cross training that will assist them in addressing complex barriers more effectively, potentially reducing disputes. This will also improve transparency between agencies, allowing for more efficient data transfer and advocacy for clients. As an added benefit this will educate other agencies in the social service community about the current initiatives CRH is undertaking to enhance their service provision and eviction prevention mandate.

In addition, option 3 can be implemented as a preliminary step in the creation of a tenant relations department for the organization at a later date. Increased referral services are a large component of the support provided by tenant relations teams suggested in option 2. Having a referral framework already in place and increasing the knowledge and skills of CRH staff through cross trainings may ease the transition of staff into a tenant relations role. Therefore the recommended approach for CRH at this time is option 3.

While option 3 is the best approach for Capital Region Housing to reduce disputes based on current funding and staffing limitations, it is important to recognize that option 2, the creation of a tenant relations department, would have a more direct impact on dispute and eviction prevention. This research has demonstrated that the majority of disputes arise due to gaps in communication and understanding on the part of staff and clients. It is imperative that CRH invest more resources to improve these interactions when they are able to do so as an important component of their customer focus mandate. The agency will need to hire and train additional staff to decrease overburden and enable more interpersonal contact with clients. They may also need to invest in services such as onsite translators to improve communications. While a formalized Partnership Program is a good first step to increasing awareness, skills and more effective advocacy for clients, it is recommended that option 2 be implemented when the organization has the capacity to do so effectively.

7. Conclusion

The purpose of this project was to assess the existing dispute resolution systems in operation at Capital Region Housing and to develop a DR framework in line with the organizations current customer focus and eviction prevention mandate. This included identifying where gaps currently exist, smart practices of comparable housing bodies, and the staff compliment deemed most appropriate to assist CRH in reducing the number of disputes arising, reducing the number escalating to formal DR processes, and resulting evictions. The research strategy employed included a narrative review of the literature to determine smart practices and to enhance the understanding of client barriers and subsequent challenges in housing. It also included several qualitative interviews, focus groups and a survey conducted with CRH staff, other social service agencies in Edmonton, and other housing bodies in Alberta, British Columbia and Ontario, to help determine current challenges existing in Canadian social housing and the processes utilized to address them.

Findings from all lines of evidence suggested several complimentary solutions to housing challenges and for managing complex client barriers. However, the qualitative data addressed organizational barriers at CRH specifically and touched on the need for consistency, policy development, and adequate staffing to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery.

These findings informed the options and recommendation determined to be the most implementable and beneficial for CRH given its current capacity and funding limitations. The recommendation proposed is to create a formal partnership program with other community agencies providing supports to CRH clients and with whom CRH staff interact regularly regarding referrals and client advocacy.

Limitations in the data collection for this study consisted of a limited scope and limited data discipline at CRH prior to commencing the study. 19 interviews and 4 focus groups were conducted with 38 participants and 8 people responded to the survey. While this was enough to inform recommendations for this project, employing similar research in the form of a questionnaire or a more complex survey could expand the scope significantly to gain additional insights into dispute resolution strategies employed by other organizations. CRH might also consider surveying their client base on what they feel the most pressing issues are concerning the handling of disputes and evictions at CRH. The survey could ask whether or not they would feel comfortable increasing personal interactions with CRH staff. This would inform the organization of what supports for clients and trainings for staff may be necessary prior to implementing a Tenant Relation's Department should they choose to do so.

Gaps were discovered in the academic literature with regard to specific dispute resolution practices employed in social housing. While some of this information could be obtained from provider websites and organizational reports, it seems many organization are still honing best practices regarding dispute management and eviction prevention strategies. Information sharing between agencies to establish best practices was recommended in the concluding comments of many articles in the literature. There is also limited data available regarding fraudulent activity in social housing specifically. This report touched more heavily on complex

client barriers as catalysts for non-compliance, misreporting of income, and behavioral challenges as a rich data set has been established on these issues.

In conclusion, Capital Region Housing is already implementing initiatives in line with a customer centered philosophy and service model. The current aim of the organization is to find ways to accommodate vulnerable clients to ensure they can remain safely housed, improving their quality of life, and enabling their upward mobility. This report provides an assessment of what is working and some additional ways the organization can augment their dispute resolution framework to enhance positive impact in Edmonton's social housing community.

References

- Alberta Housing Act, Revised Statutes of Alberta, chapter A-25, (2000). Retrieved from <http://www.qp.alberta.ca/documents/Acts/A25.pdf>
- Barnaby, L., Penn, R., & Erickson, P. G. (2010). *Drugs, homelessness & health: Homeless youth speak out about harm reduction*. (The Shout Clinic Harm Reduction Report). Retrieved from http://www.wellesleyinstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/WI_Webinar_HRNAPPP_Feb2010_v1.pdf
- B.C Non-Profit Housing Association. (2015). *W04 – How much is the rent?: Verifying tenant income and assets* (PowerPoint Slides). Retrieved from http://bcnpha.ca/wp_bcnpha/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/W4-How_much_is_the_rent_BCNPHA.pdf
- Beer, A., Slatter, M., Baulderstone, J., & Habibis, D. (2006). *Evictions and housing management* (AHURI Final Report No. 94) Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne. Retrieved from <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/94>
- Berg, B. L., & Lune, H. (2012). *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences* (8th ed.). Boston: Pearson.
- Bleasdale, M. (2006). *Supporting the housing of people with complex needs* (AHURI Positioning Paper No. 89). Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne. Retrieved from <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/position-papers/89>.
- Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. (2017). What is core housing need? Retrieved from https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/hoficlincl/observer/observer_044.cfm
- Capital Region Housing. (2010). *Annual report*. Retrieved from <http://www.crhc.ca/about-us/annual-report.aspx>
- Capital Region Housing. (2013). *Annual report*. Retrieved from <http://www.crhc.ca/about-us/annual-report.aspx>
- Capital Region Housing. (2014). *Annual report*. Retrieved from <http://www.crhc.ca/about-us/annual-report.aspx>
- Capital Region Housing. (2015). *Annual report*. Retrieved from <http://www.crhc.ca/about-us/annual-report.aspx>
- Capital Region Housing. (2016). *Programs*. Retrieved from <http://crhc.ca/programs-and-services.aspx>

- Capital Region Housing. (2016). Residential tenancy addendum agreement, Crime free multi-housing program of Edmonton. Internal Document.
- Capital Region Housing. (2016). Near market tenants. Retrieved from <http://www.crhc.ca/tenants/affordable-housing.aspx#Relations>
- Canavan, R., Barry, M. M., Matanov, A., Barros, H., Gabor, E., Greacen, T., ... Priebe, S. (2012). Service provision and barriers to care for homeless people with mental health problems across 14 European capital cities. *BMC Health Services Research*, 12, 1-9. doi:10.1186/1472-6963-12-222
- Carliner, M., & Marya, E. (2016). *Rental housing: An international comparison* (Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies Research Brief). Retrieved from http://www.jchs.harvard.edu/sites/jchs.harvard.edu/files/brief_international_housing_carliner_marya.pdf
- Clark, A., Hamilton, C., Jones, M., & Muir, K. (2017). *Poverty, evictions, and forced moves* (Joseph Rowntree Foundation Research Report). Retrieved from <https://www.cchpr.landecon.cam.ac.uk/Projects/Start-Year/2016/Poverty-evictions-and-forced-moves/OutputTemplate/DownloadTemplate>
- Clough, A., Draughon, J. E., Njie-Carr, V., Rollins, C. & Glass, N. (2014). Having housing made everything else possible: Affordable, safe and stable housing for women survivors of violence. *Qualitative Social Work*, 13(5), 671-688. doi:10.1177/1473325013503003.
- Collard, C.S., Lewinson, T., & Watkins, K. (2014). Supportive housing: An evidence based intervention for reducing relapse among low income adults in addiction recovery. *Journal Of Evidence-Based Social Work*, 11(5), 468-479. doi:10.1080/15433714.2013.765813
- Dierckx de Casterle, B., Gastmans, C., Bryon, E., & Denier, Y. (2011). QUAGOL: A guide for qualitative data analysis. *Journal of Nursing Studies*, 1-12. doi:10.1016/j.ijnurstu.2011.09.012
- Dunn, E., Fluhrer Greenberg, A., & Sundarraj A. (2008). Housing choice voucher termination hearings: Best practices for public housing agencies. *Clearinghouse Review*, 42, 134-149. Retrieved from [file:///Users/juliejonas/Downloads/EricDunnAshleyFluhrerGree%20\(1\).pdf](file:///Users/juliejonas/Downloads/EricDunnAshleyFluhrerGree%20(1).pdf)
- Fertig, A., & Reingold, G. (2008). Homelessness among at-risk families with children in twenty American cities. *Social Service Review* 82(3), 485-510. doi: 10.1086/59233
- Gifford R., & Lacombe, C. (2006) Housing quality and children's socioemotional health. *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment*, 21, 177-189. DOI 10.1007/s10901-006-9041-x

- Goldblatt, A., Felix, R., Chotai, V., & Fleger, M. (2011). *Final report: Systematic barriers to housing initiative* (Housing Support Services Hub Research Report). Retrieved from: <http://homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/Systemic-Barriers-to-Housing-Initiative.pdf>
- Hartley, D. (2014, October 6). Public Housing, concentrated poverty, and crime. *Economic Commentary*. Retrieved from <file:///Users/juliejonas/Downloads/ec%20201419%20public%20housing%20concentrate%20poverty%20and%20crime%20pdf.pdf>
- Hinds, A. M., Bechtel, B., Distasio, J., Roos, L. L., & Lix, L. M. (2016). Health and social predictors of applications to public housing: a population-based analysis. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, 70(12), 1229-1235. doi:10.1136/jech-2015-206845.
- Hopper E. K., Bassuk E. L., Olivet J. (2010). Shelter from the storm: Trauma-informed care in homelessness services setting. *The Open Health Services and Policy Journal*, 3, 80-100. 10.2174/1874924001003020080.
- Horvath, A. & Mydin, A., O. (2012). Towards best practice in public housing maintenance management. *European Researcher*, 30, 1538-1544. Retrieved from http://www.erjournal.ru/journals_n/1348995422.pdf
- Jacobs, K., Arthurson, K., White, R., & Donoghue, J. (2003). *Developing effective housing management strategies to address problems of anti-social behaviour* (AHURI Positioning Paper No. 54). Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne. Retrieved from <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/position-papers/54>
- Johnson, S., Cooper, C. L., Cartwright, S., Donald, I., Taylor, P., & Millet, C. (2005). The experience of work-related stress across occupations. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 20, 179-187. DOI 10.1108/02683940510579803
- Justice and Solicitor General. (2013). *Alberta Peace Officer investigator program, Instructor binder*. Internal Document.
- Kenley, R., Chiazor, M., Hall, J., & Heywood, C. (2010). *Good practices for managing Australia's public and community housing assets* (AHURI Final Report No. 148). Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute Limited, Melbourne. Retrieved from <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/148>
- Kerman, N., Sirohi, R., Curwood, S. E., & Trainor, J. (2017). Canadian service providers' perceptions of barriers and support gaps in housing and mental health. *Canadian Journal of Community Mental Health*, 36(2), 1-15. Retrieved from: <http://www.cjcmh.com/doi/pdfplus/10.7870/cjcmh-2017-009?src=recsys&>
- Kirkcaldy, B. D. & Brown, J. M. (2000). Personality, socioeconomics and crime: An international

- comparison. *Psychology, Crime and Law*, 6(2), 113-125.
<http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/10.1080/10683160008410836>
- Lens, M.C. (2013). Subsidized housing and crime: Theory, mechanisms, and evidence. *Journal of Planning Literature*, 28(4), 352-363. Retrieved from
<http://luskin.ucla.edu/sites/default/files/Lens%204%20JPL.pdf>
- Martin, C. (2016). One strikes, three strikes: Crime and anti-social behaviour in NSW public housing. *Alternative Law Journal*, 41(4), 262-266. doi [10.1177/1037969X1604100410](https://doi.org/10.1177/1037969X1604100410)
- McClean, B., Grey, I. M., & McCracken, M. (2007). An evaluation of positive behavioural support for people with very severe challenging behaviours in community-based settings. *Journal of Intellectual Disabilities*, 11, 281 – 301. doi 10.1177/1744629507080791
- McDavid, J., Huse, I. & Hawthorn, L. (2013). *Program Evaluation and Performance Measurement: An Introduction to Practice*. Second edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- McKeary, M., & Newbold, B. (2010). Barriers to care: The challenges for Canadian refugees and their health care providers, *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 23(4), 523-545. Retrieved from
<http://oppenheimer.mcgill.ca/IMG/pdf/feq038.pdf>
- Meschede, T. (2011). From street life to housing: Consumer and provider perspectives on service delivery and access to housing. *Cityscape: A Journal of Policy Development and Research*, 13(1), 33-70. Retrieved from
https://www.huduser.gov/periodicals/cityscape/vol13num1/Cityscape_March2011.pdf#page=77
- Moye, J. (2003). Can't stop the hustle: The Department of Housing and Urban Development's "One Strike" eviction policy fails to get drugs out of America's projects, 23 B.C. Third World L.J. 275. Retrieved from
<http://lawdigitalcommons.bc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1130&context=twlj>
- National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (2014). *Improving access to health and social care services for people who do not routinely use them* (NICE Local Government Briefings). Retrieved from
<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/lgb14/resources/improving-access-to-health-and-social-care-services-for-people-who-do-not-routinely-use-them-pdf-60521146427077>
- Netto, G. (2011). Strangers in the city: Addressing challenges to the protection, housing and settlement of refugees. *International Journal of Housing Policy*, 11(3), 285-303. doi: 10.1080/14616718.2011.599132
- New South Wales Government. (2016-17). New South Wales affordable housing ministerial

- guidelines. Retrieved from
http://www.housing.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/332789/Ministerial-Affordable-Housing-Guidelines-2016-17.pdf
- Ontario Ministry of Housing. (2016). Rental housing enforcement unit. Retrieved From
<http://www.mah.gov.on.ca/page142.aspx>
- Ottawa Community Housing Corporation. (2017) Tenant guide. Retrieved from
http://www.och-lco.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/OCH-TenantGuide_2017_Final.pdf
- Palys, T. (2008). Purposive sampling. In L. M. Given (Ed.) *The Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*. (Vol.2). Sage: Los Angeles, 697-698. Retrieved from
<https://www.sfu.ca/~palys/Purposive%20sampling.pdf>
- Parliament of the United Kingdom. (2013). *Prevention of social housing fraud act (c.3)*. Retrieved from
http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2013/3/pdfs/ukpga_20130003_en.pdf
- Patton, M. Q. (2014). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods*, 4th edition. Thousand 150 Oaks, California: Sage Publication Inc.
- Pomeroy, S. & Marquis-Bissonnette, M. (2016). *Non-housing outcomes of affordable housing*. (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation Research Report). Retrieved from
https://carleton.ca/cure/wp-content/uploads/Non_Housing_Outcomes_of_Affordable_Housing.pdf
- Queensland Government. (2017). Complain about noisy neighbours. Retrieved from
<https://www.qld.gov.au/law/housing-and-neighbours/noise-and-crime-in-the-neighbourhood/complain-about-noisy-neighbours>
- Rea W., Yuen, J., Engeland, J., & Figueroa, R. (2008). The dynamics of housing affordability. *Perspectives on Labour and Income*, 20(1), 37–48. Retrieved from
<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/75-001-x/2008101/pdf/10511-eng.pdf>
- Residential Tenancies Act, Statutes of Alberta, chapter R-17. 1 (2004). Retrieved from
http://www.qp.alberta.ca/documents/Regs/2006_098.pdf
- Rodriguez, C. I., Herman, D., Alcon, J., Chen, S., Tannen, A., Essock, S., & Simpson, H. B. (2012). Prevalence of hoarding disorder in individuals at potential risk of eviction in New York City: A pilot study. *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, 200(1).
<http://doi.org/10.1097/NMD.0b013e31823f678b>
- Slatter, M., & Beer, A. (2004). *Evictions and housing management: toward more effective strategies* (AHURI Positioning Paper No. 76). Australian Housing and Urban Research

- Institute Limited, Melbourne. Retrieved from <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/position-papers/76>
- Social Housing Accommodation Regulation, Alberta Regulation 244 (1994). Retrieved from http://www.qp.alberta.ca/documents/Regs/1994_244.pdf
- Srivastava, A. & Thomson, S. B. (2009). Framework analysis: A qualitative methodology for applied research note policy research. *Journal of Administration and Governance (JOAAG)*, 4(2), 72-79. Retrieved from <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/f45f/59619556c57b693955f6b1d7adc1ba8d80b6.pdf>
- United Nations (1948). Universal declaration of human rights. Retrieved from http://www.un.org/en/udhrbook/pdf/udhr_booklet_en_web.pdf
- U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (n. d.). Defining housing affordability. *PD & R Edge Magazine*. Retrieved From <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/pdredge/pdr-edge-featd-article-081417.html>
- U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. (n. d.). Enterprise income verification system. Retrieved from https://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/ph/rhiip/uivsystem
- U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (n. d.). Supporting reentry for formerly incarcerated individuals. *Evidence Matters*. Retrieved from <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/periodicals/em/summer16/highlight1.html>
- Vesely, A. (2011). Theory and methodology of best practice research: A critical review of the current state. *European Journal of Public Policy*, 5(2), 98-117. Retrieved from: [file:///Users/juliejonas/Downloads/99-516-1-PB%20\(1\).pdf](file:///Users/juliejonas/Downloads/99-516-1-PB%20(1).pdf)
- Woolley, E. (2016). Does a Lack of ID Impact Housing?. Retrieved from <http://homelesshub.ca/blog/how-does-lack-id-impact-housing>
- World Health Organization. (1989). *Health principles of housing*. Retrieved from http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/39847/1/9241561270_eng.pdf
- World Health Organization. (2010). International workshop on housing, health and climate change: Developing guidance for health protection in the built environment mitigation and adaptation responses. Retrieved from http://www.who.int/hia/house_report.pdf?ua=1
- Your Homes Newcastle. (2017). Tenancy fraud policy. Retrieved from <https://www.yhn.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/tenancy-fraud-policy-2015.pdf>

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Informed Consent Document – Interviews



**University
of Victoria**

Participant Consent Form

Examining Tenant Disputes at Capital Region Housing: Finding the Most Appropriate Approach to Dispute Resolution

You are invited to participate in a study entitled Examining Tenant Disputes at Capital Region Housing: Finding the Most Appropriate Approach to Dispute Resolution, being conducted by Julie Jonas, a Master of Arts in Dispute Resolution student in the department of Public Policy at the University of Victoria.

You may contact her if you have further questions at:

Ph: (780) 984 – 5167

Email: julie.jonas@gmail.com

As a graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a degree in Dispute Resolution. It is being conducted under the supervision of Kimberly Speers.

You may contact her if you have further questions at:

Ph: (250) 721 8057

Email: kspeers@uvic.ca

This study is being conducted for a client, Esther de Vos, the Director of Policy, Research and Strategic Initiatives at Capital Region Housing in Edmonton, AB.

Purpose and Objectives

The primary issue around which this project is centered is finding the most appropriate approach for dealing with tenant disputes at CRH. At times, these processes have been punitive, time consuming, and expensive. As part of the cultural and paradigm shift occurring in the organization, a review of these processes is timely and necessary. The objectives of this project are to inform the executive management team at CRH about the processes utilized and outputs generated by the investigation team and other staffs dealing with tenant disputes. It will examine whether the current systems in place to deal with tenant disputes that arise from the *Residential Tenancies Act* and the *Social Housing Accommodation Regulation*, are best serving the organization and its clientele.

The primary research question is as follows:

- What is the most appropriate approach for dealing with client disputes at Capital Region Housing?

Ancillary questions are as follows:

- Are existing processes meeting these outcomes?
- How do the dispute systems at CRH affect tenants and various CRH departments?
- What do other social housing providers do?
- What do best practices regarding tenant management entail?

Importance of this Research

Capital Region Housing is moving forward with a customer focused culture, valuing eviction as a last resort for all tenants. Through this research, Capital Region Housing intends to align their dispute resolution processes with this shift in culture to save time and resources and reduce associated stresses for the organization's staff and clients. This will help to ensure clients can remain in stable housing as an important component of leading healthy lives.

Participant Selection

You are being asked to participate in this study based on being a member of:

Group 1 - Capital Region Housing Staff

The Investigative team at Capital Region Housing and as such this research is directly examining and evaluating the processes and procedures you carry out in your daily work and how this impacts the organization and its clients.

The Capital Region Housing management team, you will be interviewed to get a better sense of the organizational climate, past procedures, and the culture shift that is taking place. You will be able to comment on your experiences of the investigative and tenant management practices based on your time with the organization and their expertise in housing.

Other staff members such as the customer service clerks and housing clerks and have a good understanding of the social demographic of the clientele that CRH most often works with. You can provide insight into the treatment of clients at the front end of client services and during their tenancy. Your knowledge will help to develop dispute resolution frameworks that can potentially serve to mitigate snowballing problems during the client's application process and tenancy.

Group 2 - Community Stakeholders

Stakeholders at the Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers, Housing First, Homeward Trust, the Multicultural Health Brokers, the Edmonton Community Legal Clinic or the Bissel Centre and are familiar with the challenges faced by the clients of Capital Region Housing. You

will be able to provide insight about their needs and how Capital Region can better support them in a management capacity and in dealing with challenges they may face during their tenancy.

Group 3 – Social Housing Providers

Getting in touch with professionals from various social housing agencies in Alberta, Ontario and BC, and international providers in the UK and Australia, will provide insight into other dispute resolution and tenant management practices and how they impact their respective organizations.

What is Involved

If you consent to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include an interview with Julie Jonas at a location, date and time to be agreed upon by both parties. The interview will take approximately 30mins - 1 hour. Julie will ask you a series of questions relating to your experience of Capital Region Housing's tenant management procedures as it relates to your work. Julie will use this information as a component of an evaluation report regarding investigative procedures at Capital Region Housing to be given to her client for ownership when the study is complete.

Audio-tapes and-written notes will be used during the interview process. At a later time a transcription will be made of the discussion to assist Julie in the data analyses phase of the research. All the information collected from you will be coded by her so that your identity remains anonymous as the study proceeds

Inconvenience

Interviewing will take time and will impact the working hours of all participant groups. Most should not suffer a loss of wages or any chastisement for missing work. For many it may be considered an important part of their role at their agency to engage in research processes that benefit the state of knowledge for the social service sphere. However the proper permissions to participate will be obtained prior to commencing data collection. Obtaining permissions could also be considered an inconvenience to participants.

Risks

There are no known risks to you by participating in this research *[Groups 2 and 3]*

There are very few risks to you by participating in this research. *[Group 1]*

Economic risks may occur given that the purpose of the research is to evaluate the investigative and tenant management frameworks which are a part of the daily work of Group 1 participants. This research will determine if different roles or procedures may be more beneficial for the

organization and its clients. Changes to staff roles will be dependent on the study's findings and the decisions of the executive management team at Capital Region Housing. The nature of these potential changes does not hinge on your participation in the study.

Benefits

Participation in this research will be of benefit to Capital Region Housing staff, clients, and stakeholders financially, personally and socially. The objectives are to develop a dispute resolution process that is less time consuming, punitive and expensive for all parties involved. Finding the most effective and efficient staff compliment for dispute resolution will also assist the organization to better serve their clients as a landlord, potentially helping them to stay in stable housing for longer periods of time which can serve to decrease dependence on other social services and improve social mobility. While this project focuses on CRH tenants specifically, the outcomes of the research can be applied to other programs running at CRH such as the rent subsidy programs, to deal with any non-tenant disputes.

This project will benefit the state of knowledge in further defining the operational role of dispute resolution in the social housing sphere. This may be of benefit for comparable organizations undergoing operational innovations.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study your data will only be used if you give your permission, which must be provided to the researcher (Julie) in an email or written statement that is dated and signed by you. If you do not wish to have the data used for any research purposes the researcher will destroy the record of your data immediately.

On-going Consent

It is unlikely the researcher will need to contact you after the interview is completed, however it is beneficial to obtain ongoing consent in case any comments need to be clarified during the transcription or report writing phase of the research. In agreeing to participate and by signing this document, you are agreeing to free contact between the researcher and yourself for the duration of the study, which will begin when you sign this document and end when the final report is written and disseminated (Estimated to be completed September 1st 2017).

Ongoing consent also gives you the freedom to contact Julie at any time during the study should you have any questions or concerns. You can reach her via the contact information at the top of this document.

Anonymity

In terms of protecting your anonymity, the informed consent forms are the only documents that will have identifying information about participants and will be stored in lockable filing cabinets that only the PI can access. No identifying information will be collected during the interview process and the researcher will use codes to track all data sets. Due to having a limited number of participants, the researcher will be familiar with the responses from the participants, however all notes and digital files will not have any identifying features. Responses included in the final report will have no identifying features.

Confidentiality

Due to the potentially sensitive nature of some of the participant data, adequate data storage procedures will be undertaken. Information collected will only be accessible by the PI and supervisors of this project. All paper files such as hand written notes and informed consent documents will be stored in lockable filing cabinets. All digital data such as transcriptions, survey data and report data will have identifying features of individuals and organizations taken out or coded as necessary and be stored in password protected files.

Dissemination of Results

The final research results will be disseminated in various ways. Julie will provide a formal report to Capital Region Housing for their ownership and use in innovating their operational framework for investigations. Julie will have to discuss the results in scholarly meetings, most notably for her project defense, which is a mandatory component of her obtaining her degree. The University of Victoria may also upload a copy of the report to the UVic Spaces website where theses and reports written by students can be accessed by the public.

Disposal of Data

Data will be stored for 2 years following the study in case of any follow up or clarifications that may be needed on behalf of the project client. After 2 years, data will be destroyed via shredding of paper documents and the deletion of all digital documents including survey data and transcriptions. No information collected during the study will be archived for future use.

Contacts

Individuals that may be contacted regarding this study include Julie Jonas, the Principal Investigator of the study, Kimberly Speers, the supervisor of this study at the University of Victoria. They can be contacted using phone numbers and email addresses provided at the beginning of this document.

In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca).

Consent

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study, that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers, and that you consent to participate in this research project.

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.

Appendix 2 - Implied Consent Document Survey



**University
of Victoria**

**Letter of Information for
Implied Consent**

Examining Tenant Disputes at Capital Region Housing: Finding the Most Appropriate Approach to Dispute Resolution

You are invited to participate in a study entitled Examining Tenant Disputes at Capital Region Housing: Finding the Most Appropriate Approach to Dispute Resolution, being conducted by Julie Jonas, a Master of Arts in Dispute Resolution student in the department of Public Policy at the University of Victoria.

You may contact her if you have further questions at:

Ph: (780) 984 – 5167

Email: julie.jonas@gmail.com

As a graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a degree in Dispute Resolution. It is being conducted under the supervision of Kimberly Speers. You may contact her if you have further questions at:

Ph: (250) 721 8057

Email: kspeers@uvic.ca

This study is being conducted for a client, Esther de Vos, the Director of Policy, Research and Strategic Initiatives at Capital Region Housing in Edmonton, AB.

Purpose and Objectives

The primary issue around which this project is centered is finding the most appropriate approach for dealing with tenant disputes at CRH. At times, these processes have been punitive, time consuming, and expensive. As part of the cultural and paradigm shift occurring in the organization, a review of these processes is timely and necessary. The objectives of this project are to inform the executive management team at CRH about the processes utilized and outputs generated by the investigation team and other staffs dealing with tenant disputes. It will examine whether the current systems in place to deal with tenant disputes that arise from the *Residential Tenancies Act* and the *Social Housing Accommodation Regulation*, are best serving the organization and its clientele.

The primary research question is as follows:

- What is the most appropriate approach for dealing with client disputes at Capital Region Housing?

Ancillary questions are as follows:

- Are existing processes meeting these outcomes?
- How do the dispute systems at CRH affect tenants and various CRH departments?
- What do other social housing providers do?
- What do best practices regarding tenant management entail?

Importance of this Research

Capital Region Housing is moving forward with a customer focused culture, valuing eviction as a last resort for all tenants. Through this research, Capital Region Housing intends to align their dispute resolution processes with this shift in culture to save time and resources and reduce associated stresses for the organization's staff and clients. This will help to ensure clients can remain in stable housing as an important component of leading healthy lives.

Participant Selection (Will be customized per participant when given to the individual during the informed consent process)

You are being asked to participate in this study based on being a member of:

Group 2 - Community Stakeholders

Stakeholders at the Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers, Housing First, Homeward Trust, the Multicultural Health Brokers, the Edmonton Community Legal Clinic, Edmonton Social Planning Committee, the Bissel Centre, or another social organization, and are familiar with the challenges faced by the clients of Capital Region Housing. You will be able to provide insight about their needs and how Capital Region can better support them in a management capacity and in dealing with challenges they may face during their tenancy.

Group 3 – Social Housing Providers

Getting in touch with professionals from various social housing agencies in Alberta, Ontario and BC, and international providers in the UK and Australia will provide insight into other dispute resolution and tenant management practices and how they impact their respective organizations.

What is Involved

If you consent to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include completing a short online survey that will take approximately 15 mins, which you can access as soon as you have agreed to the terms of this consent form. The survey was written by Julie (the principle investigator) and will ask you a series of questions relating to your experience of social housing, including investigations and tenant management procedures as they have related to your work and the individuals you work with. Julie will use this information as a component of

an evaluation report regarding dispute resolution processes at Capital Region Housing to be given to her client for ownership when the study is complete.

All the information collected from you will be anonymous, you are not asked to provide any identifying information about yourself during the completion of the survey.

Please be advised that the survey is operated through **Survey Monkey which uses a server located in the U.S.** As such, there is a possibility that information given in your response may be accessed without your knowledge or consent by the U.S. government in compliance with the U.S. Patriot Act.

Inconvenience

The survey will be distributed to you and others in your organization by one of your colleagues who has been in touch with the research team. It will be available for you to fill out until the closing date on April 30th 2017. It will take 15 minutes of your time and can be completed at your convenience during working or personal hours.

Risks

There are no known risks to you by participating in this research.

Benefits

Participation in this research will be of benefit to Capital Region Housing staff, clients, and stakeholders financially, personally and socially. The objectives are to develop a dispute resolution process that is less time consuming, punitive and expensive for all parties involved. Finding the most effective and efficient staff compliment for dispute resolution will also assist the organization to better serve their clients as a landlord, potentially helping them to stay in stable housing for longer periods of time which can serve to decrease dependence on other social services and improve social mobility. While this project focuses on CRH tenants specifically, the outcomes of the research can be applied to other programs running at CRH such as the rent subsidy programs, to deal with any non-tenant disputes.

This project will benefit the state of knowledge in further defining the operational role of dispute resolution in the social housing sphere. This may be of benefit for comparable organizations undergoing operational innovations.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study your data will only be used if you give your permission, which must be provided to the researcher in an email or written statement that is dated and signed by you.

If you do not wish to have the data used for any research purposes the researcher will destroy the record of that data immediately.

On-going Consent

It is unlikely the researcher will need to contact you after the survey is completed, however it is beneficial to obtain ongoing consent in case any comments need to be clarified during the transcription or report writing phase of the research. In agreeing to participate and by signing this document, you are agreeing to free contact between Julie and yourself for the duration of the study, which will begin when you sign this document and end when the final report is written and disseminated (Estimated to be completed September 1st 2017).

Ongoing consent also gives you the freedom to contact Julie at any time during the study should you have any questions or concerns. You can reach her via the contact information at the top of this document.

Anonymity

In terms of protecting your anonymity, no identifying information will be collected during the survey component of the study. All notes and digital files will not have any identifying features. Responses included in the final report will have no identifying features.

Confidentiality

Adequate data storage procedures will be undertaken throughout the study. Information collected will only be accessible by the PI and supervisors of this project. All paper files such as hand written notes and informed consent documents will be stored in lockable filing cabinets. All digital data such as transcriptions, survey data and report data will have identifying features of individuals and organizations taken out or coded as necessary and be stored in password protected files.

Dissemination of Results

The final research results will be disseminated in various ways. Julie will provide a formal report to Capital Region Housing for their ownership and use in innovating their operational framework for investigations. Julie will have to discuss the results in scholarly meetings, most notably for her project defense, which is a mandatory component of her obtaining her degree. The University of Victoria may also upload a copy of the report to the UVic Spaces website where theses and reports written by students can be accessed by the public.

Disposal of Data

Data will be stored for 2 years following the study in case of any follow up or clarifications that may be needed on behalf of the project client. After 2 years, data will be destroyed via

shredding of paper documents and the deletion of all digital documents including survey data and transcriptions. No information collected during the study will be archived for future use.

Contacts

Individuals that may be contacted regarding this study include Julie Jonas, the Principal Investigator of the study or Kimberly Speers, the supervisor of the study at the University of Victoria. They can be contacted using phone numbers and email addresses provided at the beginning of this document.

In addition, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca).

Consent

By completing and submitting the survey, **YOUR FREE AND INFORMED CONSENT IS IMPLIED** and indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered by the researchers.

Please retain a copy of this letter for your reference.

Appendix 3 - Sample Interview / Focus Group Questions

Group 1: Capital Region Housing Staff

Investigators

- 1) How would you describe your role at Capital Region Housing?
- 2) What do your daily tasks entail?
- 3) How would you characterize tenant disputes that arise out of the RTA compared to those that arise out of SHAR?
- 4) Which types of disputes do you see more often?
- 5) Do you feel the procedures in place to deal with these disputes are effective? Why or why not?
- 6) Do you feel the procedures in place to deal with these disputes are fair? Why or why not?
- 7) If you had an option would you deal with RTA disputes differently than those arising out of SHAR?
- 8) Can you describe your experiences with clients going through RTDRS?
- 9) Can you describe your experiences with clients going through court?
- 10) Do you prefer one system over another? Why or why not?
- 11) How do you feel the investigations processes impact the organization (CRH)?
- 12) How do you feel the investigations processes impact CRH clients and their families?
- 13) Is there anything you would change about the investigative processes at Capital Region Housing?

Executive Management

- 1) Can you describe your role at the organization?
- 2) What is your experience regarding dispute resolution processes at CRH?
- 3) Do you feel the procedures in place to deal with tenant disputes are effective? Why or why not?
- 4) Do you feel the procedures in place to deal with tenant disputes are fair? Why or why not?
- 5) Do you feel it is appropriate to have a singular dispute resolution framework for the various types of disputes that arise out of the RTA and SHAR? Why or why not?
- 6) How do you feel these processes impact the organization (CRH)?
- 7) How do you feel these processes impact CRH clients and their families?
- 8) Is there anything you would change about the way tenant disputes are managed at Capital Region Housing?
- 9) Management is currently invested in a culture change at the organization. Can you describe this?
- 10) Can you comment on why you feel this is necessary?
- 11) What is your role in ensuring successful culture change at CRH?

Other Staff

- 1) What is/are your role(s) at CRH?
- 2) How would you describe your interactions with CRH tenants?
- 3) Do you feel you have the tools to deal with difficult clients effectively?
- 4) If yes, how would you describe the tools you have? / if no, what tools would you like to acquire that would help you to better deal with CRH clients?
- 5) What do you know about the client dispute processes operating at CRH?
- 6) Do you feel the procedures in place to deal with tenant disputes are effective? Why or why not?
- 7) Do you feel the procedures in place to deal with tenant disputes are fair? Why or why not?
- 8) Do you feel it is appropriate to have a singular dispute resolution framework for the various types of disputes that arise out of the RTA and SHAR? Why or why not?
- 9) How do you feel these processes impact the organization (CRH)?
- 10) How do you feel these processes impact CRH clients and their families?
- 11) Is there anything you would change about the way tenant disputes are managed at Capital Region Housing?

Group 2: Community Stakeholders

- 1) What is your role at your organization?
- 2) Can you describe your background and qualifications for your position?
- 3) How often do you work with Capital Region Housing? In what capacity?
- 4) What is your impression of Capital Region Housing?
- 5) How often do you work with Capital Region housing tenants?
- 6) How would you describe the challenges your clients face?
- 7) How do you feel stable housing impacts your clients and their families?
- 8) Can you comment on what support you feel your clients may need when accessing housing?
- 9) Can you comment on what support you feel your clients may need to maintain a successful tenancy?
- 10) What do you know about client dispute processes at Capital Region Housing?
- 11) What supports would your clients need if they were going through a court process?
- 12) What does a client centered approach mean to you?

Group 3: Social Housing Providers

- 1) What is your role at your organization?
- 2) Can you describe your background and qualifications for your position?
- 3) Can you briefly describe the demographics of the population you serve?
- 4) Can you describe your organization's philosophy regarding tenant management?
- 5) How does your organization handle tenant misreporting or non-reporting of income?
- 6) How does your organization handle criminal tenant activity?
- 7) How does your organization handle breaches of tenant covenants?

- 8) What team(s) are in place to manage investigations regarding these activities?
- 9) Do you utilize any dispute resolution services? Or go through a court process with your clients to manage harms/ damages/ financial arrears?
- 10) If so, how would you describe these services?
- 11) How do you feel the processes utilized to manage tenant disputes impact your organization?
- 12) How do you feel these processes impact your clients and their families?
- 13) Do you feel the procedures in place to deal with difficult tenants are effective? Why or why not?
- 14) Do you feel the procedures in place to deal with difficult tenants are fair? Why or why not?
- 15) What does a client centered approach mean to you?

Appendix 4 - Sample Survey Questions

Group 2: Community Stakeholders

- 1) What organization do you work for? (open comment)
- 2) How often do you work with Capital Region housing tenants at your organization? (Likert)
- 3) How often do you refer clients to Capital Region Housing to access services? (Likert)
- 4) What is your impression of Capital Region Housing? (open comment)
- 5) How would you describe the challenges your clients face? (open comment)
- 6) How do you feel stable housing impacts your clients and their families? (open comment)
- 7) Can you comment on what support you feel your clients may need when accessing housing? (open comment)
- 8) Can you comment on what support you feel your clients may need to maintain a successful tenancy? (open comment)
- 9) What supports would your clients need if they were going through a court or dispute resolution process? (open comment)
- 10) What does a client centered approach mean to you? (open comment)

Group 3: Social Housing Providers

- 1) What organization do you work for? (open comment)
- 2) Can you briefly describe the demographics of the population you serve? (open comment)
- 3) Can you describe your organization's philosophy regarding tenant management? (open comment)
- 4) How does your organization handle tenant misreporting or non-reporting of income? (open comment)
- 5) How does your organization handle criminal tenant activity? (open comment)
- 6) How does your organization handle breaches of tenant covenants? (open comment)
- 7) What team(s) are in place to manage investigations regarding these activities? (open comment)
- 8) Do you feel the procedures in place to deal with difficult tenants are effective? Why or why not? (Likert and open comment)
- 9) Do you feel the procedures in place to deal with difficult tenants are fair? Why or why not? (Likert and open comment)