

Housing Access Dufferin

Information For Applicants

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30 Centre Street

Orangeville, ON L9W 2X1

T: (519) 941-6991 x2021

F: (519) 941-0271

www.dufferincounty.ca

Information for Applicants

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Information for Applicants

What is Housing Access Dufferin?

Housing Access Dufferin is part of the County of Dufferin's Community Services division. Housing Access Dufferin manages the Centralized Waiting List for those seeking rent-geared-to-income housing, offers referral services to those seeking market housing or shelter services, and assists clients in maintaining their eligibility for subsidized housing in Dufferin County.

All applications for Rent Geared-to-Income assistance in the County of Dufferin are managed by Housing Access Dufferin, and all applications are added to the Centralized Waiting List. This "one-stop," centralized approach means applicants only need to complete one application form to apply to more than one Housing Provider for Rent Geared to Income assistance.

Where is the Housing Access Dufferin Office located?

County of Dufferin Community Services

30 Centre Street, Orangeville, ON L9W 2X1

Phone: (519) 941-6991 Fax: (519) 941-0271

Office Hours: Monday to Friday 8:30 am to 4:30 pm (Closed all Statutory Holidays)

What is Rent Geared-to-Income assistance?

Rent Geared-to-Income (**RGI**) assistance is also known as subsidized housing. RGI assistance is for eligible households who do not have enough income and/or assets to pay market rent. Rent for tenants is based on their income. It is available to those who have applied to move into rental units where subsidy is offered.

Am I eligible for Rent Geared-to-Income (RGI) assistance?

To be eligible for Rent Geared to Income (RGI) assistance, you must meet the following criteria:

1. At least one member of the household must be over the age of 16;
2. You must be able to live independently with or without support services;
3. Each member of the household must have legal resident status in Canada (Canadian Citizen, permanent resident status, or have applied for permanent resident status or refugee protection under the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* (Canada)). Please note that you do not have to live in Dufferin County to apply;
4. No removal order has become enforceable against any member of the household under the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* (Canada);
5. No member of the household owes money from a previous tenancy in any housing project under any housing program to a social housing landlord;

6. No person on the application has been convicted for misrepresentation of income in relation to RGI assistance under the Criminal Code, by a Court of Law or under the *Residential Tenancies Act* by the Landlord and Tenant Board, or the former *Tenant Protection Act* by an Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal;

7. If you own a residential dwelling that is suitable for year-round occupancy, you must agree to sell it within 180 days of being housed; and,

8. Your household's gross monthly income must not exceed the maximum Household Income Limit specified for households that are your size (this limit is higher for households with more people in them).

What are my obligations as an applicant for RGI assistance?

You must notify Housing Access Dufferin, within 30 days,

1. If your address changes,
2. If your phone number changes, or
3. If any other information or document on your application changes.

As an applicant for RGI assistance, you are required to keep your file updated in order to be on the centralized waiting list and maintain your eligibility status. It is your responsibility to notify Housing Access Dufferin of any changes in the information or documents you previously submitted. The required reporting time is twenty (30) business days.

Furthermore, you will be required to complete an Information Update form on an annual basis, whether there have been any changes to your information or not. It will be mailed to you, and the form must be returned to the Housing Access office by the date given on the form.

How soon will I know if I am on the waiting list?

When we receive your application, we make sure that it is complete and that all the information you must provide is included. We will write to you within fourteen (14) days.

If your application is incomplete, the letter that we send to you will request the missing information.

If your application is complete, the letter will verify whether or not you are eligible for RGI assistance.

If you are eligible, the letter will also detail which Housing Provider waiting lists you will be on, in what category you have been placed (either Special Priority or chronological (date-order)) and for how many bedrooms your household qualifies.

If you are not eligible, the reasons for your ineligibility will be given, and you may appeal this decision by the date given.

If the letter advised you that information was missing from your application, you will be given a deadline to get the information to the Housing Access office. If you do not submit the missing information by the date required, you will receive a letter notifying you that your file has been

cancelled and that you may appeal this decision by the date given. When the information is received to complete your application, you will receive a letter verifying whether or not you are eligible for RGI assistance.

What if I can't get some of the information needed to complete my application?

If you are unable to get information that Housing Access Dufferin requires for your application, we may ask you for other information in its place. Until the application is complete, we will not place your household on the waiting list.

Are there any special circumstances that would enable me to be housed more quickly?

One category on the waiting list called "Special Priority," is assigned to victims of abuse. This is the only category of priority available on Housing Access Dufferin's Centralized Waiting List.

How do I get assigned Special Priority?

You are required to complete a Household Category: Special Priority Verification Declaration form and supply supporting information and documentation for verification purposes. This request may be attached to your housing application form for RGI assistance or submitted separately. Forms are available from the Housing Access Dufferin office or website.

Does Housing Access Dufferin provide access to Emergency Housing?

No, but emergency shelter and/or emergency assistance is offered by the following providers in the County of Dufferin, and they may be able to assist you in finding accommodation:

For Women	Family Transition Place	1-800-265-9178
For Youth	Choices Youth Shelter	(519) 942-5970
For Men & Housing Assistance	Salvation Army	(519) 941-2570

When will I get housing?

The waiting time will vary depending on the housing locations you choose and the number of bedrooms you need. In general, however, waiting times average between four and eight years.

Does being on a waiting list ensure I will be housed?

No. If you do not keep Housing Access Dufferin informed of changes to your contact information, and we are unable to contact you as a result, you cannot be offered housing.

All Housing Providers review applicants on their waiting list for their past tenant history and suitability. They review an applicant's history to determine whether the applicant is likely to meet their monthly obligation of paying their rent/housing charge in full and on time. Applicants with a poor tenant history may not be offered housing by some providers.

In addition, if a household is applying to live in a co-operative, they will be interviewed to ensure they understand the obligations of being a co-op member and are able to commit to the responsibilities of living in a co-operative. Co-operative households must volunteer to work in the co-operative as a way to contribute to their community.

Are interpretation services available?

Housing Access Dufferin will co-ordinate interpretation services if the applicant is unable to bring interpretation assistance with them.

What if I am unable to sign the application and consent, or am unable to make a valid application and give valid consent?

You may have the application and consent forms signed on your behalf by another individual who is either:

- your parent or legal guardian,
- your attorney under a power of attorney that authorizes the attorney to make the application and give the consent on your behalf, or
- someone else authorized to make the application and give consent on your behalf.
 - Housing Access Dufferin will require verification of the details of this person's authority to sign on your behalf.

What happens while I'm waiting for Housing?

It is important that you keep your application up to date. Once per year, near the anniversary of your application date, you will receive an Information Update package by mail. A covering letter will provide you with a due date for this update to be completed and returned to our office.

Additionally, you must notify Housing Access Dufferin about any changes to any of the information you have given us in your application form. You must do this within twenty (30) business days of the change occurring (see "What are my obligations...").

Failure to report changes within twenty (30) business days and/or to keep your application up-to-date may result in the removal of your name from the waiting list or not being offered housing. We advise all applicants to fill in the section for an alternate contact on the application, just in case you cannot always be reached at your primary phone number. If you forgot to do this and have already handed in your application, submit a written letter requesting that the contact's information be added to your application, and remember to include your name and date of birth with your request.

How are people chosen for housing?

The system for selecting households is based on date of application, so households who have applied before you will be offered housing before you. Special priority may be given to your application if you are a victim of abuse and/or human trafficking and if your situation qualifies your household for priority (see “How do I get assigned Special Priority”).

How will I be contacted for an offer?

You may be contacted initially by telephone to determine if you are interested in the location being offered. If you are interested, and are the successful applicant accepted for the unit, you will be formally offered the unit through a written offer letter that you will have to sign. Please make sure that Housing Access Dufferin has a daytime phone number and your current mailing address so you can be contacted when a unit becomes available. If you cannot be reached during the day, it would be helpful to give us a telephone number of a contact person we could reach during the day so they could pass on the message to you.

How many offers for RGI housing do I get?

You are allowed a maximum of three housing offers; if you refuse your third, your name will be removed from the waiting list, or, at the discretion of Housing Access Dufferin, your file may be re-dated effective the date of your third refusal. In other words, your application would go to the bottom of the Centralized Waiting List. Once your name is removed from the list you will have to re-apply and get a new application date. This is why you should only choose locations where you really want to live.

What if I know that I will not be able to move during a certain time period?

You may, at any time, contact our office to advise us of a change in circumstances regarding your ability to move into housing. If you are nearing the top of the waiting list, you may wish to consider having your application put “on hold” for a period of time.

Housing Access Dufferin will consider requests for temporary removal from the waiting list (or for an application to be put “on hold”), in accordance with the *Housing Services Act, 2011*, and the local rule regarding temporary removal. The maximum length of time for which a household may be put on hold is 6 months, and a household may request on hold status only once.

Do I get to pick the size of the unit I want?

You can indicate the size of unit (number of bedrooms) you want to live in. Your choice must fall within a range of unit sizes determined by your household size. Generally, the rules for occupancy are:

- Largest size unit = one bedroom per two members who are spouses of each other; one bedroom for each additional member; and additional bedrooms required for medical or custody reasons (contact housing office)
- Smallest size unit = one bedroom per two members who are spouses of each other; one bedroom for every two other members of the household; and an additional bedroom if there is an odd number of members in the household. Note: two members who are spouses of each other are eligible for bachelor sized units, but may request that they be offered only a one bedroom unit.

If you require more bedrooms than would normally be required for your household's composition, please contact Housing Access Dufferin.

How many RGI housing locations can I choose?

There is no limit. You can choose as many locations as you wish. Your eligibility for each location will be assessed upon receipt of your application.

Can I add to/change my building selections?

Applicants can add to and/or change the building selections on their application at any time. Please contact Housing Access Dufferin.

You can choose more than one unit size if they match your household's size. For example, a couple with three children may choose a three or four bedroom unit.

What if I do not agree with a decision about my application?

You will be notified in writing about any decisions regarding your application. If you do not agree, you may request a review of the decision by contacting Housing Access Dufferin prior to the deadline given on the notice of decision. Your request must be in writing, along with any supporting documentation you wish to submit, and it will be reviewed when Housing Access Dufferin receives your request. You will be notified in writing of the decision of the review committee. You may also be given an opportunity to comment if we receive information about your application from someone else.

How much will I pay in rent?

Generally, tenants and subsidized household members of co-operatives pay 30% of their gross (before deductions) monthly income in rent. Depending on where you are housed, you may pay part or all of the utilities. A utility allowance or charge is applied to your geared-to-income rent depending on the utilities that are or are not included in the rent. If you are in receipt of Ontario Works or Ontario Disability Support Program income, your rent is based on a social assistance rent scale from the *Housing Services Act, 2011*.

Are appliances and parking included in my rent?

In some locations, appliances and services such as parking are included. In other locations, tenants must supply appliances and pay for some or all services and utilities.

If I own my own home, do I still qualify?

If you own or have a legal interest in a residential property that can be lived in all year, you are required to sell your interest in the property within six months after you have moved into a geared-to-income assisted housing unit.

If I don't have any income, am I still eligible for geared-to-income housing?

Yes. However, once you are housed, you may be required to pursue income from one or more of the following sources, should your Housing Provider believe that you are eligible:

- Ontario Works,
- Support under the *Divorce Act*, the *Family Law Act* or the *Interjurisdictional Support Orders Act, 2002*,
- Employment Insurance,
- Any pension or other benefit entitlement from the provincial or federal government, and/or
- Support or maintenance payments required under a sponsorship agreement.

You will be notified in writing if required to pursue one or more forms of income and the steps to take to maintain your eligibility on the waiting list.

Can I decide after I move in that I want to move to a housing unit managed by a different Housing Provider?

Yes, but you must re-apply to Housing Access Dufferin to be added back onto the waiting list. Your new application date will be the day your new application is received by Housing Access Dufferin.

What about Market Housing?

Many Housing Providers have units that are available at the market rate (similar to what you would pay a landlord in the private sector.) If you are interested in applying for a market unit, you should contact the Housing Provider directly. Housing Access Dufferin can provide you with contact information for the non-profit and co-operative Housing Providers in the area.

What is Co-operative Housing?

Co-operative (“co-op”) housing is jointly owned and managed by the members who live in the co-op. A co-op is not operated for profit and no one can buy or sell their unit. Each co-op elects a board of directors from its membership. Co-op members are required to participate at various levels in the decision making process. Co-op members are required to work together to share the responsibility of

working to keep their housing community strong and vibrant. Each co-op has a membership committee that is responsible for the selection of new members. Applicants for co-op housing must take part in the co-op's interview process in order to be considered for membership.

Can a Housing Provider turn me down?

If a Housing Provider decides not to offer you a unit, you will be told in writing about the reasons for the refusal. You may appeal this decision by requesting a review.

A Housing Provider may refuse to offer housing to an applicant if:

- The household does not meet the Housing Provider's mandate.
- The household's rental history, either in the private sector or in social housing raises concern. Chronic late payments are part of that history.
- A household member does not agree to accept the co-operative's membership responsibilities.
- There are reasonable grounds to believe that the household would not be able to live in shared accommodation successfully. ("Shared" means sharing some of the housing unit space such as kitchen, bathroom, living room, etc.)
- There are reasonable grounds to believe the unit is not suitable for the household based on the number, gender and ages of the household members and the physical characteristics of the housing unit.
- A Special Needs Applicant requires greater or fewer support services than provided by the support service provider.

Note: If an applicant owes money for arrears or damages to a social Housing Provider, he/she is not eligible to be placed on the rent-geared-to-income waiting list and therefore would not be considered when a Housing Provider has a vacancy. If you are in arrears, Housing Access Dufferin will notify you of the steps you must take to become eligible for RGI assistance.

How do I apply for Housing in other areas outside of Dufferin County?

You must apply separately to each area in which you are interested in living. The waiting list through Housing Access Dufferin is maintained for RGI housing in Dufferin County only. Most areas have websites through which you may access their application; otherwise, please call the municipality directly for details on how to apply in their area.

**Should you have any further questions
regarding the application process,
please contact Housing Access Dufferin
at your convenience.**