

June 9, 2023

CAO / Municipal Clerk Kim Ramsay
Municipality of the District of East Hants
15 Commerce Street, Suite 170, Box 230
Elmsdale, NS B2S 3K5

Dear CAO / Municipal Clerk Ramsay:

I am writing to seek your input on how to improve the application process for Nova Scotians seeking priority access to public housing under the inadequate housing stream.

In its June 2022 report, the Office of the Auditor General (OAG) of Nova Scotia found that current processes are insufficient to grant priority access to public housing. Priority access allows certain applicants to be placed at the top of the waitlist for public housing if they are:

- Victims of family violence
- In need of affordable housing in proximity to sustaining medical supports
- **Living in inadequate housing which poses an immediate health or safety risk**

To be approved for priority access under all three streams, applicants must submit forms documenting their situational requirements that are verified by a third party. Although the form for those living in inadequate housing indicates that it must be completed by fire, building and/or health inspectors, the OAG found that in some districts, applicants were unable to find the officials to do this for them. It concluded that further guidance is required on who can complete the forms, under what circumstances and whether the requirements are reasonable to meet so that only those most vulnerable are granted priority access.

Enclosed with this letter is a new Priority Access Validation – Inadequate Housing Form developed to address the OAG's concerns and provide clarity around the role of municipal staff with regards to verification of the applicant's current housing conditions. We thank the Association of Municipal Administrators for their support in developing this form and connecting us with you to seek your guidance on the following:

- Are the examples of inadequate housing provided aligned with your understanding of the relevant legislation, regulations and bylaws?
- Can you confirm that the officials identified in the form have jurisdiction to verify whether an applicant is living in adequate housing that poses an immediate health and safety risk?

- Do you see any barriers to building inspectors and/or by-law officers in your municipality supporting applications for priority access to public housing by completing the form in a timely fashion?
- Are there any changes you think should be made to the form more generally?

In follow-up, we would like to invite you, and anyone else you feel should be part of these discussions, to discuss these questions and provide any other input you may have on the priority access process. This meeting will take place on Monday, June 26, 2023, at 1:00 pm or Tuesday, June 27, 2023 at 2:00 pm. Please attend whichever is most convenient for you and your team. We will follow-up with you by e-mail with an invitation to the meeting through Microsoft Teams that you can forward to other attendees.

We look forward to this discussion so we can better understand how we can work together to ensure only the most vulnerable Nova Scotians in our communities are granted priority access to public housing.

Sincerely,

Cara Spittal

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Maritime Centre – 1505 Barrington Street, 14th Floor (North)
Halifax, Nova Scotia, B3J 3K5

[Welcome to Nova Scotia Provincial Housing Agency | Nova Scotia Provincial Housing Agency \(nspha.ca ...\)](#)

enc.

Priority Access Validation Form: Inadequate Housing

Some households in Nova Scotia occupy housing which poses an immediate health or safety risk. When a person who qualifies for public housing can demonstrate that their home poses an immediate health or safety risk, they may be eligible for priority access to public housing and be placed at the top of the waitlist for a unit.

Applicants may be eligible for priority access to public housing if their current housing is found to be inadequate by one of the following third-party verifiers:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Municipal Building Inspectors | <input type="checkbox"/> Registered Home Inspectors |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fire Marshall | <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental abatement professionals |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Certified tradesperson, provided assessment is limited to trade (e.g., plumber, electrician, carpenter) | |

Information for renter applicants:

Applicants living in rental units who seek priority access to public housing because they believe they are living in inadequate housing must demonstrate that they have sought to resolve their concerns through the Residential Tenancies Board *before* their application can be assessed. For more information on the Residential Tenancies Program, visit this website:

<https://beta.novascotia.ca/programs-and-services/residential-tenancies-program>

Information for homeowner applicants:

Before applying for public housing, applicants who are homeowners may choose to seek assistance through the Homeowner Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Programs (RRAP) offered by the Department of Municipal Affairs and Housing. For more information on Homeowner Programs that provide financial assistance to people who own and occupy homes that do not meet minimum levels of health and safety, require emergency repairs or do not meet their accessibility requirements, visit this website:

<https://housing.novascotia.ca/programs/financial-assistance-and-grant-programs-homeowners/homeowner-residential-rehabilitation>

The definition of inadequate housing is related to the basic structure and systems of a housing unit. Inadequate housing is defined as an occupied housing unit that has moderate or severe physical problems related to habitability. Housing is not adequate if it does not guarantee physical safety or protect against cold, damp, heat, rain, wind or serious threats to health and structural hazards. Examples of inadequate housing related to habitability include, but are not limited to:

- | | |
|--|--|
| ✓ Structural issues | ✓ Presence of allergens in the home |
| ✓ Plumbing facilities not in working order | ✓ Presence of harmful substances/chemicals in the home |
| ✓ Electrical system not in working order | ✓ Other significant issues related to habitability |
| ✓ Heating system is not in working order | |

Examples of housing situations that *do not* meet the criteria include, but are not limited to:

- ✓ Main entryway locks are inoperable
- ✓ Floors, stairways and railings are in disrepair
- ✓ Housing does not meet accessibility needs
- ✓ Housing is overcrowded

To be granted approval for priority access to public housing due to inadequate housing, applicants must provide the following documents to their Nova Scotia Provincial Housing Agency district office:

1. **Public Housing Application Form** → **Completed by the applicant**
2. **Priority Access Validation Form
Inadequate Housing** → **Completed, dated and signed by a
qualified third-party verifier**

The Priority Access Validation Form for Inadequate Housing must be completed, dated and signed by a qualified third-party verifier.

Third-party verifiers cannot be an applicant's friend, neighbour or relative.

If you or your third party verifier has any questions or concerns about qualifying for priority access to public housing due to inadequate housing, please contact your district office by email **<district email address>** or by telephone at **<district telephone #>**.



Priority Access Validation Form: Inadequate Housing

1. Applicant Information

Last Name		First Name	
Date of Birth		Phone	
Street Address		City/Province	
Postal Code		Email	

2. Residential Tenancy Information:

This section of the form is to be completed by the applicant

Please indicate which of the following living situations is applicable to you:

- renter home-owner homeless Other(specify): _____

If you are a renter, has a report been filed with the Residential Tenancies Program? No Yes

If yes, please attach a copy of the Residential Tenancy Officer decision to your application.

3. Eligibility Criteria Checklist

This section of the form is to be completed by a third party verifier who is qualified to assess and confirm whether the applicant seeking priority access to public housing due to inadequate housing is

The applicant's housing poses an immediate health or safety risk. Please check off all that apply:

- Structural issues
- Plumbing facilities not in working order
- Electric system not in working order
- Heating system not in working order
- Presence of allergens in the home
- Presence of harmful substances or chemicals in the home
- Other

If 'other' is selected, please describe the immediate health or safety risk in the space below:



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4. Professional Services Information

Authorized Body:

Municipal Building Inspector Registered Home Inspector
 Fire Marshal Environmental abatement professional
 Certified tradesperson (specify trade)

Street Address		City/Town	
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5. Declaration

Name (print):

Position/Title:

Phone		Email	
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I solemnly declare that, to the best of my knowledge, the information I have provided in this form is accurate.

Signature: _____ Date: _____