

Dear Tenants,

We are writing this open letter to all current tenants of An Clachan and John Orr Tower, in response to a December 6 communication from the 'Queen's Community Housing Resident's Association'.

We value all feedback regarding our [Fair Access Policy](#) changes. Queen's Community Housing strives to create a welcoming, inclusive living environment, providing quality, affordable housing for Queen's students. The Fair Access Policies are being implemented to improve equitable access to Community Housing properties for more students.

We agree with your comments about the need to increase the overall supply of affordable, quality rental properties in Kingston. We are pleased that you see value in some of what is being implemented. We note your concerns with two of the seven elements of the changes, specifically the limits on the number of renewals, as well as a perceived lack of transparency in how rent increases are being communicated.

In developing all of these policy changes, Community Housing consulted with campus stakeholders, including student leaders. Given these consultations, we fully anticipated that current tenants would be concerned with lease renewal limits and higher rents. To ensure clear and transparent communication to tenants about all of the changes, details were posted to the Community Housing website on November 15, and highlighted in a November 23 all-tenant email.

With respect to the notification process for rent changes, we have a legal obligation to connect directly with individual tenants, ensuring the information they receive is accurate and timely. Notification of the annual lease renewal process and associated rent increase is always sent directly to each tenant, as required under the provincial *Residential Tenancy Act*, through the "Standard Ontario N2: Notice of Rent Increase (Unit Partially Exempt)" form.

Letters detailing the lease renewal process, and rent changes **taking effect September 1, 2024**, are being delivered to each tenant of An Clachan and John Orr Tower the week of December 18, which is earlier than usual, providing more than 8 months written notice. We regret this has been misconstrued by the Association as a lack of transparency.

We want to assure all tenants that rental amounts are increasing at the same rate throughout An Clachan and John Orr Tower apartments. Once individual letters have been directly delivered to all tenants, our website will be updated to reflect the new rents taking effect September 1, 2024. We understand that rent increases are challenging, but our current rental rates are 50% below market levels, and this is simply not sustainable. Please be assured that **Community Housing will always maintain rents well below market rates**, and we will continue to ensure consistency and transparency in annual rent changes.

We also understand the concern with the change that will limit the number of lease renewals to align with the length of a student's academic program of study. This will increase turnover, providing additional opportunities for more graduate students to access Community Housing units, which we know are in such high demand. These reasonable limits will balance support for current tenants with expanding access for other current and incoming graduate students who have been unable to access this benefit. While we recognize this will impact some current tenants, we have also been clear that

consideration will be given to extenuating circumstances. We do expect the vast majority of current tenants will be offered at least one renewal, bringing tenancy to August 2025 at minimum.

The letter also expressed concern with a lack of information about displacement strategies related to the future redevelopment of the An Clachan site. As we have stated previously, this initiative is in the very earliest stages of planning. It will be several years before construction could begin, therefore it is premature to consider any potential displacement strategy. We will update the Community Housing website as more information about the project becomes available, and will continue to share notifications directly with all tenants in the coming years.

Finally, the letter expresses an expectation that these changes should not be implemented without direct consultation with current tenants. It is important to note that Queen's Community Housing, as a department of a post-secondary institution, operates as *partially* exempt from the Residential Tenancies Act (RTA). This means we operate with exemption from *specific provisions* within the RTA, as outlined in Section 7.1 of the Act, and not under a total exemption from the entirety of the Act. In this context, consultation has a narrow application. Nonetheless, we are always willing to engage in direct discussion with tenants about any concerns or questions relating to our processes, policies or service delivery. Tenants are invited to contact us at community.housing@queensu.ca.

We appreciate the newly formed Association is interested in engaging in constructive dialogue about the changes being implemented. We have written to the Association at the email address provided, to ask that names of representatives be provided by January 10, 2024, and we will make arrangements to meet with them.

Community Housing has always maintained positive and respectful relationships with our tenants, and we welcome further dialogue about the Fair Access policy changes that are being implemented to address the concerns of students across the university regarding equitable access to university-owned rental units at John Orr Tower and An Clachan.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Adam King".

Adam King
Manager, Community Housing