

Ministry of Housing

**Minister Responsible for the
Poverty Reduction Strategy**

Office of the Minister

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September 6, 2017

Mr. Les Gamble
Chair
Manitoulin-Sudbury District Services Board
210 Mead Boulevard
Espanola ON P5E 1R9

RE: Regulatory amendments under the *Housing Services Act, 2011* to include a
Portable Housing Benefit Framework (PHBF) – Effective September 1, 2017

Dear Chair Gamble:

I am writing to inform you of recent regulatory amendments to O. Reg. 367/11 under the *Housing Services Act, 2011* (HSA) that establish a framework for a portable housing benefit effective September 1, 2017. Service Managers will now have the option to offer a locally-funded monthly benefit to low-income households that would count towards the Service Manager's social housing Service Level Standards if the benefit meets the conditions set out in the amended regulations.

On March 14, 2016, the province released the update to the Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy (LTHAS Update). The strategy update supports the vision that every person has an affordable, suitable and adequate home to provide the foundation to secure employment, raise a family and build strong communities and, continues the long-term transformation of Ontario's housing and homelessness system that began in 2010 with the release of Building Foundations: Building Futures – Long-term Affordable Housing Strategy.

As part of the LTHAS Update, the province committed to develop a framework for a portable housing benefit that would give people more flexibility to choose where they live. At present, Ontarians in need of housing assistance rely on various programs across the province. In social housing, eligible families and individuals may receive rent-geared-to-income assistance and pay rent equal to 30 per cent of their income, but often have to live in specific housing units to receive this assistance.

Unlike rent-geared-to-income and other housing assistance, the portable housing benefit is tied to the household and not the physical housing unit, allowing the benefit to move with the household. The benefit also provides greater social inclusion for social housing tenants because it gives Service Managers the ability to diversify their housing portfolio and create more vibrant mixed-income communities.

In addition, the benefit supports economic inclusion for recipients because unlike the rent-geared-to-income (RGI) system where any monthly income change impacts monthly rent assistance, the portable housing benefit is based on annual income. This means recipients would not have their subsidy immediately recalculated and would be able to keep more of what they earn during the year.

The amended regulations allow Service Managers to use municipal resources to offer portable housing benefits as an optional alternative to the current rent-geared-to-income assistance.

The amended regulations include eligibility requirements, how the benefit will be calculated, how the recipient's income will be verified, and how the benefit will be delivered to the household. For further details, you can access the amended regulations under the HSA through the following hyperlink:

<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/110367>

Any questions regarding these regulatory amendments can be directed to Ravi Bhusia, Manager of the Program Development & Analysis Unit. Ravi can be reached by telephone at (416) 585-6526, or by email at Ravi.Bhusia@ontario.ca

We look forward to your continued support and partnership.

Sincerely,



Peter Milczyn
Minister

c: Mr. Fern Dominelli, Chief Administrative Officer, Manitoulin-Sudbury District
Services Board