

Any Each Other Anything: COVID-19 Response April 30, 2020

Q&A from WebEx Discussion amongst MNPHA Members

Questions about Current Operations - Protecting our staff and tenants

1. What steps are organizations taking to reduce loitering in public/shared spaces within the buildings?

Eden Health Care, Bethel Place: taping off space on the floor so people can see how distant to be in high frequency area – doors in front of offices, and in front of mailboxes; it is well-received to leave the doors to common areas closed, but not locked. Put pretty ribbon on the walls to demonstrate how far 6 feet is since many people don't know.

SAM: got a legal opinion about locking common areas. We shared these with Boards of Directors, and they decided to keep the common areas unlocked because socialization is so important for seniors and they are independent living buildings. As a property management company, we take the position that we gather the information and provide it to Boards, and ultimately it is their decision. However, we had one incident where a tenant invited family members over and had a gathering, and a neighbour called the police. We don't know if there will be any fines, however SAM was slammed on social media with people suggesting we don't care about seniors. We have to be so cautious. I developed a policy for common areas, including gazebos, etc. and said that if Boards needed to specifically vote not to close common areas so they had to actively make a decision.

2. How are other facilities dealing with occupancy on elevators?

Westman Lions: hasn't done anything about elevators yet, they are quite small so only one person would be able to use it if 6 feet distance is suggested.

Western Manitoba Seniors Non-Profit Housing Co-op: we are allowing one in elevator at a time.

Steinbach Housing: we have established an elevator protocol of one person per "ride". There has been great cooperation from our tenants.

Eden Health Care, Bethania: limiting elevator occupancy to 2 people or less. We put signage in and around elevator.

Arms of the Cross Housing: we have sign in each floor one person per time unless it is couple living together. Tenants are really following this very well.

Bethel Place: we have signage up in the elevators. If there are more than two people we encourage them to turn and face the wall.

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3. Does anyone have the thermal temperature reading camera's pointed at the entrance ways? If so, how do they get monitored and are they economical?

Westman Lions: we have considered something like that in place with a security staff over the long-term if this becomes the new norm. It would make sense to try to automate as much as possible – during SARS in China it was very common for buildings to have this.

Bethania: in supportive housing, we are required to screen staff. We have a handheld thermal thermometer, which is quite fast but you must be quite close to take the temperature. If people have been outside for a while and it's cold, it reads cold. So they need to be inside for a while, or put it on their wrist rather than forehead.

Eden: our staff check temperatures of other staff before coming in.

Oakbank Springfield Kinsmen Seniors Complex: we have a hand held one for our staff before they start work.

RESOURCE: The Long-Term Care Association of Manitoba shared information about Clearly InSight IP Network and Video: <https://clearlyinsightip.com/> If there are suggestions from Public Health to monitor temperatures, we can look into options for group pricing.

4. What is the proper PPE for staff that is managed by health authorities that work in your building?

Collectively: in many circumstances, use of PPE is based on supplies available, rather than a standard.

Western Manitoba Seniors Non-Profit Housing Co-op: Home care staff in the Westman region do not have any PPE.

Bethania: Shared Health has detailed recommendations on PPE in health care settings. Health Care Staff coming into Supportive Housing have PPE (Masks/visors); for house keeping staff we provide masks. Administrative staff do not need any PPE, except if coming in contact with a resident, when they would put on a disposable mask.

Eden: Most people making homemade mask they use cotton & have slit to be able to add a filter of some sort.

Steinbach Housing: Homecare are only wearing PPE with tenants in self-isolation.

Brad: the Canadian Muslim Women's Association is now producing about 1000+ N95 masks per week. They are manufactured by their non-profit called The Cutting Edge.



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RESOURCE: MNPHA has a list of vendors who have masks, gloves, and other resources available. Check www.mnpha.com/covid-19 or call or e-mail Si at membership@mnpha.com. LITE is now selling non-medical, cloth masks, <https://shop.lite.mb.ca/collections/all>.

5. What material are people using when sewing up their own masks at home to make?

Eden: a seamstress said that she uses layers of high quality 200+ thread count cotton woven, and 1 layer thinner in between. There's an elastic that goes around the head to ensure a good fit, a mouldable nose piece and a pocket should you want to add an additional filter.

Paul: Cotton masks will not protect the wearer but help protect others. The filter that is used is often a coffee filter.

6. I'm concerned about maintenance & repairs. Are there any guidelines that I should follow when sending my contractors into a home?

Bethania: we screen our contractors the same way we would expect tenants and staff to self-screen. If we're arranging them, we will advise the company upfront that we will ask the same questions we ask our visitors – if they have travelled, if they have any symptoms or live with anyone that has symptoms.

Questions about Current Operations - Finances

1. How are your operations being affected by tenants unable to pay rent, providing notice to vacate, costs increase i.e. changing your projections for occupancy, revenues and operating resources?

Westman Lions: commercial tenants have had financial challenges and have asked for 3 months rent abatement. We are looking forward to the commercial rent support program to cover some of this reduced revenue. Residential units have not been impacted as residents are seniors.

Cleaning costs have gone up by about 1/3, we are paying a 'hazard bonus' to maintenance staff.

Bethania: we have a significant number of vacancies and we are not doing any showings, so we expect vacancy loss to be an issue next year.

SAM Management: for arrears, we found that the problem is not so much tenants don't want to pay, but they have challenges to transition payment method, which is a financial literacy problem and a different way of thinking – they don't know how to get a cheque or money order because they are used to just coming into the office and paying. We proactively reach out to tenants educating them, and bring a portable debit machine to collect rent with one specific

Any Each Other Anything: COVID-19 Response April 30, 2020

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building. We are actively making payment agreements with people who are having problems paying the full rent. Vacancy loss will be an issue though.

Kinew Housing: tenants appreciate the transition to direct deposit, found that it was easier than expected and had benefits of increased convenience.

- 2. Would the minimum \$50 rent charges apply to those tenants that have lost their income due to COVID-19 and are waiting on EI to kick in?**

MB Housing: yes, the \$50 minimum rent would apply with sponsor management units. In direct managed buildings, the same minimum rent has been in place.

- 3. Are any facilities showing suites to applicants, or are you still holding off initiating new move-ins?**

SAM management: we have huge demand right now, many inquiries every day from people desperate for housing. We are only showing vacant suites, using appropriate social distancing. We are still signing electronic leases.

Steinbach housing: we are showing vacant suites, but screening the people and only one at a time.

Stonewall & District Lions Manor: we will show vacant suites after they are renovated, which will increase our rent loss.

- 4. How do you advertise vacant suites?**

Collectively: rental guide; virtual showings. Age and Opportunity has a housing guide that they publish annually, a housing help person, an annual resource fair – the 55+ Expo *cancelled for this year

SAM: uses 4Rent.com, receives a lot of inquiries from that.

Bethania: has virtual showings for supportive housing, has not tried for independent suites yet.

Questions about Future Operations - Making plans to return to normalcy

- 1. How are others dealing with requests to bring back (or allow) events that can be done with physical distancing and have less than ten participants?**

Westman Lions Manor: we have been discouraging activities as much as possible, and think there will be increased pressure as things open up. We are thinking of limiting coffee time to 10 ppl per hour or staggering it in different rooms. For games nights, cards nights, bingo, etc. we



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Any Each Other Anything: COVID-19 Response April 30, 2020

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are keeping them off the calendar for now. New guideline for public spaces suggests providing 10m² per person, so we need to measure our common room for new occupancy caps.

Bethania: we are just starting to think about it now. Likely, we will put half of furniture back into common spaces, thinking about coffee times and reminding people to stay spaced. Bingo and other events won't return until Fall at the earliest.

Stonewall & District Lions Manor: no plans to resume activities any time soon.

Arms of the Cross Housing: all the common room activities are cancelled until end of May for now. Any events which may include people coming from outside of the building are cancelled until end of June. Once the group sizes increase we really cannot do many activities.

2. How about hairdressing services (for seniors' independent living)?

Arms of the Cross: our Hair Salon is opening on Monday with the new guide lines.

Stonewall & District Lions Manor: we are allowing our Hair Dressers to operate on Monday with new protocols for protection and not having it as a gathering place.

Bethania: Will likely be reintroducing hairdressing next week.

3. Will extra cleaning be the new norm?

Eden Health Care Services: we are currently still looking to disinfect once a day. However, once restrictions subside, we will still look to have a 'high-touch surface area' list of areas to be disinfected by our cleaning staff.

Steinbach Housing: we follow PCH standards in our buildings now in our independent living and expect those standards to continue

Western Manitoba Housing Co-Operative: We will be maintaining our new standards of disinfecting going forward.

Westman Lions: Will be building the extra cleaning into their budgets going forward, including wiping high touch areas at least three times per day.

Winnipeg Housing: we have increased cleaning on all our sites. We try to leave minimal supplies on the carts, as they are frequently taken and often resold.

Collectively: we observe an increased theft for cleaning and sanitization supplies, especially hand sanitizer, gloves.



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Any Each Other Anything: COVID-19 Response April 30, 2020

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- 4. Are there any good reference materials that have been published to help figure out the new norm for cleaning protocols?**

Health Canada has guidance on cleaning and disinfecting public spaces:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/diseases-conditions/cleaning-disinfecting-public-spaces.html>

CMHC: BC Housing has general protocols and refers to their detailed guidelines, including an operations manual and enhanced cleaning protocols for Schools and Child Care Programs:

<https://www.bchousing.org/COVID-19>.

MB Housing: will have some material coming out today.

- 5. Are organizations planning to re-open their offices soon, and how to plan a staged return?**

SAM: everyone is working from home right now, because the building we are housed in is closed and they want to maintain building cleanliness. We have been thinking about a staged approach with some working MWF one week, then rotating the next week. Our building generally supports 6 foot distance, but there are common areas. We are adding a plexiglass shield for the front reception, and adding a gate so that tenants don't walk around to visit offices. Finance team has been stressed working from home on audits and reporting, and many look forward to regrouping.

Stonewall & District Lions Manor: I'm at the office daily but have laid off one other office staff member along with our activity coordinator.

MB Housing: in addition to social distancing and continued work from home where possible. We are also using staged work hours.

Winnipeg Housing: we have been meeting at 1:30 everyday to do planning. We want to get more staff back in. Our office has no more than 10 ppl. Our finance team has finished audits so they could work from home for a while. The staged return for property managers are some come Mon, Wed and Friday, while other some Tuesday and Thursday. We are planning to open office again to public for the week after next week, so tenants can come to pay rent. We will have clear communications to tenants, staff training to be sure everyone is aware of their responsibilities for cleaning and communications.

Bethania: our properties have laid out spots to stand to keep distances, and they will be in place for some time.

Any Each Other Anything: COVID-19 Response April 30, 2020

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Eden: we have small staff teams working at various offices, so we are also doing a staged return

6. Annual Meeting planning: what are others doing about the requirement to hold an annual meeting within 6 months of year end?

SAM Management: For Co-Ops, the Registrar published a notice saying that they will not penalize if your Boards don't meet. It is available here:

https://mcusercontent.com/a5417062e4fc5f666bb20c202/files/841cfb43-4362-495c-bcb1-29dbbc5fc815/Information_Note.pdf. Most boards have decided not to meet, but are sending out information packages with the notice saying that they are postponing meetings.

For Life Leases, there has been no change/amendment to the Act regarding requirements for information to be provided with tenants. We are doing the required schedule and audits to tenants and questionnaires for them to give feedback.

MNPHA: There is information from CHF Canada regarding annual meetings and co-op boards, <https://chfcanaada.coop/covid-19-and-manitoba-housing-co-ops/>. We have been thinking about our own AGM and will share information regarding standards and good practices.

7. Will MNPHA be advocating for the rent increase freeze?

MNPHA: Yes, we will be surveying our members to collect information on how you have been impacted financially for this advocacy. Please let us know what advocacy would be helpful for you. We also have a call coming up with Michelle Corrigal, A/Director of RTB on May 13. Please join to ask your questions/share your concerns.

8. In Portage la Prairie, our homeless shelter and soup kitchen have closed. The homeless shelter due to funding, the soup kitchen due to Corona Virus. There are a group of us working on both these issues. What creative ideas, warnings, dreams, strategies have other communities used to address these kinds of issues in other communities?

Winkler: Central Station has been delivering meals to tenants. They used to have a Monday night meal for the community gathering.

Winnipeg: many organizations have been renting hotel rooms for people experiencing homelessness, as well as an isolation shelter in a vacant MB Housing building.

Steinbach: soup kitchen at homeless shelter – Today House – is still operating on a take-out basis. <https://m.facebook.com/TodayHouse/>



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Any Each Other Anything: COVID-19 Response April 30, 2020

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Funding: Rural and Remote Homeless Funding (for non-designated communities) is available to help with COVID-19. The Brandon Neighbourhood Renewal Corporation has a call for proposals right now, along with the list of resources available in Brandon: <https://bnrc.ca/homelessness-prevention-2/>

What are the rent costs for senior suites and what amounts do you charge for meals?

Bethania: Rent varies by building, but several are RGI. Meals also vary by building - from \$7.00 to \$9.00.

Steinbach Housing: Rent varies by building and type of housing; meals are \$6.

Arms of the Cross: rent 1 BR \$479 and 2BR \$649. Meals while pick-up only \$5.00 and once Common room open meals are back to \$6.00.

Stonewall & District Lions Manor: Rent 819-1BR, 961-2BR. Meals \$6.00 per Lunch



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