

**The experiences of residents with the City of Peterborough's rent supplement programs  
Part 2**

Final Report

Community-Based Research

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City of  
**Peterborough**



## Table of Contents

<b>Abstract</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Acknowledgments</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Keywords</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Methods</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Results</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Discussion</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Works Cited</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Appendices</b>	<b>25</b>

## **Abstract**

The purpose of this research was to determine what feedback the City of Peterborough should gather from recipients of its supplement programs, what survey structure can be implemented on an annual basis, what impact on quality of life financial support has had on tenants, and how the rent supplement has affected the recipients' living arrangements. The City of Peterborough rent supplement program provides rent subsidies to individuals of low income to reduce the amount that they have to allocate to rent. To accomplish the goals of this study, recipients of rent supplements participated in a survey and focus group. The survey consisted of quantitative and qualitative questions inquiring about the participants' experiences since receiving the supplement. The focus group expanded on the results from the survey. Grey literature research was conducted to determine what information other municipalities have gathered on residents' experiences with their rent supplement programs. The data shows that overall the quality of life and living arrangements have improved for individuals receiving a rent supplement. Residents can now afford healthier groceries and social activities. In order to conduct the survey on an annual basis the questions should be quantitative and responses collected on a scale of strongly agree to strongly disagree. This paper is a continuation of a project that is interested in the experiences of residents receiving supplements from the City of Peterborough. Part one of this research focused on geared-to-income programs. This part focuses on flat-rate rent supplements offered by the Housing Resource Centre.

### **Acknowledgments**

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## **Keywords**

Affordable-housing: Any type of housing that costs less than 30% of a household's pre-tax income

City of Peterborough Housing Division (CPHD): division of the City that administers and manages housing programs for several non-profit organizations

Close-ended questions: questions that have a limited amount of answers such as a yes, no or multiple choice

Flat-rate supplement: a fixed amount of supplement

Rent Geared-to-income supplement (RGI): a rent supplement that depends on the monthly income of tenant

Homelessness: situation where people do not have permanent accommodations or the means of acquiring it

Housing Access Peterborough (HAP): where to apply for subsidized housing programs for the City and County of Peterborough

Housing Resource Centre (HRC): a non-profit organization that helps people find and keep housing to prevent homelessness

Investment in Affordable Housing (IAH): This program will provide over \$800 million in federal and provincial funding to improve access to affordable housing over six years. The program will end March 31, 2020.

Low income: income below which a family is likely to spend 20% more of its income on food, shelter, and clothing than the average family

Marginalized population: comprised of individuals who are not part of the mainstream social, economic, cultural or political life

Moderate income: slightly below-average income

Non-portable: a rent supplement that cannot be transferred to new residence if the recipient moves

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD): Promotes policies that will improve the economic and social well-being of people around the world

Open-ended questions: questions that measure different variables to understand the statistical significance of something

Ottawa Community Housing (OCH): provides approximately 15,000 homes to 32,000 tenants within many communities across the City of Ottawa

Personal Support Workers (PSWs): An unregulated health care provider. They can manage daily tasks for people suffering from illness, injury or dealing with the effects of aging

Peterborough Housing Corporation (PHC): the city of Peterborough's non-profit housing company that operates as an independent corporation of the City of Peterborough

Portable: a rent supplement that can be transferred to a new residence if the recipient moves

Qualitative Research: descriptive research done to gain an understanding of peoples' experiences

## The experiences of residents with the City of Peterborough's rent supplement programs part 2

Quality of life: the standard of health, comfort, and happiness experienced by an individual or group

Quantitative Research: research that measures different variables to understand the statistical significance of something

Rent supplement: a government funded payment made to a landlord to bridge the difference between what a tenant can pay and the market rent

Subsidized housing: government assistance programs aimed towards reducing housing costs and expenses for people in need with low to moderate incomes

Thematic analysis: analysis of qualitative research that records patterns within data.

## **Introduction**

Homelessness does not discriminate, it happens to individuals of different ages, races and genders. On any given night 35 000 Canadians are homeless, 235 000 in a year (Gaetz et al, 2016). In addition to personal costs, homelessness cost the Canadian economy \$7.05 billion in 2013. This is calculated using the costs of emergency shelters, community supports and the increased costs of emergency services, health care and others (Gaetz et al, 2013).

Providing rent supplements costs less than providing emergency shelters and services. In Peterborough, renting is 57% cheaper than emergency shelters. In 2016 the annual cost of emergency shelter for one person was \$19,385.15 while the cost of a bachelor apartment was only \$8,292 (AHAC, 2017). When comparing the cost of homelessness to the cost of affordable housing programs, it becomes clear that placing individuals in housing is the better investment (Gaetz et al., 2013). Partnerships across public, private and not-for-profit sectors fund many services that provide aid to the homeless; this includes rent supplements. Rent supplements can help individuals be economically self-sufficient, provide them with safe shelter and provide them with a better quality of life (JCHS, 2013). A rent supplement is a government-funded payment made to a landlord to bridge the difference between what a tenant can pay and the market rent (Mendelson, 2016). Affordable housing is clearly a key piece in the plan to end homelessness in Canada. In fact, affordable housing is a theme of Peterborough's 10-year housing and homelessness plan that came into effect in 2014 (Tim Welch Consulting Inc. et al, 2013).

This research surveys participants receiving rent supplements from the City of Peterborough to gain an understanding of the experiences of recipients, and to determine how the programs that can be improved. The City of Peterborough has two different types of rent supplement programs, geared-to-income and flat-rate. Geared-to-income (RGI) supplements depend on the amount of income the applicant receives and adjusts accordingly (Walton, 2017).

The experiences of residents with the City of Peterborough's rent supplement programs part 2

RGI is non-portable meaning the supplement is fixed to the rental unit and cannot be transferred. Flat rate programs are offered by the Housing Resource Centre (HRC) under the Housing Choice Rent Supplement Program and the Investment in Affordable Housing Rent Supplement Program (IAH). Rent Supplements from the HRC have at a flat rate averaging around \$250. These fixed rate supplements are portable, meaning they can move with the tenant to different units (Peterborough Rent Supplement Program Outline, 2017).

The Housing Resource Centre administers the fixed rate rent supplement programs that are the subject of this research project. The HRC in Peterborough provides support and information about how to find or keep appropriate housing to prevent homelessness (Housing Peterborough, 2017). The HRC financially assists 123 households in Peterborough through rent supplements (Peterborough Rent Supplement Program Outline, 2017). Investment in Affordable Housing (IAH) is a government funded program, administered by the HRC. One of the housing choice requirements is that individuals must be paying more than 30% of their net monthly income on rent (Peterborough Rent Supplement Program Outline, 2017)

In 2016/2017 the first part of this project focused on the geared-to-income rent supplement programs administered by Peterborough Housing Corporation. These programs were Commercial, IAH-Peterborough and Strong Communities Rent Supplement Programs. Part one evaluated the tenants' personal experiences and determined if geared-to-income supplements had a financially positive impact on the participants' lives, and if quality of life was improved. Part one found that most survey participants could afford necessities they couldn't before receiving the rent supplement, such as food, and had an increased sense of community. Many participants mentioned that they wished their supplement was portable.



## The experiences of residents with the City of Peterborough's rent supplement programs part 2

This second part of the project focuses on flat-rate portable rent supplements administered by the Housing Resource Centre. Determining if recipients see a benefit to the supplement's portability is of particular interest due to the responses in the first part of this project. This project is also interested in the experiences of tenants receiving rent supplements from other municipalities. The survey results will help the Housing Division support residents in the future. The information on the participants' experiences will allow the City to share the successes and challenges of running these programs. The information gathered could influence future funding decisions and may result in program policy changes. The focus of this project is to address these four questions:

1. What feedback can and should the municipality gather from users of the Investment in Affordable Housing and Housing Choice rent supplement programs? What research have other municipalities done on similar programs?
2. What sort of survey structure can be implemented that could be repeated on an annual basis to collect current year and longitudinal data?
3. What impact on quality of life has financial support had on individual tenants who have received a rent supplement?
4. In the case of people who have been able to find a rental unit using the supplement from the City, how has this impacted their lives? What can they tell us about the changes this has made in their living arrangements?

### **Methods**

*What feedback can and should the municipality gather from users of the Investment in Affordable Housing and Housing Choice rent supplement programs? What research have other municipalities done on similar programs?*

One of the goals of this project was to determine what feedback the municipality can and should gather from users of the rent supplement programs. This question focused on examining the information collected in part one of this project and researching what other municipalities have gathered regarding the experiences of tenants receiving rent supplements.

## The experiences of residents with the City of Peterborough's rent supplement programs part 2

A Google search revealed data and statistics of other municipalities on the experiences of their supplement recipients. The same municipalities as part one of the project were used for consistency; Brantford, Sarnia, Oshawa and Kanata. Part one of the project was interested in the differences between these municipalities' supplement programs and Peterborough's. This part focused more on research about tenant's experiences with rent supplements. Key terms searched were; annual report housing, annual report rent supplement, rent supplement feedback, and rent supplement experiences.

*What sort of survey structure can be implemented that could be repeated on an annual basis to collect current year and longitudinal data?*

This project also aimed to determine what sort of survey structure for collecting current year and longitudinal data is preferred for implementation annually. To answer this, the survey from part one was reviewed and the recommendations of the researcher were considered. Walton designed the survey specifically for this research and recommended points of improvement after her analysis. Therefore, in order to effectively implement an annual survey, the suggested corrections should be made. Ambiguous questions in the survey that respondents did not understand or misinterpreted required rewording, and space added for qualitative answers.

*What impact on quality of life has financial support had on individual tenants who have received a rent supplement? In the case of people who have been able to find a rental unit using the supplement from the City, how has this impacted their lives? What can they tell us about the changes this has made in their living arrangements?*

The main purpose of this project is to evaluate what impact financial support has had on the quality of life of tenants who have received a rent supplement. In the case of people who have been able to find a rental unit using the supplement from the City, evaluating how this has influenced their lives and the changes it has made to their living arrangements. To evaluate these indicators and experiences, 115 surveys were sent out to recipients of a rent supplement from the

The experiences of residents with the City of Peterborough's rent supplement programs part 2

Housing Resource Centre. The 16 question surveys (appendix 1) consisted of multiple choice, fill in the blank and comment sections. The questions asked; the age makeup of the household, what things are now affordable using the supplement, opinion on portability, and experience of life using the supplement. Prior to releasing the surveys, they received approval from the Trent Community Research Centre, the Housing Resource Centre, and the City of Peterborough. The City provided an incentive to encourage participation. Participants of the survey could fill out a ballot for the chance to win a gift card. Pre-stamped return envelopes accompanied the surveys to remove any cost to the participants. Each survey had a consent form on the front of the package that participants had to fill out in order to be part of the research. The surveys were released mid-December with a mid-January deadline. In order to maintain confidentiality, the City stuffed blank envelopes and the HRC added the addresses and mailed them out. The HRC received the completed surveys who then removed the ballot before I received the surveys to maintain confidentiality. The survey results were inputted into excel. The multiple choice and fill in the blanks were converted directly into tables. The comment and opinion questions were scanned for common themes. Mentions such as location, community, safety, cleanliness, and amenities were extrapolated and categorized separately as either positive or negative for question 15. The same process was applied to the themes observed in question 16. Once themes were established, the amount of participants who mentioned a theme was recorded. These numbers were then translated into graphs using excel.

To further evaluate how receiving a rent supplement impacted the tenants' lives and living arrangements, a focus group was conducted. Pizza was offered at the focus group as incentive, transportation and childcare costs were covered as well. A member of the HRC facilitated the focus group and asked attendees 11 questions that initiated more detailed

The experiences of residents with the City of Peterborough's rent supplement programs part 2 responses than the survey (Appendix 2). The HRC contacted each individual receiving a rent supplement from three different buildings. Three buildings where some tenants receive rent supplements were chosen for a varied demographic while preserving ease of transportation for the participants. Unfortunately, only 4 individuals participated in the focus group and were all from the same building.

## **Results**

*What feedback can and should the municipality gather from users of the Investment in Affordable Housing and Housing Choice rent supplement programs? What research have other municipalities done on similar programs?*

Although many municipalities offer similar programs to Peterborough's rent supplement programs, not many other cities have conducted research on the experiences of their recipients. For continuity, the cities used in part one of this project were considered; Kanata, Brantford Sarnia, Milton, and Oshawa. Due to lack of results, the search was broadened to all of Ontario and community housing was considered in addition to rent supplement programs.

Bruce County conducts three surveys per household in their rent supplement program; once as an application to determine qualifications for entry, once in the program, and once again after 6 months of receiving a supplement. The pre-program two-page survey, found in appendix 3, begins with a form requesting the number of members in the household, number of bedrooms in unit, and current monthly rent. There is then space requesting the average monthly costs of utilities if not included in the rent. The initial application evaluation contains multiple choice questions such as; "How stressed are you as a result of your rent?" "How stressed are you as a result of your utilities?" and "Do your housing costs impact the amount of funds you have available for other basic needs (food, clothing, medical supplies, etc)?" (Bruce County, 2017).

## The experiences of residents with the City of Peterborough's rent supplement programs part 2

The Ottawa Community Housing (OCH) 2015 annual report mentions how many calls for community safety services they have received that year. The top three types of calls were for parking violations, noise complaints and suspicious activity. In 2015 Ottawa received 29,340 calls, this makes up 13% of their inquiries and requests for service. Parking, noise, and unusual/suspicious activity made up the main reason for calls (OCH Annual Report, 2015). The call centre is open 24/7 and over 90% of tenants were satisfied with service delivery. The report also mentions 70 to 80 active OCH Tenant Groups identify and act upon community concerns and opportunities. The groups also organize community events and activities, and help neighbours get to know each other. The OCH Tenant groups create the types of communities they want to live in with funding and support of OCH (OCH Annual Report, 2015). The report states that 1 in 5 OCH homes are designated as smoke free with tenants voluntarily opting into a no-smoking lease. OCH provides a Tenant Guide to all new tenants with the intent to increase communication, transparency and awareness with tenants about services, service levels they should expect, as well as explains the tenant's legal rights and responsibilities (OCH Annual Report, 2015). Ekos Research Associates conducted the one-time tenant satisfaction survey with OCH and reached a sample size of just over 1000. The results report that 75% are satisfied with their homes, 75% are satisfied with their communities, and 74% are satisfied with the level of service. In regards to safety and security, 91% feel safe inside their homes, 81% feel safe outside (OCH Annual Report, 2015).

*What sort of survey structure can be implemented that could be repeated on an annual basis to collect current year and longitudinal data?*

Walton's report encourages the use of incentives when implementing surveys and recommends the use of clear language. Thematic analysis attempts to pinpoint themes or patterns in data sets. This type of analysis is highly dependent on the researcher's interpretation and is therefore difficult to reproduce. In part one only a single theme was chosen from each comment.

## The experiences of residents with the City of Peterborough's rent supplement programs part 2

This part two analyzed all themes within a comment, allowing for the opinions of participants to be fully represented and unfiltered.

*What impact on quality of life has financial support had on individual tenants who have received a rent supplement? In the case of people who have been able to find a rental unit using the supplement from the City, how has this impacted their lives? What can they tell us about the changes this has made in their living arrangements?*

The survey was sent to 115 participants in the rent supplement programs of the HRC. Two of the surveys were returned to sender and 28 responses were received, resulting in a 24% response rate. The results were analyzed manually in excel. For detailed results of each question, including graphs, refer to appendix 4.

- Q1. Individuals responsible to pay the rent in their household who are between the ages of 46-59 represent 43% of respondents. The second most common demographic is 60+ at 32%.
- Q2. Most households do not have residents under the age of 18 or over the age of 65.
- Q3. Most participants heard about the rent supplement program through the Housing Resource Centre (32%) or a friend (29%).
- Q4. The majority (52%) of participants were on the inquiry list for 0-6 months. Only 4% waited over 5 years (figure 1).

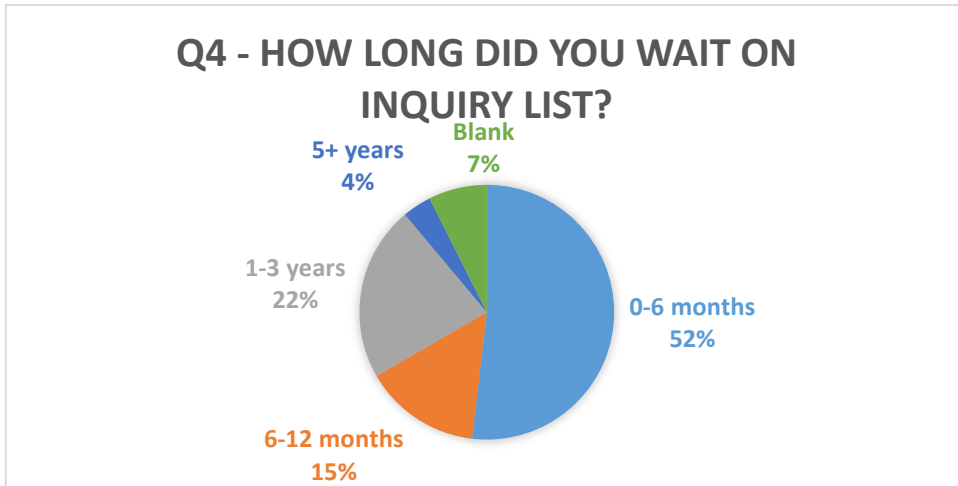


Figure 1. Pie chart depicting how long survey participants waited on the inquiry list before receiving a rent supplement.

Q5. Most participants have been receiving a supplement for 1-3 years (57%) (figure 2).

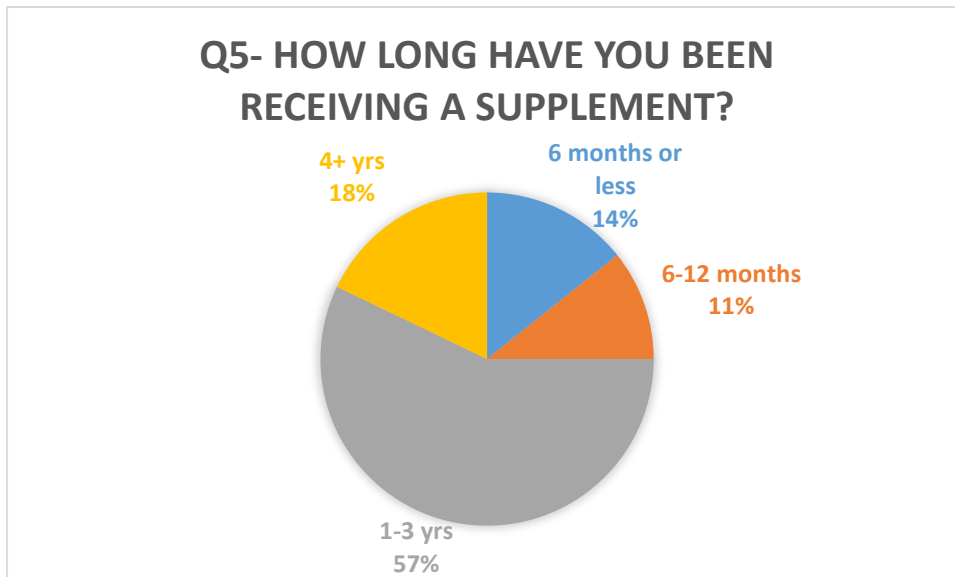


Figure 2. Pie chart depicting how long survey participants have been receiving a rent supplement.

Q6. Most survey respondents are on a waitlist for rent geared to income housing (66%).

Q7. The amount of people who needed access to emergency funds is equal to the amount of individuals who did not.

Q8. Most participants reported that they can now afford healthier groceries with the rent supplement (82%) (figure 3).

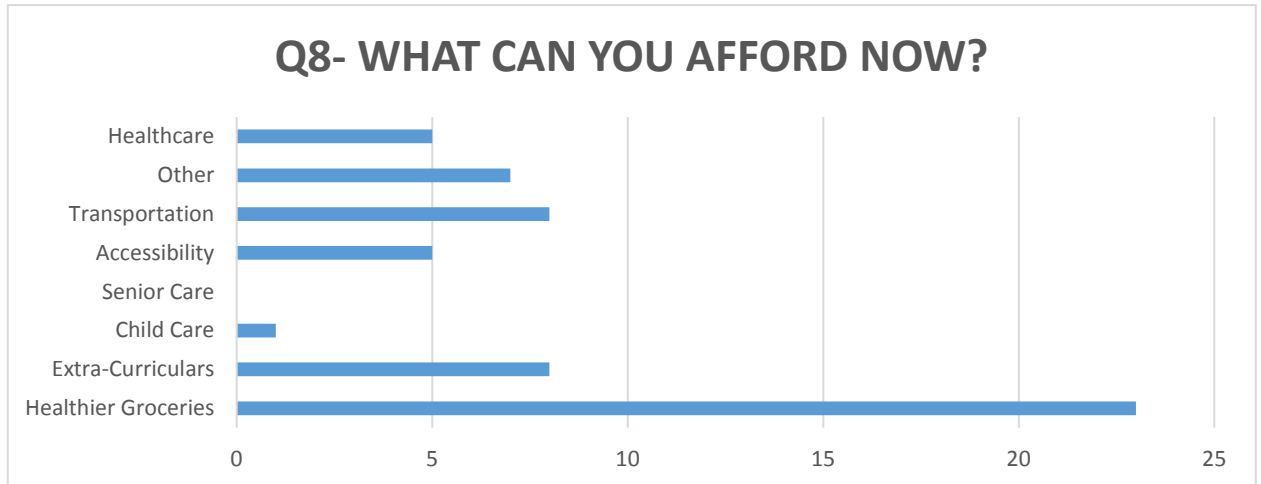


Figure 3. Bar graph representing the responses in a select all that apply question about what is now affordable using the rent supplement.

- Q9. 36% of respondents said that the rent supplement allowed them to move to a better area.
- Q10. 32% selected that the rent supplement allowed them to live closer to family.
- Q11. A majority of participants selected that they have been able to live in one location longer since receiving the rent supplement (89%).
- Q12. Most participants have not moved since receiving the supplement (86%) (figure 4).

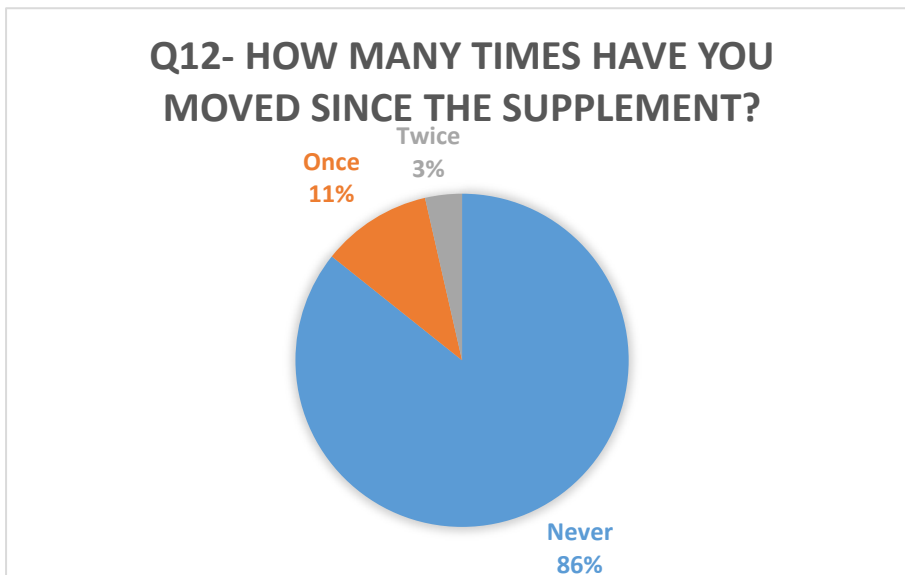


Figure 4. Pie chart depicting how many times respondents have moved since receiving a rent supplement.

- Q13. The portability of the rent supplement is seen as beneficial by 86% of respondents.



Q14. 93% of respondents report that the supplement has made their life better.

Q15. The majority of participants like where they live (79%).

Q16. The most common response to this question was that the individual is grateful for this program (figure 5).

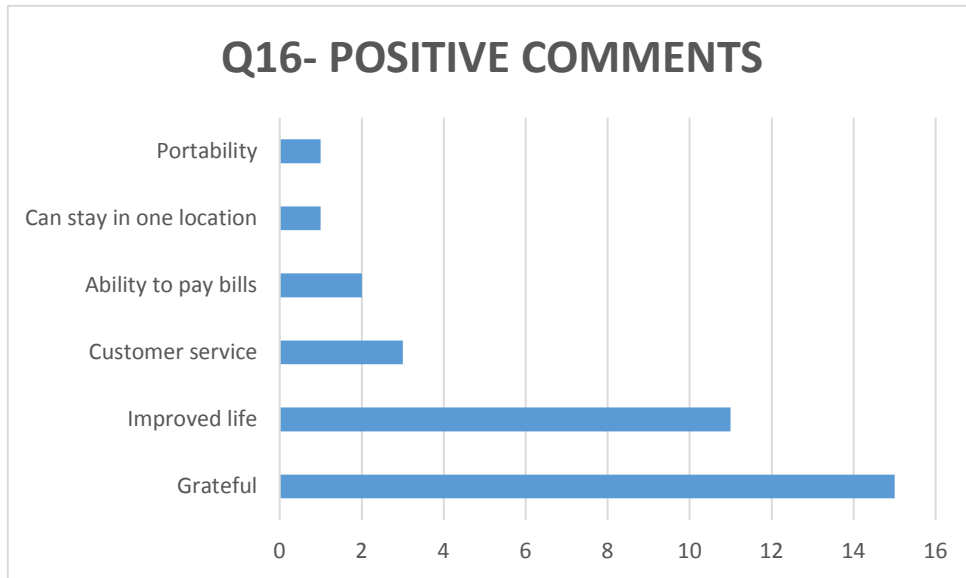


Figure 5. Bar graph showing the positive themes extracted from the comments in the survey question about the program.

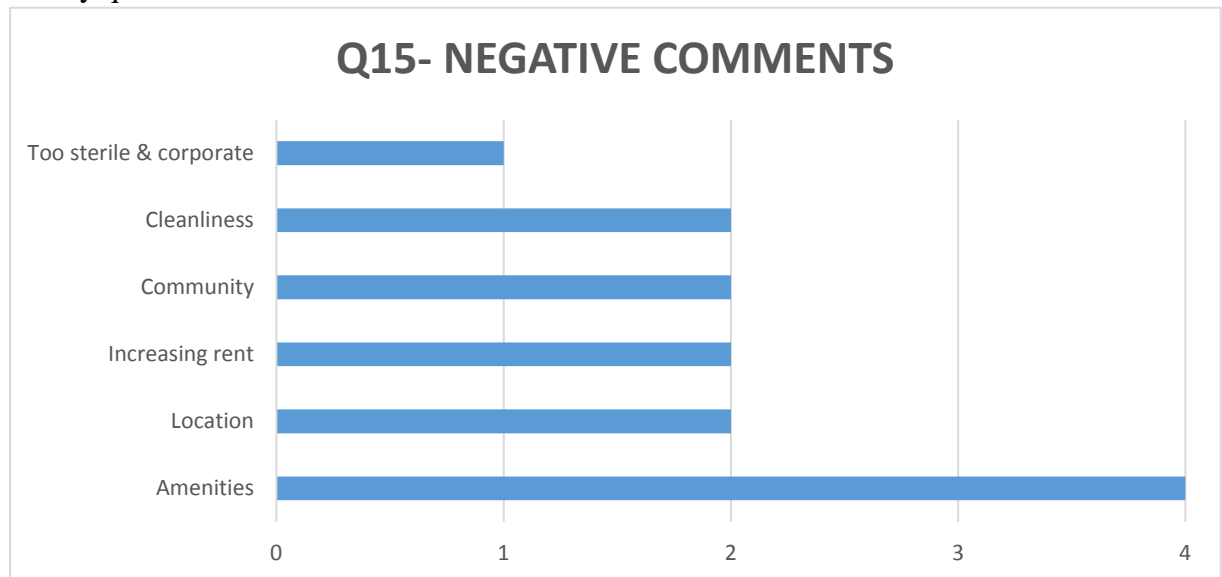
Question 13 asked participants to explain if they saw a benefit to portability or not. Most participants mentioned that the portability is beneficial because one may have to move or want to upgrade. Three of the four respondents that have moved while using the supplement stated that they were able to move into a larger space in a more convenient location. Peace of mind was mentioned a few times as a benefit to the portability as well as the opportunity to move without sacrificing the supplement. Responses for this question contained no negative themes. The two respondents who selected that they do not see a benefit to portability stated that they are already in a good location or haven't had to seek another place yet.

Question 15 asked participants to expand on why they did or did not like where they live. A majority of respondents believe that they are in a good location and in a good community. Other

## The experiences of residents with the City of Peterborough’s rent supplement programs part 2

positive themes discussed were safety, quiet, access to a yard and good maintenance. The most common negative theme was that tenants miss certain amenities. Other negative themes discussed were bad location, increasing rent, bad community, poor cleanliness and the building being too sterile and corporate (figure 6). The comments of question 15, do you like where you live, are a good indicator on how the rent supplement has changed the tenants’ living arrangements. One respondent stated, “I miss my balcony & back yard, this place is too sterile and corporate”. One common theme was the accessibility to stores and services, some found that they were not in a good location while most did. The following statement demonstrates how respondents referred to their living arrangements “easy access to my apartment [...] I can walk to everything I need and much more...”. Another respondent said that they “wouldn’t be able to live here without it”.

Figure 6. Bar graph showing the negative themes extracted from the comments in the survey question about the individual’s location.



Question 16 allowed participants to document their opinions about the rent supplement program. The vast majority commented that they were grateful for the program and that their life has improved with the supplement. Other positive comments were about great customer service, ability to pay bills, ability to stay in one location, and praised the supplement portability. A few

## The experiences of residents with the City of Peterborough's rent supplement programs part 2

respondents expressed that they would like to see the program extended, that the amount of money needs to increase, that the supplement should be indexed to inflation, and that wait times should be reduced.

The focus group emphasized the results from the survey. The four participants all stated that they had more money available to do things. The supplement made living more comfortable and easier. Everyone was in agreement that they could now afford things that they couldn't before the rent supplement such as food, internet, and cable. The rent supplement has allowed recipients to go on outings, such as a night at the movies, or playing pool with friends. Everyone in the focus group found his or her apartments before receiving the rent supplements, and have not moved since receiving it. The group shared however, that finding a place without the supplement is much more difficult than with since there is a need to balance affordability and accessibility. One of the participants stated that the supplement helps keep the rent affordable compared to what others are paying, especially new people in the building. Everyone stated that they cannot afford to look for somewhere new to live because of how much housing prices have increased. By staying in their current units, they are protected by the rent increase guideline of 1.8%. Three quarters of the participants like where they live. The rent supplement has allowed the focus group participants to live in a building with Personal Support Workers and other benefits. One individual was strongly against the building. No participants have ever needed access to emergency funds since receiving the supplement. Before having the rent supplement tenants could not afford food or cable. Everyone saw the program as beneficial and stated that the application process was easy. The yearly updates by the HRC don't take long, but should be more accessible. It was pointed out that the HRC never missed a supplement payment. There was a consensus that the supplement should be indexed to match the increase in rent.

## **Discussion**

The pre-rent supplement evaluation conducted by Bruce County gives an example of what the City of Peterborough could ask rent supplement recipients in regards to their experiences (Bruce County, 2017). Some questions from the evaluation, such as “how many bedrooms are in your unit”, do not need to be asked as they are not meaningful to the research. Instead, the City could ask participants if they are happy with the size of their unit as this data would be more applicable to their experiences. Bruce County's form (appendix 3) also requests budget information, similar budget questions could be included to address the suggestion of evaluating participants spending habits from part one. In part one, Walton proposed more research to determine whether the supplement provides adequate resources to individuals. Depending on the results, participants could receive income distribution education through a financial advising program (Walton, 2017).

The City of Peterborough could also adopt Bruce County's three-survey structure. Instead of a mass annual survey, send surveys to rent supplement recipients at set time-intervals. The use of this structure prevents the collection of repeat data from the same individuals each year.

The OCH survey makes a point to differentiate community and homes (OCH Annual Report, 2015). Although question 15 of the City of Peterborough survey did not specify, respondents did well at elaborating on the two without being prompted. Future surveys could make this differentiation in order to make results comparable to other municipalities. Differentiating between the two would also provide prompts for the participants resulting in answers that are more elaborate.

The survey for the City of Peterborough should include questions about customer service and the corresponding level of satisfaction. The results from those questions could be used to

## The experiences of residents with the City of Peterborough's rent supplement programs part 2

evaluate Peterborough's housing and homelessness plan in providing people-centered services (Tim Welch Consulting Inc. et al, 2013).

Due to the poor response rate of online surveys last year, they were omitted this year. Online surveys should be reintroduced, this year's survey was looking at a younger demographic and may have yielded better results due to the convenience of technology compared to mail. Any feedback that can be, should be collected by various means.

As stated in part one of this research, it is important that the language of the questions is very clear (Walton, 2017). In this round of surveys, respondents tended to contradict themselves in some of their selections. This may have been due to wordiness or ambiguous language. A definitions page may be required for future surveys. The survey collected data on who needed access to emergency funds while receiving the supplement. In order for this data to determine how the supplement has impacted tenant's lives it should be compared to whether those same individuals have ever needed access before receiving the rent supplement.

Walton's report mentions that thematic analysis is highly dependent on the researcher's interpretation (Walton, 2017). Because of variability in interpretations, qualitative questions are typically not completely reproducible or comparable on an annual basis. For this reason quantitative answers should be sought as often as possible. Questions inquiring about experiences could ask participants to rate their experiences on a scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Questions could be formed from the themes commonly observed from the results of this research. Unrestricted responses are however still very important to this research. There should be a section that allows respondents to expand on any of their answers if they so choose. It is important that when conducting thematic analysis that all themes within an answer are considered independently and not as an overall theme.

## The experiences of residents with the City of Peterborough's rent supplement programs part 2

Excel was an effective tool for analyzing the results of the survey. The ability to carry data over from different spreadsheets is useful for collecting and comparing current and longitudinal data. It is also very common and accessible software.

According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), quality of life indicators are health, education, environment, safety, civic engagement, accessibility of services, community, and life satisfaction (OECD, 2016). Healthier groceries, extra-curriculars, and transportation were the top three things that survey respondents can now afford using the rent supplement. Participants mentioned healthcare and healthier groceries these directly correlate to an improved quality of life. Accessibility and transportation also show improved quality of life. Environment, safety, and community are all indicators of quality of life recognized by OECD and mentioned by survey participants. The majority of survey respondents like where they live. The most common positive comments about where respondents live talked about their location, community and safety. These themes directly correlate to improved quality of life. The most common negative comment about where tenants live was the lack of amenities, not directly corresponding to a quality of life indicator. Only one survey respondent selected that the rent supplement made no difference in their life but is "just thankful there is this help". One respondent said that the rent supplement has made their life worse but did not elaborate on how.

Overall, the financial support has allowed residents to afford healthier groceries and social outings. The rent supplement has allowed tenants to find more comfortable living arrangements and for the majority has had a positive impact on their living arrangements.

## **Recommendations**

### *Survey*

1. Reword question 2 to; How many residents are in your household including yourself and what is their age?
2. Consider adding healthcare, dental care, life insurance and utilities to options.
3. Differentiate between homes and community in question 15, either as multiple choice or as a comment prompt.
4. Consider adding questions about the level of satisfaction with the program customer service. The results from these questions could be used to evaluate Peterborough's housing and homelessness plan in providing people-centered services.
5. Ask participants if they needed access to emergency funds before receiving the rent supplement in order to properly determine the impact of the financial aid.

### *Structure*

1. Use clearer language on the survey. Consider adding a definitions section if required.
2. Re-integrate the online survey form as an option.
3. Move towards more closed quantitative questions where possible using a sliding scale as multiple choice to reduce the amount of thematic analysis needed.

### *Future Research*

Throughout this research, rent supplement recipients have expressed many concerns about their building or landlords. Research could be conducted on the experiences of tenants with affordable housing to identify areas requiring attention. Areas such as receptiveness of landlords regarding complaints or upkeep of building could be evaluated.

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Walton, B. Residents' experiences with the City of Peterborough's rent supplement program. TCRC 2017 Apr.



### **Appendix 1- Rent Supplement Survey Participant Consent Form**

You have been invited to participate in a research study performed by The City of Peterborough's Housing Division in collaboration with the Trent Community Research Centre. The title of the study is: **The experiences of residents with the City of Peterborough's Rent Supplement Programs Part 2**. You have been selected because you are currently receiving rent supplement through CCRC's Housing Resource Centre. CCRC is mailing the survey to rent supplement recipients however will not release the names or any identifying information about this mailing list to The City of Peterborough, Trent Community Research Centre or any other person or organization.

The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of tenants in these programs. If you choose to complete the survey, you may return the included ballot for the chance to win a gift card from any of the following businesses; Tim Hortons, No Frills, Walmart, or a voucher for any downtown business. The contact information on the ballot will be used only to distribute prizes to winners.

The study consists of a short survey and should only take about 15 minutes to complete. The results of this study could help improve the Rent Supplement Programs in the future and your participation would be greatly appreciated. Results of this study will be published by the Trent Community Research Centre. If you have any questions about this study or require further information, please contact the student researcher, Sabrina Bailey at [sabrinabailey@trentu.ca](mailto:sabrinabailey@trentu.ca) or the research supervisor, John Marris at [johnmarris@trentcentre.ca](mailto:johnmarris@trentcentre.ca).

**By ticking this box, I agree with the following declarations**

- I, the participant, have been informed of the nature of this study as described above and **freely give my informed consent** to participate.
- I understand that I am/ **free to ignore the survey** and that my rent supplement will not be affected in any way whether I participate in the survey or not.
- I understand that **privacy/confidentiality** of my participation in this study will be maintained in the following manner:
  - My name will be not be collected with the survey results. The contact information on the ballot will .will not be used for any other purpose and will not be seen by the student(s) compiling the surveys
  - I understand the purpose of this study stated above
  - I permit the anonymous data and records from this research to be used in research publications or for teaching so long as my privacy and confidentiality are protected.
  - I understand that I will have a chance to win a gift card for my participation in this study if I return the enclosed ballot.
  - I understand that this research project has been reviewed and received ethical approval by the Research Ethics Committee of the Department of Forensic Science, Trent University.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Rent Supplement Survey**

*Please answer the following questions to the best of your knowledge. You can skip any question that you do not want to answer. When you finish please return your answers using the addressed, stamped envelope. If you wish to be entered in a draw for a gift card, please fill out the ballot included in the survey package and include it in the envelope. Thank you for taking the time to participate in our study!*

### **1. How old is the person responsible to pay the rent in your household?**

- 16-25
- 26-35
- 36-45
- 46-59
- 60+

### **2. How many residents are in your household and what is their age?**

Number of residents under 18 \_\_\_\_\_

Number of residents 18-65 \_\_\_\_\_

Number of residents 65+ \_\_\_\_\_

### **3. How did you hear about the rent supplement program?**

- Municipal Website ([www.peterborough.ca](http://www.peterborough.ca))
- Municipal Office (500 George St. N Peterborough)
- Housing Resource Centre (540 George St N Peterborough)
- Peterborough Housing Corporation (526 McDonnell Street Peterborough)
- Housing Access Peterborough (526 McDonnell Street Peterborough)
- Landlord
- Through a friend
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

### **4. If you inquired about a rent supplement from the Housing Resource Centre and were placed on an Inquiry List before entering the program, approximately how long did you have to wait?**

- 0-6 months
- 6-12 months
- 1-3 years
- 3-5 years
- 5+ years

**5. How long have you been receiving a rent supplement?**

- 6 months or less
- 6-12 months
- 1-3 years
- 4+ years

**6. Are you currently on a waitlist for any other form of housing?**

**Optional- If yes, please specify what type of housing**

- Yes \_\_\_\_\_
- No

**7. While receiving rent supplement, have you ever needed to access emergency financial assistance? For example, help with utility or rent arrears, borrow money from friends or family, pay day loans etc.**

- Yes
- No

**8. Are there things you can afford now with the rent supplement that you could not afford before? Check all that apply.**

- Healthier groceries
- Extra-Curricular activities (For example, sports, day camps, workout classes etc.)
- Child Care
- Senior Care
- Accessibility (ex. ramps, lifts, grab bars, anything to improve one's mobility around the residence)
- Transportation
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**9. Did receiving a rent supplement allow you to move into an area that better met your needs ?? (i.e. closer to work, school, etc.)**

- Yes
- No

**Rent Supplement Survey (continued)**

**10. Did receiving a rent supplement allow you to live closer to family members?**

- Yes
- No

**11. Have you been able to live in one location longer since receiving the rent supplement?**

- Yes
- No

**12. Have you moved since you received your rent supplement?**

- Yes            If yes, how many times? \_\_\_\_\_
- No

**13. Do you see a benefit in your supplement being portable? (This means that you can move to a different eligible unit and keep your supplement.)**

- Yes
- No

**Why or why not?**

**14. Think about your life before receiving a rent supplement. Has the rent supplement made your life worse or better?**

- Worse
- No difference
- Better

**15. Do you like where you live?**

- Yes
- No

**Why or why not?**

**Rent Supplement Survey (continued)**

**16. Do you have any comments about the rent supplement program? (Ex. Things you like, things you would change etc.)**

The experiences of residents with the City of Peterborough's rent supplement programs part 2

This ballot information will be kept entirely separate from the completed survey and the contact information will not be used for any other purpose.

Yes, I want a chance to win a \$25 gift card for:

- No Frills
- Tim Hortons
- Walmart
- A participating downtown business-see [www.downtownptbo.ca](http://www.downtownptbo.ca)

My email address or phone number \_\_\_\_\_

Your information is safe: your phone number and email address will not be shared, sold or otherwise provided to any third party.

**Appendix 2 - AGENDA**  
**Focus Group**  
**For evaluating the experiences of residents with the City of Peterborough's Rent Supplement Programs**

Welcome and Pizza

Overview and Introduction of Meeting – goals and rules, disclose that this is being recorded

Introduction of participants - First name only, to ease guiding conversation

Warm up Questions

1. How long have you been receiving the rent supplement?
2. Do you know which specific rent supplement program you are getting (list)?
3. Can you remember how long you were waiting to get the rent supplement?

Detailed Questions

4. How has receiving a rent supplement changed your life? (let them answer in general terms and follow up with specific if necessary)
  - a. Are you able to afford to buy things you couldn't before the rent supplement?
  - b. Is it easier to buy healthier food?
  - c. Can you afford things for the rest of your family that you couldn't before
    - i. Healthcare
    - ii. Recreation for your children
  - d. Can you afford outings like the movies or other activities?
    - i. What type of activities?
  - e. Have you noticed a difference in your social life or your involvement in the community?
5. Can you tell me about your experiences of finding somewhere to rent?
  - a. Did the supplement help with your existing rent? Or did it allow you to look for somewhere new to live?
6. Do you like where you live?
7. Have you needed any emergency funds since receiving the supplement?
8. Looking back to before you had the rent supplement, can you talk about what challenges you faced?
9. Can you tell me about your living arrangements before you got the rent supplement?
10. What are your general feelings towards the HRC rent supplement program?
11. Are there changes you would like to see in the program?

Thank you

**FORMAT**  
**Focus Group**  
**For evaluating the experiences of residents with the City of Peterborough's Rent Supplement Programs**

Meeting should be around 1.5 hours long – Around lunch may work best for most people.

Meeting should be in a room with chairs arranged so that all participants can see each other, a circle if possible.

Everyone should have name tags with first names only

Pizza should be easily accessible

Goals

To understand the experiences of residents who are receiving rent supplements from the City of Peterborough.

To evaluate what quality of life-type indicators of impact financial support has had on tenants receiving the supplement.

To evaluate how finding a rental unit using the supplement has impacted their lives.

To understand what changes the supplement has made to their living arrangements.

Rules

Please share all your thoughts and feelings. If you are not comfortable sharing with the group you may speak to us privately.

There is no such thing as a bad response or idea.

All conversations and feedback will be constructive and productive

Please refrain from separate conversations or shutting down other people's remarks, either by physical or verbal actions – no eye rolling

Disagreements will happen, please be respectful



### APPENDIX 3 – Bruce County Rent Supplement Survey

#### Rent Supplement In-Situ Application

(In-Situ means already living in an acceptable rental situation)

This application **must** accompany the Application for Rental Accommodation

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Survey Completed: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Household Information:</b>	
Number of members in the household	
Number of bedrooms in unit	
Current monthly rent	

<b>Rental Unit Information:</b> Please specify if the following are included in your rent.	<b>Included Yes/No</b>	<b>Average Cost/Month If Not Included</b>
Heating method: _____ <small>(e.g. oil, natural gas, electric, propane or geo thermal)</small>		\$ _____
Hot Water		\$ _____
Municipal Water Charges		\$ _____
Electricity		\$ _____
Is the unit self contained? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Unit is not self contained if it is a hostel unit, group home or congregate living arrangement, nursing or retirement home.		
Do you have a lease? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		

<b>Landlord Contact Information:</b>	
Landlord Name:	
Telephone Number	
Cell Number	
Email Address	

**Please see the following page to complete for additional questions.**

### **Pre-Program Rent Supplement Evaluation**

Thank you for taking the time to complete this pre-program survey for the Rent Supplement Program. Your participation in the evaluation is voluntary. However your comments are important to help us identify ways to improve the Rent Supplement Program. Applicants who are later offered rent supplement assistance are asked to complete a similar survey at time of offer and once again after 6 months of receiving assistance from the program. Participation is voluntary and the information received from each person is confidential and will be used only to provide general feedback.

**Please answer the following questions by selecting the level of stress that you believe most accurately describes how you feel.**

A. How stressed are you as a result of your rent?

- Not at all
- Not often
- Sometimes
- Very
- Extremely

B. How stressed are you as a result of your utilities?

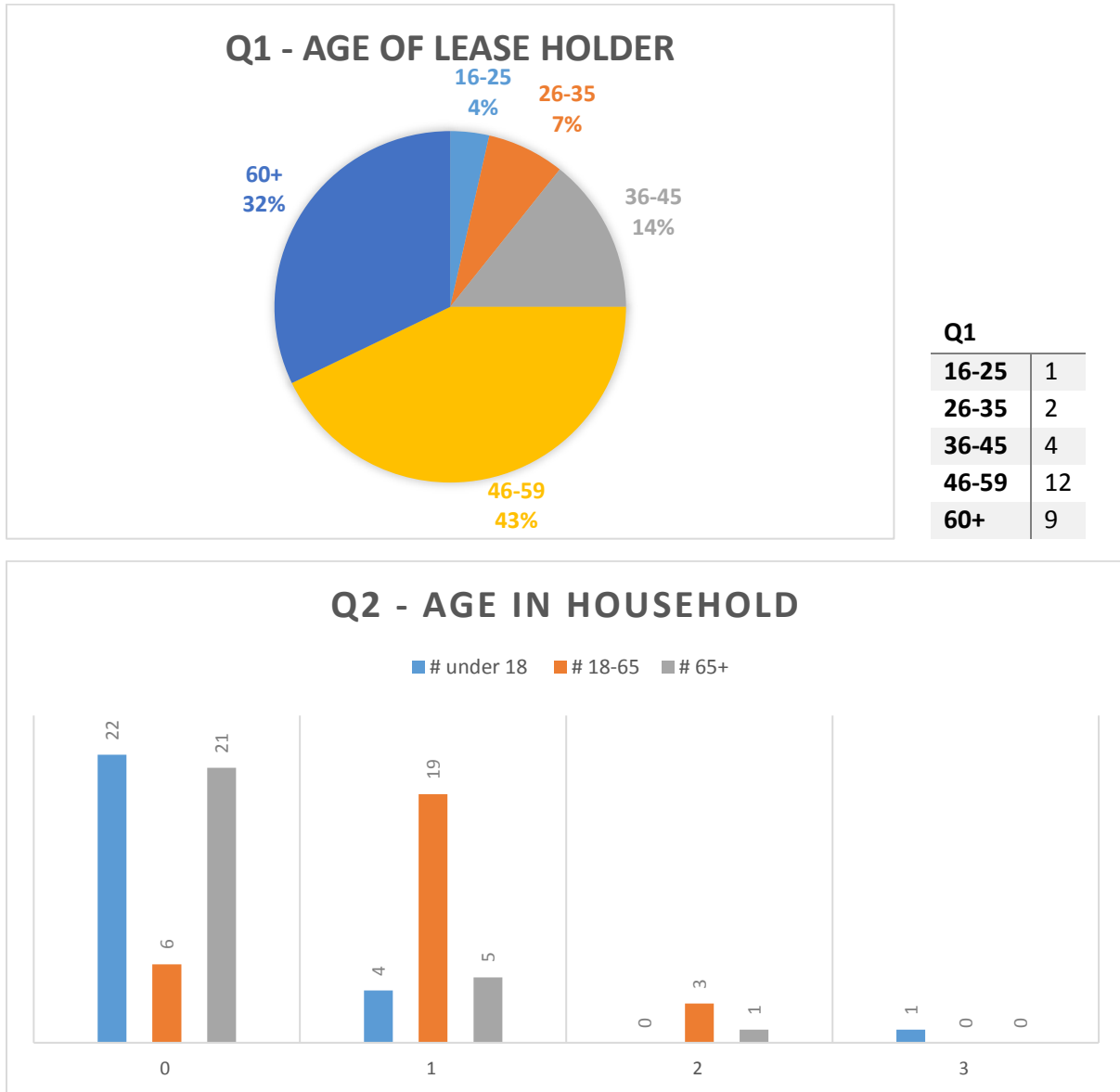
- Not at all
- Not often
- Sometimes
- Very
- Extremely

C. Do your housing costs impact the amount of funds you have available for other basic needs (food, clothing, medical supplies, etc.)?

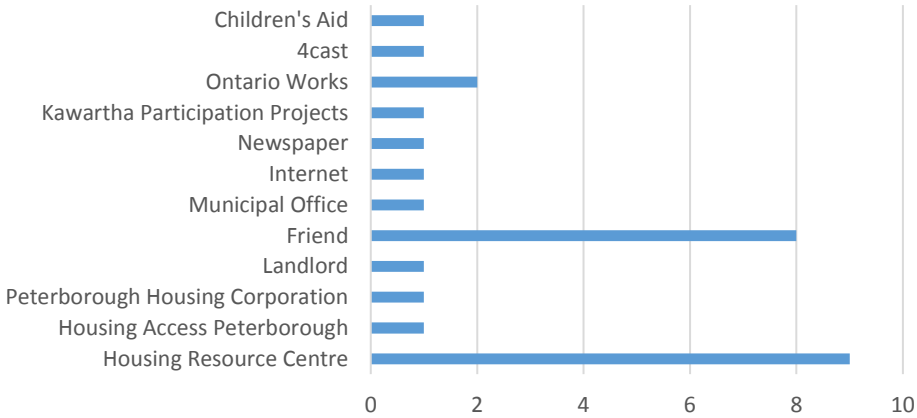
- Not at all
- Not often
- Sometimes
- Very
- Extremely

**Thank you for taking the time to complete the survey.**

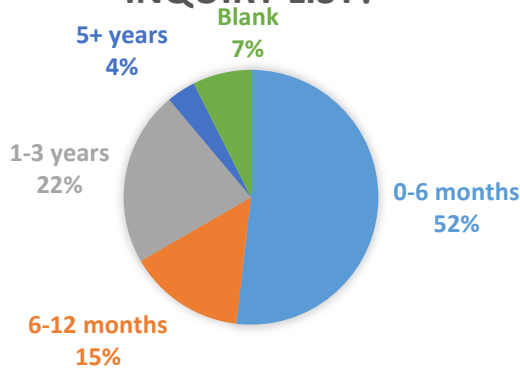
### APPENDIX 4 – Survey Results



### Q3 - HOW DID YOU HEAR ABOUT THE PROGRAM?



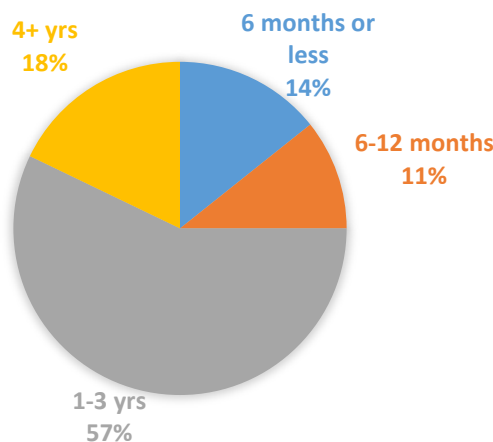
### Q4 - HOW LONG DID YOU WAIT ON INQUIRY LIST?



#### Q4

0-6 MONTHS	14
6-12 MONTHS	4
1-3 YEARS	6
3-5 YEARS	0
5+ YEARS	1
BLANK	2

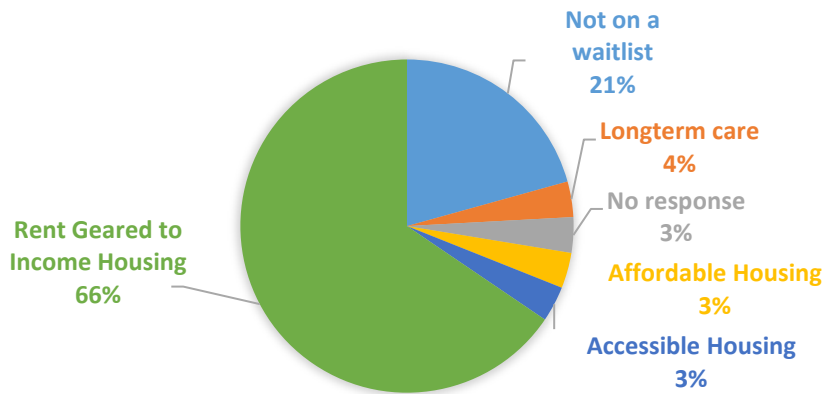
### Q5- HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN RECEIVING A SUPPLEMENT?



#### Q5

6 MONTHS OR LESS	4
6-12 MONTHS	3
1-3 YRS	16
4+ YRS	5

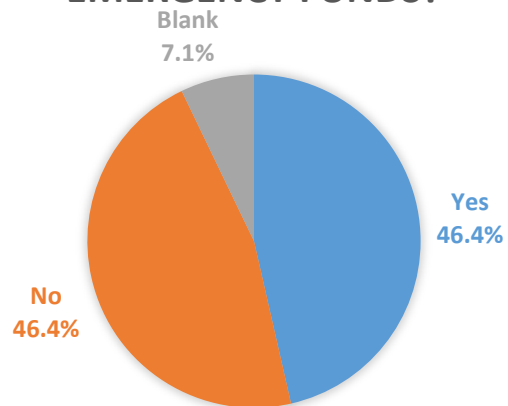
### Q6- ARE YOU CURRENTLY ON A WAITLIST FOR ANY OTHER FORM OF HOUSING?



#### Q6

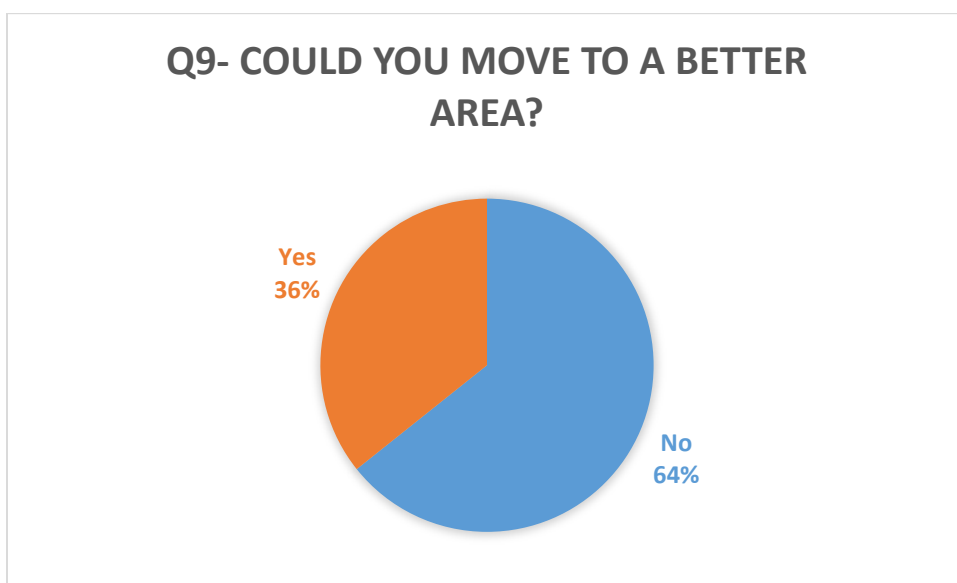
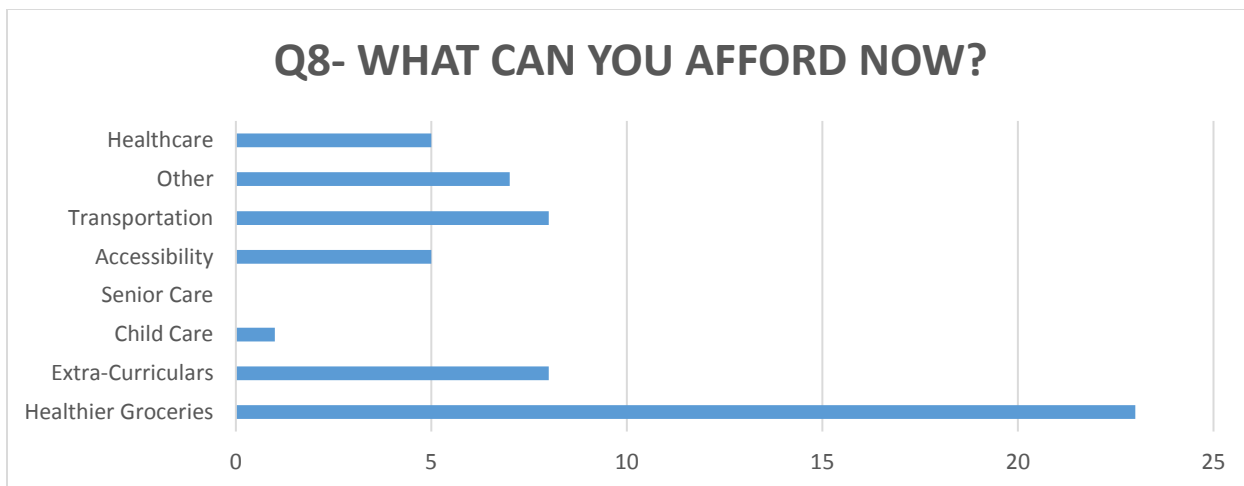
NOT ON A WAITLIST	6
LONGTERM CARE	1
NO RESPONSE	1
AFFORDABLE HOUSING	1
ACCESSIBLE HOUSING	1
RENT GEARED TO INCOME HOUSING	19

### Q7- HAVE YOU EVER NEEDED EMERGENCY FUNDS?



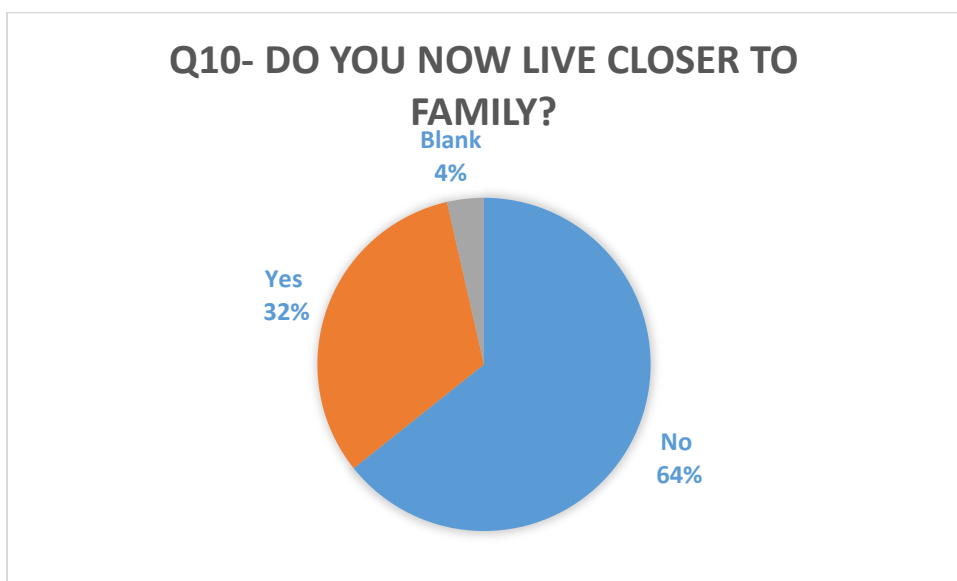
#### Q7

YES	13
NO	13
BLANK	2



**Q9**

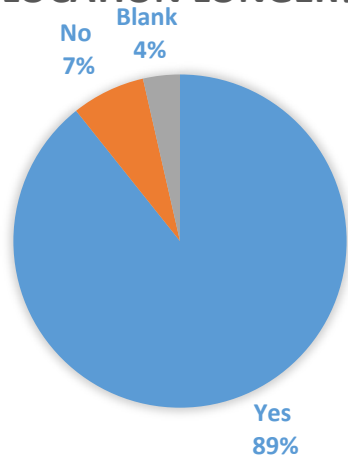
<b>NO</b>	18
<b>YES</b>	10



**Q10**

<b>NO</b>	18
<b>YES</b>	9
<b>BLANK</b>	1

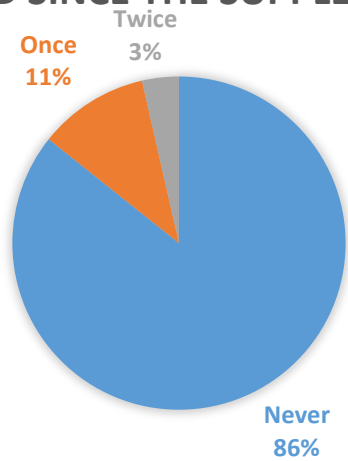
**Q11- HAVE YOU BEEN ABLE TO LIVE IN A LOCATION LONGER?**



**Q11**

<b>YES</b>	25
<b>NO</b>	2
<b>BLANK</b>	1

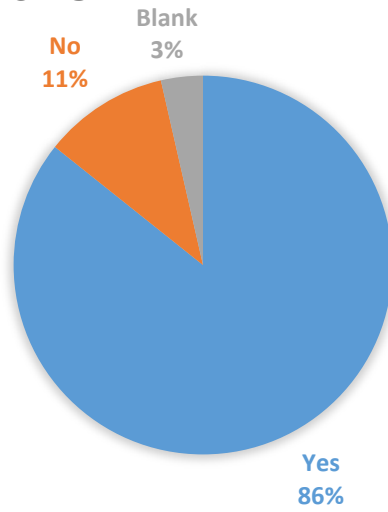
**Q12- HOW MANY TIMES HAVE YOU MOVED SINCE THE SUPPLEMENT?**



**Q12**

<b>NEVER</b>	24
<b>ONCE</b>	3
<b>TWICE</b>	1

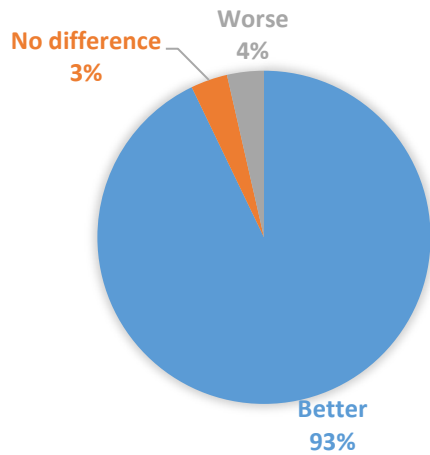
### Q13- IS PORTABILITY BENEFICIAL?



#### Q13

YES	24
NO	3
BLANK	1

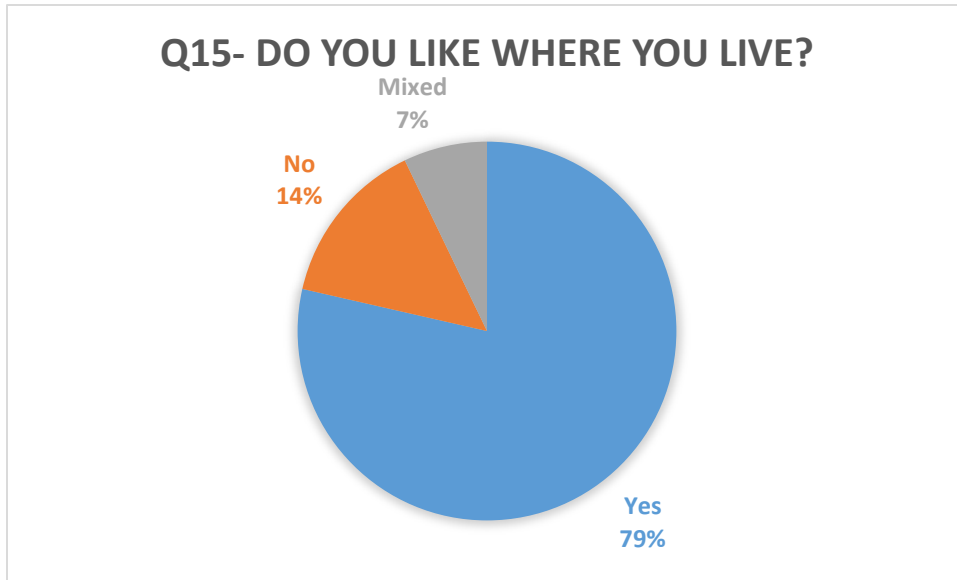
### Q14- HAS THE SUPPLEMENT MADE YOUR LIFE BETTER OR WORSE?



#### Q14

BETTER	26
NO DIFFERENCE	1
WORSE	1





Q15	
YES	22
NO	4
MIXED	2

