March 28, 2019

Re: Your request for access to information under Part II of the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, 2015 [Our File #: AESL/013/2019]

On March 5, 2019 the Department of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour received your request for access to the following records/information:

"January 2019 information note titled Emergency Accommodations Budget and Operations."

I am pleased to inform you that your request for access to this information has been granted in part and the responsive records are attached. Access to the remaining records, and/or information contained within the records, has been refused in accordance with the following exceptions to disclosure, as specified in the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, 2015 (the act):

Section 29.(1)(a) The head of a public body may refuse to disclose to an applicant information that would reveal advice, proposals, recommendations, analyses or policy options developed by or for a public body or minister;

As required by subsection 8.(2) of the act, we have severed information that is excepted from disclosure and have provided you with as much information as possible.

Section 42 of the act provides that you may ask the Information and Privacy Commissioner to review this partial refusal of access or you may appeal the refusal to the Supreme Court Trial Division. A request to the Information and Privacy Commissioner shall be made in writing within 15 business days of the date of this letter or within a longer period that may be allowed by the Commissioner.

The address and contact information of the Information and Privacy Commissioner is as follows:

Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner
2 Canada Drive
P. O. Box 13004, Stn. A
St. John’s, NL A1B 3V8

Telephone: (709) 729-6309
Facsimile: (709) 729-6500
In the event you wish to appeal to the Supreme Court, you must do so within 15 business days of the date of this letter. Section 52 of the act sets out the process to be followed when filing such an appeal.

Please be advised that responsive records will be published following a 72 hour period after the response is sent electronically to you or five days in the case where records are mailed to you. It is the goal to have the responsive records posted to the Completed Access to Information requests website within one day following the applicable period of time.

If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact the undersigned at (709) 729-4276 or SharonSeaward@gov.nl.ca.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

SHARON SEAWARD
ATIPP Coordinator

Attachment
Information Note  
Department of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour

Title: Emergency Accommodations Budget and Operations

Issue: Transition of responsibility for emergency accommodations from Advanced Education, Skills and Labour (AESL) to Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation (NLHC).

Background and Current Status:
- The 2017-18 NLHC review of programs and services identified a number of improvements and efficiencies necessary to meet the commitment to transform programs using the Housing First philosophy. Housing First is permanent housing complemented by the provision of services, and is an effective tool in addressing chronic and episodic homelessness while reducing pressure on other emergency services.

- Effective June 11, 2018, NLHC assumed accountability for coordination of access to emergency accommodations from AESL. NLHC delivery of all programs and services related to the continuum of housing centralizes Housing First theory and practise. This complements the primary focus of NLHC to provide safe, affordable housing to low-income individuals most in need.

- The total budget associated with emergency accommodations was transferred from AESL to NLHC in Budget 2018-19. The transfer amount was $3.6 million ($3.5 million for emergency accommodations and approximately $100,000 for the Front Step program).

- No request to transfer budget related to staffing was requested by NLHC at that time, as there was indication that NLHC would be able to complete this work with the existing staffing complement.

- In December 2018, Ministers of CSSD and AESL met to discuss NLHC issues related to the operational budget and staffing resources for the provision of emergency accommodations.

Analysis:
- The cost of providing emergency accommodations is increasing. AESL provided NLHC with expenditure reports for three years prior to the transfer, which demonstrated an increase of $700,000 from $2.9 million in 2015-16 to $3.6 million 2018-19. Information on amounts paid to individual providers of emergency accommodations was forwarded to NLHC.

- AESL did not realize any savings as a result of the transfer of emergency accommodations services to NLHC. In fact, Income Support expenditures may slightly exceed the budgeted amount in 2018-19. The best possible analysis at that time provided the budget amount

- NLHC did not request staffing resources to provide emergency accommodations services. It was acknowledged that approximately one and one half of the six Community Agency Client Services Officers (CACSO) worked with shelters on placing homeless individuals. The remaining CACSOs have always and continue work with individuals with complex needs, including those moving from shelter to permanent rental accommodations.
• AESL worked closely with NLHC, beginning in February 2018, to plan and implement the transition of emergency accommodations services. An AESL manager was temporarily assigned to NLHC for the first three months of transition to assist with developing policy and service delivery processes. Regular meetings between AESL and NLHC front line staff were established and processes were put in place to ensure strong communication on individual cases.

• AESL is working with NLHC to re-establish regular meetings and strengthen protocols to ensure AESL is informed when individuals enter emergency shelter so that action can be taken to begin the transition from shelter to permanent housing. AESL has reiterated to NLHC the need for shelters to provide a daily report on current residents, and NLHC to use the established email protocol to inform AESL.

• AESL was invited to meet with shelter providers by End Homelessness St. John’s, January 16, 2018. There is great interest in discussing issues arising and ways AESL can work with community to ensure the best possible Income Support service is provided to individuals experiencing homelessness. AESL has not decreased services to individuals with complex needs or those experiencing homelessness, and it is necessary to address any real or perceived issues in community. For example, a better understanding of AESL payment processes and increased use of direct deposit as opposed to immediate cheques may address issues related to delayed security deposit payments.

• NLHC has successfully made a number of advances toward Housing First policies and practices, including: dedicating public housing units for emergency accommodations; implementing an eviction prevention framework; ensuring individuals experiencing homelessness are prioritized among social housing applicants; and, working with a non-profit providing housing search services.

• NLHC has also leveraged in-house expertise in housing inspection to introduce a number of measures to enhance life safety in the emergency accommodations by private providers.

**Action Being Taken:**

• AESL is working with front line NLHC staff to re-establish communication processes to ensure Income Support benefits are processed in a timely manner to facilitate exit from shelters.

• AESL will work with community partners to address any issues arising related to Income Support services provided to individuals experiencing homelessness.

Prepared/Approved by: C. King/W. Mavin
Ministerial Approval:

January 17, 2019