



Welcoming new tenants with a new and more concerted approach

The committee for welcoming new tenants has brought together various OMHM employees who are in some way involved in the welcoming process, as well as members of the Advisory Committee of Tenants (Comité consultatif des résidents, or CCR).

From left to right:

Yves Santerre, group assistant; Richard Fitzgerald, member of the CCR ; Julie Chalifour, liaison officer; Nathalie Morin, director for the promotion of social development and consultation; Colette Kandolo, rental agent; Nathalie Thifault, director for the optimization of tenant services; Valeria Taranto, community organizer; as well as Nicole Vallières and Francine Cayer, members of the CCR.

*Absent from the photo:
France Lavoie, rental agent, and Michel Fortin, prevention project manager.*



A little more than a year ago, the committee on welcoming new tenants began its work, a result of the social development action plan of the Office municipal d'habitation de Montréal (OMHM). Its objective: improve the welcoming of new residents so that they quickly feel at home in their new dwelling and integrate comfortably into their new living environment.

In collaboration with the tenants

The Advisory Committee of Tenants (Comité consultatif des résidents, or CCR) had expressed a desire to participate in order to determine how the tenant committees could play a role in the welcoming process. Some of its members took part in the committee's discussions and worked with the OMHM employees in their planning. In order to be sure that the expectations and suggestions of the tenants were considered, the committee also solicited comments from tenant representatives during the subsector meetings that took place in the spring.

The work over the last year has uncovered two major needs:

1. **INFORMATION FROM THE OWNER** concerning the dwelling, low-rent housing and the building regulations, as well as the coordinates of the people to contact when needed. This is the role of the Office.
2. **ASSISTANCE WITH THE INTEGRATION** of the new tenants so that they can find their bearings in their new living environment and their neighbourhood, and start to develop relationships. On this issue, everyone can contribute, from community workers to tenant associations and OMHM employees.

In the coming months, training and various tools will be offered to both the OMHM employees and the tenant associations with a view to establishing a welcoming process that is adapted to the needs of the new residents. *(Please see page 4 for more information on this subject.)*

How to welcome new tenants

During the subsector meetings last February, the members of the committee on welcoming new tenants did a survey of tenant association representatives. How do they see the welcoming process and why is it important? What role can the associations play? Here is a summary of what was said.

Welcoming new tenants means:

- Approaching them.
- Helping them.
- Being ready to live together in mutual respect.

For the new tenant, this welcome can have very positive effects:

- Feeling at home and welcome in the housing project.
- Quickly acquiring a feeling of confidence.
- Being informed about the resources and services that are available in the neighbourhood.
- Finding answers to his or her needs more quickly.
- Integrating more rapidly into the new living environment.

For the tenant association and for the housing project, the welcome process is a good way to:

- Speak about the living environment.
- Explain how things are done in the building.
- Describe the role of the tenant association.
- Build relationships between the residents.
- Discuss the various cultures that coexist within the low-rent housing project.
- Get the residents involved in activities.

In the end, everyone wins. Even neighbourhood community organizations can be more effective since the new tenants learn of their existence as soon as they arrive.

To be useful and appreciated, the welcome must be extended in a spirit of openness towards the new tenants. The secret? A personalized approach that respects the need for privacy and is not too aggressive.

Ideas for facilitating integration

How can an association really help new tenants to integrate into their community?

A number of actions have been suggested:

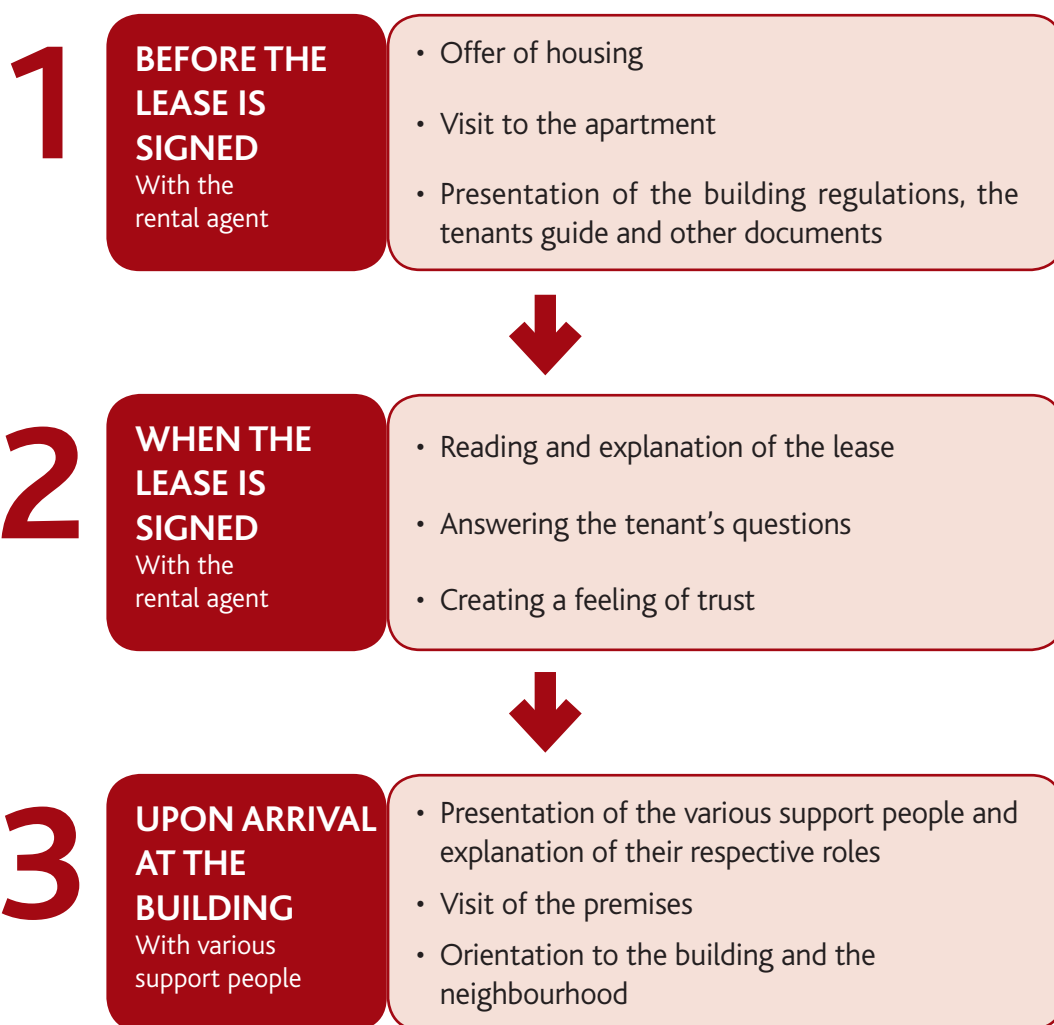


A three-stage welcoming process

Anxious to improve the welcoming of new tenants, the OMHM is committed to implementing a new approach, which will require the active participation of the various people involved. It hopes that this will favour a relationship of trust between the tenants and the Office.

This approach consists of three stages. The first two are accomplished by the new tenant, with the help of the rental agent. The third requires the contribution of various OMHM employees, the tenant association (whenever possible) and neighbourhood community organizations.

EVERYONE HAS A ROLE TO PLAY



OMHM

- Tenant security agent
- Maintenance and repair worker
- Community organizer

TENANT ASSOCIATION

- Invitation to activities
- Assistance for integrating into the building

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

- Summary of neighbourhood resources
- Assistance for integrating into the community

What's new in the welcoming process

OMHM rental agents will now have a new chapter in their rental guide dealing exclusively with welcoming tenants. They will also be briefed to ensure that they appreciate their crucial role in creating a relationship of trust with the new tenants.



Furthermore, the security agents and the maintenance and repair workers will be encouraged to introduce themselves when they first encounter the new tenants and to explain their roles within the building.

For the tenant association

In addition to this special edition, which explains everyone's role in welcoming new tenants, the Office will be offering tools to the tenant committees:

- Welcome posters will be produced. They will be used to welcome the newcomers to their buildings.
- Starting in 2015, intercultural workshops will allow association members to become familiar with the habits and customs of various cultures. This will equip them to adapt their welcoming strategies to the various communities present in Montreal's low-rent housing.
- Tenant association members who would like to introduce themselves to new tenants can be notified of their move-in dates and apartment numbers. They must present this request to their community organizer. However, no personal information will be divulged since this would be contrary to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

To participate actively in welcoming

Tenant committees that want to be actively involved in welcoming new tenants to their buildings are asked to contact their community organizer. Together, they can coordinate their approaches and be even more effective!

AGA — It's happening on October 23!

You are invited to participate in the next Annual General Assembly (AGA) of the tenant associations of the Office municipal d'habitation de Montréal (OMHM), on the theme "Role and importance of participatory bodies." The meeting will be held on October 23 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Petite-Bourgogne adult education centre (CEDA), located at 2515, rue Delisle, near the Lionel-Groulx metro station. You will soon receive an invitation providing all the details.

Each OMHM tenant association may delegate two representatives. First on the agenda will be a report by the Advisory Committee of Tenants (Comité consultatif des résidents, or CCR) on the activities of the year just ended. The representatives will then be able to express their concerns and provide direction to the advisory committee in setting their priorities for the coming year.

During the Annual General Assembly, tenant representatives have the opportunity to comment on the various agenda items and present the concerns of the tenants in their buildings.



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