

Military family housing rent



Life within the CF family has its certainties and uncertainties – the high level of job satisfaction; the inherent stress of working in areas of the world where the risk of injury is greater than it is here at home; the feeling of camaraderie generated by working with friends who are well-trained, compassionate and professional in all they do; the worry of leaving your family in Canada while you're deployed elsewhere.

One slice of life that is a certainty within the CF family is moving. Whether you're still training in your military occupation or you've been in for two decades, you've already moved and you'll move again. A large proportion of CF members and families will move house in any given year. This high degree of job-related mobility can get in the way of finding the accommodation you and your family need. And finding that accommodation goes a long way toward alleviating the worries of deployment.

The Canadian Forces Housing Agency (CFHA) provides housing for CF members and their families wherever the private market cannot meet their housing needs. On behalf of DND, CFHA administers the rent system and carries out maintenance and repairs for about 15 000 married quarters (MQs) at 33 locations throughout Canada. The Agency has also undertaken activities such as housing requirement studies, developing contemporary housing solutions, and implementing DND's accommodation policy.

If you are living in married quarters, your residence will have been allo-

cated based on the size of your family. MQs range from apartment complexes to row houses, from duplexes to single-family dwellings and mobile homes. They offer from two to four bedrooms and a variety of amenities.

CF housing operated by DND is governed by Treasury Board policy dictating that shelter charges (rent, exclusive of utility charges) for Crown-owned housing must reflect market rates in the local economy. The aim of implementing the policy is to respect the principle of fairness for all CF members – whether you live in CF housing or in a private-market residence in the same community.

Historically, CF members who chose to live in MQs paid rents well below those paid by their colleagues who chose to rent private-sector accommodations. For example, in Vancouver and Esquimalt, the difference has been as great as \$700. A rent-phasing program introduced in 1997 gradually brought MQs' rents to market value; since 2002, new occupants of MQs have paid local market-value rents. Market-value rents for MQs were achieved throughout Canada in 2003, except in the rent control provinces of Manitoba and Ontario, and in Vancouver.

Achieving market value fairly

The impact of the implementation of Treasury Board policy differs from location to location, and can be influenced by how long you have lived in your MQ, the local economic growth, and whether or not the province you live in has rent control.

In provinces with no rent control, long-term occupants will continue to see rent increases of no more than \$100 per month per year until the appraised market value of the MQ is reached. While most MQs' rents have already reached appraised market values, the monthly rent paid by some longer-term occupants is still being raised, though by no more than \$100 per month each year.

In provinces with rent control (primarily, Ontario and Manitoba), it is a little different. More than two-thirds of you in MQs in Ontario are paying market value for your accommodation and receive rent control. For the remaining third of you in MQs in Ontario, the rent you pay has not yet reached the appraised market value at which rent control will kick in. In Manitoba, on the other hand, almost 90% of CF members living in MQs are receiving rent control.

Once the rent on your MQ has reached the appraised market value, annual rent adjustments will reflect the local rental market activity – that can mean either an increase or a decrease. In general, you will see a rent increase for your MQ only if there is a corresponding increase in the civilian market. If you are renting in a province with rent control, or if you are not paying the assessed fair market value, rent increases you experience are controlled by provincial legislation or military regulations. Military pay increases are not linked to MQ rent increases any more than civilian rent increases are related to civilian renters' pay raises. ■

Quick facts

- ◆ About half of all Regular Force CF members serve in large urban areas offering a variety of housing options.
- ◆ About half of all Regular Force CF members live in small urban, rural and remote areas offering limited or no housing options.
- ◆ About 80% of all Regular Force CF members live in private-market housing.
- ◆ About 20% of all Regular Force CF members, fewer than 12 000, live in Married Quarters (MQ).
- ◆ National Defence and Treasury Board policies dictate that no CF member will pay more than 25% of his or her gross family income for MQ rent.
- ◆ The maximum allowed yearly rent increase for CF housing is \$100/month.
- ◆ The national average for the 2004 MQ rent increase was 2%. [By comparison, British Columbia's *Residential Tenancy Act* allowed a 2004 maximum rent increase equalling the provincial inflation rate + 2% for conventional tenancies, while Ontario, with province-wide rent control, capped 2004 rent increases at 2.4%.]

Rent Q&As

Q: Who calculates my rent, and how?

A: Every year, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) appraisers assess your local private-sector rental market to determine the fair market value for each type of MQ, whether it's a townhouse, a mobile home, or a three-bedroom apartment. This assessment takes into account the same factors as those used to determine the value of any private-sector dwelling – the type, age and general condition of the dwelling; the number of bedrooms; the location of the dwelling with regard to access to schools, community facilities, and transportation; and so on. Rents for MQs reflect rents charged for equivalent dwellings in the local private-sector market.

CMHC does not assess each MQ, but chooses a benchmark unit that is representative of a particular type or style of MQ. Benchmark units are chosen and assessed based on two standards, renovated and non-renovated.

Renovated units have received new siding, windows and doors; their bathrooms and kitchens have been renovated; and the heating, plumbing and electrical systems are fully operational and compliant with current codes. Non-renovated units have received minor upgrades or none at all.

CMHC follows Treasury Board policy and industry valuation standards and practices when appraising MQs.

Q: What does the government do with all the rent money it collects?

A: Since the CF Housing Agency's inception in 1996, all rents it has collected on military housing have been reinvested into the operation and maintenance of military housing. That has been a significant investment in the MQs at all CF locations over the past seven years. Of course, health and safety issues have dictated the priorities of the work done.

More than \$400 million has been spent to maintain and upgrade MQs, including \$50 million of supplementary funding provided by DND under the Quality of Life initiative. CFHA has successfully completed a rigorous and accelerated program of repairs and

maintenance including the repair or replacement of roofs, doors, windows and insulation; and the upgrading of heating, cooling and electrical systems. Your local Base or Wing authorities are in the loop when work is slated to be done on your MQ – it's in keeping with good maintenance and operating practices, and it helps to minimize the disruption experienced by you and your family.

DND recognizes that more needs to be done – some of you are living in "vintage" 1950s- and '60s-built MQs that may not reflect all current building standards, for example. The Department and CFHA are working diligently to upgrade these units. This year, almost 200 units at nine locations throughout Canada will be completely refitted to current standards. Over the next three years, a further investment of \$120 million is planned to renovate and improve the housing portfolio.

Q: Does a pay raise always mean an increase in my rent?

A: No, it doesn't. There is no relationship between the timing of pay increases and rent adjustments. Similar to

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Visit www.forces.gc.ca/hr/cfpn and look under "Supplement" for news and information not available in the print edition.

2004 Post Living Differential Rates (monthly)

Aldergrove	\$ 197
Barrie-Borden	\$ 107
Brantford	\$ 120
Calgary	\$ 86
Cambridge	\$ 86
Chatham	\$ 15
Chilliwack	\$ 17
Cornerbrook	\$ 18
Dundurn-Saskatoon	\$ 6
Gander	\$ 11
Grand Falls-Windsor	\$ 69
Guelph	\$ 284
Halifax	\$ 192
Hamilton	\$ 328
Kamloops-Kelowna	\$ 98
Kenora	\$ 20
Kingston	\$ 26
Kitchener	\$ 203
London	\$ 128
Meaford-Owen Sound	\$ 14
Montreal Island and North Shore	\$ 379
Montreal South Shore	\$ 316
Nanaimo	\$ 39
Niagara-St. Catherine's	\$ 176
North Bay	\$ 38
Ottawa-Gatineau (NCR)	\$ 135
Peterborough	\$ 76
Prince Albert	\$ 34
Quebec City-Valcartier	\$ 110
Rouyn-Noranda	\$ 123
Sarnia	\$ 25
Sault Ste. Marie	\$ 37
Sept-Îles	\$ 152
Sherbrooke	\$ 48
Shilo	\$ 14
Stratford	\$ 223
Sudbury	\$ 71
St-Jean	\$ 53
St. John's	\$ 252
Thunder Bay	\$ 62
Timmins	\$ 24
Toronto	\$ 1237
Toronto 2	\$ 749
Toronto 3	\$ 682
Toronto 4	\$ 946
Toronto 5	\$ 1130
Trail	\$ 15
Vancouver	\$ 572
Victoria-Esquimalt	\$ 464
Windsor	\$ 317
Winnipeg	\$ 40

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what happens with private market rents, MQ rents are reviewed and adjusted annually. In order to accommodate the annual posting cycle, MQ rents are adjusted November 1 every year. If you are living in an MQ that has achieved local market value rent, that adjustment can be up or down, depending on the local market.

Q: Who gets priority when DND is deciding which MQs to work on?

A: Without exception, military housing of any type, age, location or size with problems that could adversely affect the health, welfare and safety of you or your family always goes to the top of the list.

Q: What are the differences between MQs and SQs?

A: There really is no equivalency between Married Quarters and Single

Quarters. SQs throughout Canada are used mainly for CF members on training or taking Educational Upgrading courses. If you're living in SQ, you know that where there are enough SQs at any given Base or Wing, they can be used for residential accommodation.

Some standard factors are used when the department assesses your SQ in order to set the residential values at a standard level for similar units throughout the country. The yearly 10% rent increase you've paid since 2001 reflects increased maintenance and upkeep costs on SQs throughout the country. The increase also brings your SQ rent to a level reflecting the national average.

Q: We're in Trenton right now and we're doing okay, but what if I'm posted somewhere like Toronto, where the cost of living is high? How can we afford to pay market-value rent?

A: Since rents on MQs are linked to rents in the local market, the rent you might pay for a seven-year-old three-bedroom MQ in Trenton is not the same as the rent you'll pay for the same kind of unit in Toronto – or in Cold Lake, for that matter.

The Post Living Differential (PLD) program seeks to compensate the average CF member and family for the difference between the cost of living in their place of duty, and the average cost of living for that same average CF member and family in all CF locations throughout Canada.

Housing costs are only one of many factors considered when determining the overall cost of living for a particular location. PLD provides the same rate of compensation for a given location regardless of income, rank or family size, and is reviewed each year to take changes in local conditions into account in relation to the national average. ■

Consult CANFORGEN 101/04 and References at <http://vcds.dwan.dnd.ca> for more information about the 2004 PLD rates.

Click on "CBI NEWS" at http://hr.dwan.dnd.ca/dgcb/cbi/engraph/home_e.asp, visit http://hr.dwan.dnd.ca/dgcb/dppd/pld/engraph/home_e.asp, consult the Director General Compensation and Benefits FAQs at http://hr.dwan.dnd.ca/dgcb/dppd/pld/engraph/PLD_FAQ_e.asp, and read the July and September 2003 issues of *CF Pers Newsletter* or consult those issues of *CFPN Online* at www.forces.gc.ca/hr/cfpn/ for information about PLD.

Building and sustaining a retention culture in the CF

From the National Retention Team

Over the past two years, 2760 of you—CF members—from 19 military occupation classifications (MOCs) completed the CF Retention Survey, providing important information on career and organizational satisfiers and dissatisfiers.

Overall, in terms of satisfiers, many of you reported:

- ♦ that you are positively involved in and engaged by your work;
- ♦ that you have an active voice in your workplace;
- ♦ a belief that your military occupation has a positive future;
- ♦ satisfaction with your working relationships with co-workers and immediate supervisors;
- ♦ satisfaction with the working climate;
- ♦ satisfaction with your pay and benefits;
- ♦ satisfaction with the bilingual resources provided on training; and
- ♦ satisfaction with administrative support provided for postings.

However, with regard to dissatisfiers, the survey results suggest trends for the CF as a whole, with many of you reporting:

- ♦ a lack of confidence in how senior leadership overcomes organizational problems and challenges;
- ♦ a lack of satisfaction with the direction in which senior leadership is steering the CF;
- ♦ low to medium levels of affective commitment or emotional attachment to the CF;
- ♦ agreement that the CF has become too political and too "civilianized", with too much emphasis on superficial image and not enough emphasis on members' training and equipment;
- ♦ a feeling that the CF is too lax in dealing with unproductive military and civilian personnel;
- ♦ dissatisfaction with the CF's bureaucracy and with the logic of policies and regulations;
- ♦ dissatisfaction with the way competencies and promotions are linked; and/or
- ♦ a perception that the organization is not supportive (i.e., in areas of work-family balance).

Despite these observations, the CF does not have a general attrition problem. In fact, at 3%, the CF's volun-

tary attrition rate is considered to be low. However, retention is about much more than ensuring a low attrition rate. Retention is about having in place a framework of good human resource policy supporting both you and the organization. Ensuring the retention of experienced members who voluntarily and gladly stay with the CF helps to maintain organizational effectiveness and capability.

And that's where the National Retention Team (NRT) comes in. The NRT, comprising Environmental and HR staffs and the Director of Military Employment Policy (DMEP) Attrition/Retention Team, was convened to respond to your concerns. The team is looking for ways to build and sustain a culture that supports retention, organizational effectiveness and excellence. We'll accomplish this through the review of policies (and their development by the appropriate agencies) designed to foster a positive and supportive workplace. We will work to ensure that nothing the organization may do would cause you to prematurely, voluntarily leave.

Our focus will be on organizational dissatisfiers that many of you, from across all the surveyed MOCs, share. These dissatisfiers are associated with procedural justice (fairness), career opportunities, and work/family balance issues. These issues will be examined because they directly affect every one of you.

Over the next year, NRT members will evaluate the dissatisfiers, define the problem(s) and determine how best to solve them. Working with the appropriate subject matter experts, we will assess CF policies, instructions, communications and practices, and will submit to the Assistant Deputy Minister (Human Resources – Military) (ADM(HR-Mil)) retention recommendations intended to mitigate or remove the dissatisfiers in manner that meets your needs and those of the CF.

The CF needs a culture that encourages the retention of experienced, mission-focussed members who are committed to continuing service in the CF. The NRT is trying to build that kind of culture.

For more information on the NRT and the work being done, please contact Maj Deborah Howe, DMEP 4-5, at (613) 996-5331. ■