

Toronto Community Housing



Tenant Engagement Refresh Update

Item 8C

February 17, 2023

Tenant Services Committee

Report: TSC:2023-08

To: Tenant Services Committee ("TSC")

From: Acting Chief Operating Officer

Date: January 30, 2023

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to provide the TSC with an update on the implementation of the Tenant Engagement System Refresh.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that the TSC receive this report for information.

BACKGROUND:

A total of 1,486 tenant leaders have been established as a result of the implementation of Tenant Elections completed in spring 2022. This includes 335 Community Representatives (compared to 200 that were in place in 2019) and 1,151 building/townhouse committee members. Since the completion of their orientation, tenant leaders have been involved in key activities to support the implementation of Tenant Engagement at the community level.

In June 2022, TCHC developed and presented to the TSC a four-step plan aimed at consulting tenant leaders, receiving their feedback and developing recommendations in order to make necessary changes in the implementation of the Tenant Engagement System (Report TSC:2022-28).

The plan includes:

1. Launch of Community Actions Table at the regional level;
2. Establishment of a Tenant Advisory Committee;
3. End-of-year Regional Forum; and
4. Launch of Citywide Tenant Forum in 2023.

The implementation of the four-step plan is in progress.

COMMUNITY ACTIONS TABLE AT REGIONAL LEVEL:

Following the implementation of Community Actions Tables (“CAT”) meetings held in August 2022, staff developed a report to respond to the feedback provided by Community Representatives. The report was distributed to all tenant leaders who attended the end-of-year regional forums in November and December. In addition, digital copies of the report will be made available on the TCHC website.

TENANT ADVISORY COMMITTEE:

Commencing in August 2022, a city-wide outreach process was conducted to identify members of the Tenant Advisory Council. In November, 15 tenants from the East, West and Central regions were confirmed as Tenant Advisory Committee members after passing a screening process led by local region staff. On December 14, 2022, the committee members met for a virtual orientation. At the orientation, members introduced themselves and shared their excitement about the opportunities to collaborate with TCHC staff to advance the goals and objectives of the Tenant Engagement System and programs in their communities.

The role of the Tenant Advisory Committee is to advise TCHC Toronto Community Housing Corporation on the implementation of Tenant Engagement System and tenant facing programs including:

- support the implementation of the Tenant Forum
- advise on recommendations that will improve Tenant Engagement System implementation
- advise on key tenant facing programs

Parallel to this process in November 2022, Toronto City Council directed the Deputy City Manager, Community and Social Services to have City of Toronto (“City”) staff, through the Tenants First initiative, review the proposal for a new Tenant Advisory Committee including: Terms of Reference; the recruitment and confirmation of members; the role of tenant directors in a Tenant Advisory Committee; and the role of the City, and to

report to the February 28, 2023 meeting of the Planning and Housing Committee on the review and any recommendations. As a result of this review, additional members per region will be recruited with a focus on those not currently involved in the TCHC tenant engagement system. The goal is to add at least five new members to the Tenant Advisory Committee. The criteria will be adjusted to highlight community experience outside of Toronto Community Housing Corporation in order to facilitate a diversity of membership.

This process will be completed in time to hold an inaugural meeting of the new Tenant Advisory Committee in April, 2023. The Tenant Advisory Committee members were also informed of City Council's direction and the plan for TCHC to work with City staff to determine next steps prior to resuming the Committee's activities.

END-OF-YEAR REGIONAL FORUMS:

The purpose of the end-of-year forums was to consult with Community Representatives and Building Committee Members on key issues and changes that will make tenant engagement implementation more responsive to tenants' needs post-pandemic. In addition, we set out to achieve the following objectives:

- Increase collaboration: For Community Representatives and Building Committee Members to reconnect with TCHC frontline and management staff;
- Ensure accountability: To share TCHC's responses to issues raised and feedback provided during the Community Action Table meetings held in August; and
- Increase participation: To solicit further input to develop recommendations that will inform amendments to the current Tenant Engagement System.

Before the forums, staff conducted pre-registration surveys for tenants to confirm their attendance and to identify top priorities in their communities. As a result, 372 tenants pre-registered. Tenants also identified the following regional priorities: Safety and Security, Maintenance, Programs and Services, and Tenant Communications.

The end-of-year forums were held on November 19, 2022 for the Central region, November 26, 2022 for the East region, and December 3, 2022 for the West region. A total of 293 tenants attended the forums and 24 community partners participated as vendors. The forums commenced with

a panel discussion, which included TCHC subject matter experts responsible for the implementation of the priorities identified by tenants. The subject matter experts provided information and insight on short-term interventions underway to address issues raised by tenants and other plans in the works to address local priorities.

After the panel discussion, staff took time to answer questions from tenants and to-date, many of the concerns raised have been addressed. Likewise, tenants participated in a live survey to provide feedback on the implementation of current tenant engagement programs in their communities. Data and results of the survey provided mixed feedback and, are currently being analyzed for action. The forums were the first major in-person TES activity post pandemic. The results suggest that there is disconnection between tenant leaders and information related to engagement programs.

Later in the day, tenants also participated in capacity developing workshops where they learned about a variety of topics, such as community safety and security, awareness and support for victims of domestic violence, leadership, and tenant engagement.

- **Safety:** An overview of what tenants can do to improve safety in their communities while collaborating with the Community Safety Unit.
- **Community Development:** A presentation on how tenant leaders can use their skills and assets to attract resources to their communities including applying for the Tenant Action Fund and other TCHC support programs.
- **Communications:** A presentation on the roles of tenant leaders and frontline staff in using available channels of communications to create awareness, communicate information in an accessible manner, encourage timely responses, and to promote transparency.

Lastly, tenants spent time in the vendors' space to connect and network with local service providers.

Table 1: Number of participants at the end-of-year regional forums

| | Central | East | West | Total |
|-------------------------------------|---------|------|------|-------|
| Tenants Pre-registered | 81 | 140 | 151 | 372 |
| Tenants in attendance | 68 | 94 | 131 | 293 |
| Regional staff (Central OPS. Staff) | 27 | 2 | 22 | 51 |
| Partners | 4 | 8 | 12 | 24 |

NEXT STEPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Complete recruitment of a Business Planner to focus on execution of strategic activities to enhance tenant engagement.
- Commence planning for a city-wide tenant forum in 2023; and
- Seek the Board's approval of recommendations for changes to the implementation of the Tenant Engagement System.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

The City's Shareholder Direction requires TCHC to maintain a democratic system of active tenant participation and involvement that will provide:

- (a) Opportunities for Tenant engagement regarding their housing, and the full TCHC housing portfolio;
- (b) Opportunities for Tenants to provide input on TCHC corporate decisions including capital plans, operating budget, service levels, service delivery and Tenant facing policies; and
- (c) Opportunities for Tenant input on setting local spending priorities; and
- (d) Information about opportunities for engagement in other City and community initiatives.

In addition, TCHC's approach to Tenant engagement will respect the terms of the Shareholder Direction and the financial targets and performance benchmarks that are established for TCHC by the Service Manager.

SIGNATURE:

“Nadia Gouveia”

Nadia Gouveia
Acting Chief Operating Officer

PUBLIC ATTACHMENT:

1. Member Motion 2.16 – Ensuring a Successful Tenant Advisory Committee at Toronto Community Housing Corporation

Confidential Tenant Forum Survey Results

Attachment 1:

Reason for Confidential Attachment: Matters that are not required to be disclosed under the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, including but not limited to personal matters about identifiable individuals, a proposed or pending transaction with a third party, and recommendations of proposed policy or processes.

STAFF CONTACT:

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City Council

Notice of Motion

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| MM2.16 | ACTION | | | Ward: All |
|--------|--------|--|--|-----------|

Ensuring a Successful Tenant Advisory Committee at Toronto Community Housing Corporation - by Councillor Paula Fletcher, seconded by Councillor Shelley Carroll

** Notice of this Motion has been given.*

** This Motion is subject to referral to the Economic and Community Development Committee. A two-thirds vote is required to waive referral.*

Recommendations

Councillor Paula Fletcher, seconded by Councillor Shelley Carroll, recommends that:

1. City Council direct the Deputy City Manager, Community and Social Services to have City staff, through the Tenants First initiative, review the proposal for a new Tenant Advisory Committee including: Terms of Reference; the recruitment and confirmation of members; the role of tenant directors in a Tenant Advisory Committee; and the role of the City, and to report to the February 28, 2023 meeting of the Planning and Housing Committee on the review and any recommendations.
2. City Council forward this Item to the Board of Toronto Community Housing Corporation, including the Tenant Directors.

Summary

An important part of the development and implementation of Tenants First was the establishment of a Tenant Advisory Committee. These tenants were selected by the City and it was a very successful model to make sure that any changes being proposed were going to work for tenants and to oversee tenant engagement which is a requirement of the City's shareholder direction to Toronto Community Housing Corporation.

As part of the establishment of the new Toronto Seniors Housing Corporation, a Senior Tenant Advisory Committee was established and then renewed by City Council on December 15, 2021, to ensure a continued strong tenant voice at the Toronto Seniors Community Housing Corporation.

Over the last number of years, Toronto Community Housing Corporation has been engaged in a tenant engagement exercise to establish new tenant representatives in the many buildings in its family portfolio. There is also a proposal to establish a Tenant Advisory Committee.

A requirement of the Shareholder Direction is Toronto Community Housing Corporation and Toronto Seniors Housing Corporation are to consult with tenants through 'efficient and effective engagement mechanisms'. The Tenant Advisory Committee and the Senior Tenant

Advisory Committee were established by City Council for these important ends and City Staff were critical in ensuring that these requirements were being met.

Prior to the implementation of a new Tenant Advisory Committee, recommendations from the Deputy City Manager, Community and Social Services and the Tenant's First team would be helpful to ensure the alignment with established Tenants' First goals and procedures.

Background Information (City Council)

Member Motion MM2.16

<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2023/mm/bgrd/backgroundfile-230414.pdf>