

**Minutes of  
Rental Housing Advisory Committee (RHAC) Meeting**

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**Wednesday, December 13, 2010  
9:30 a.m. – 12 p.m.  
Metro Hall, Room 303, Toronto**

<p><b>Core Members/Participants:</b> Mark Cormack, TorontoCommunity Housing Corporation (TCHC) Tenant Coalition representative Elis Ziegler, East York/East Toronto Family Resources &amp; R. E.N.T. Program (EYET &amp; RENT) Thania Valle, EYET &amp; RENT Bob Nykor, TCHC tenant Victoria Naota, Federation of Metro Tenants' Associations John Bagnall, South Etobicoke Housing Help Centre Kam Lau, Unison Health and Community Services Mary Todorow, Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario Brad Butt, Greater Toronto Apartment Association</p>	<p><b>City Staff:</b> Katherine Chislett, SSHA, Chair Lauren Boudreau, SSHA Gwynne Cheung, SSHA Rosemary Foulds, SSHA Laural Raine, SSHA David Spence, City Planning Gaye Hainsworth, Toronto Employment and Social Services (TESS) Tammy Courtemanche, TESS</p>
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**1. Welcome/Introductions**

Katherine Chislett welcomed all members and guests to the meeting. A round of introductions followed.

**2. Minutes of September 22, 2010 Meeting and Agenda Review**

The minutes for September 22, 2010 were approved, with one addition: Lauren Boudreau from SSHA is to be included in the list of City Staff who attended the meeting.

**3. Ontario Government's Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy**

The provincial government released its Long Term Affordable Housing Strategy in late November.

Laural Raine provided an overview of the key points of the Provincial Housing Strategy from the City's perspective. The City has not yet formulated its official position regarding the Strategy. Some early observations:

**Negative Features**

- There is no new funding for affordable housing.
- There is no announcement that all or some of the cost of social housing would be uploaded to the provincial government.
- There was no commitment to a housing Benefit.

**Positive Features**

- Policy Framework
- Strategy and the new Housing Services Act are more enabling and less prescriptive than the Social Housing Reform Act.
- 10 year plans are mandated

The Strategy has four pillars: Putting People First, Strong Partnerships, Supporting Affordable Options and Accountability.

#### 1. Putting People First

- Simplifying RGI calculations and an annual income review
- Some flexibility in the waiting list, although there is still a commitment to the priority for victims of domestic violence.
- Review process at the local level
- Expanded mandate and new name for the Social Housing Services Corporation (Housing Services Corporation) including provisions to support tenants to build assets.

#### 2. Strong Partnerships

- Consolidating provincial funding programs to allow local flexibility (Consolidated Homelessness Prevention Program, Emergency Hostels, Emergency Energy Fund, Domiciliary Hostels (not part of the Toronto program), and Rent Bank announced as the first phase).

#### 3. Supporting Affordable Options

- Revisions to the Planning Act to require Official Plans and Zoning By-laws to permit second units in single detached, semi-detached and row housing zones.

#### 4. Accountability

- Municipalities required to prepare 10 year plans.
- Will continue to use the housing indicator from the poverty reduction strategy.
- Municipalities will be required to conduct surveys of tenant satisfaction.

#### Discussion points

- Annual review
  - The Long Term Affordable Housing Strategy acknowledges there may be occasions when a review is needed more frequently than annually.
- Public Consultation on Bill 140 – the Housing Services Act to repeal the Social Housing Reform Act
  - The Bill has received first reading.
  - SSHA will monitor the progress of the Bill and inform RHAC members of Consultation dates.
  - RHAC members may wish to participate in the consultation sessions.
- Changes to the Planning Act
  - The proposed Act will require municipalities to have zoning that allows second units and ancillary units.
  - The proposed Act allows garden suites for up to twenty years, where it was 10 years before.
  - The proposed Act does not include inclusionary zoning, which would have opened the scope for private sector affordable housing considerably.

#### **4. HOPE (Homeless to ODSP Project Engagement)**

Gaye Hainsworth presented an overview of the HOPE program.

The program aims to assist Ontario Works (OW) recipients who are homeless to apply for benefits through the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP). The project was designed to improve the financial assistance available to vulnerable clients, through case management and better connections with community partners. It began as a pilot with funding support from the provincial government.

Initially two case workers were assigned to work with people who were receiving OW and homeless (living outside). The case workers were mandated to support clients to complete the DDP. The Division developed partnerships with community agencies to assist the workers and the clients in completing the Disability Determination Package (DDP). The Division also worked with the Disability Adjudication Unit (DAU) which reviews DDP's and determines whether ODSP will be granted.

The project evaluation in 2009 found:

- DDP's were more likely completed and submitted by clients who had a HOPE caseworker
- The success rate of DDP's submitted increased from 14% to 75%.
- Partnerships have contributed to the success of the project:
  - DAU has provided training to medical practitioners who are completing the medical assessment
  - Drop-in centres provide safe space for medical practitioners to complete the medical assessment
  - Inner City health associates recruits and pays medical practitioners who are qualified to complete the medical assessments
  - Streets to Homes assisted over 300 clients to move to permanent housing

The evaluation also identified four challenges

- Maintaining contact with clients throughout the application process
- Affordable housing
- Ongoing support once the client receives ODSP
- Access to mainstream medical care.

The project is now a permanent feature of the supports that TESS offers to clients (along with financial assistance and employment support). The program is gradually being expanded to provide more service (now 10 HOPE case workers and more OW offices are involved). The Provincial pilot funding has been approved to be ongoing. More partnerships are developing with hospitals and jails to help people who were homeless to avoid being homeless again when they are discharged.

Tammy described the assistance she provided to two clients. She assisted the first person to complete the DDP without entering an OW office: the medical assessment was completed in a park. She assisted the second person to obtain identification, to receive first OW and then ODSP benefits, to move to temporary and then permanent housing and to obtain ongoing medical care.

Discussion Points

- Managing Benefits
  - OW provides some tools to assist clients with money management.
  - Streets to Homes Clients agree to have their rent paid directly to the landlord as a condition of accepting service.
- Project funding
  - The provincial government has provided ongoing funding following a successful pilot.
  - Toronto Employment and Social Services is gradually expanding the program and providing funding for some of the HOPE case management positions.
  - The Multi Disciplinary Outreach Team (MDOT) (one of the project partners) receives federal Homeless Partnership Initiative (HPI) funding.

- Follow up supports for Streets to Homes clients who move to housing comes from the provincial Consolidated Homelessness Partnership Program (CHPP), which is administered by the City, and HPI.
- Prospects for the project with the new City Council
  - Staff has prepared briefings about the project, but has not yet had an opportunity to meet with the Mayor and the new administration.
  - HOPE supports the Mayor's agenda by being very customer service focused.
- Case loads
  - HOPE case workers have approximately 50 clients, which is much lower than other OW Case Workers. This number is also flexible:
    - Some clients take a while to complete the application.
    - Some contact their HOPE Caseworker for assistance after they receive ODSP benefits.

## 5. **Housing and Homelessness Supports and Initiatives Updates**

### a) **Automatic Rent Reduction Notification Program Update**

This year the notification will be mailed to 128,109 tenants on December 14, 2010. The number of properties that are affected (4,660) has changed slightly since the last RHAC meeting as a result of assessment decisions. One third of the properties are high rise buildings. This year's notification program again affects a large number of tenants, in contrast to 2008 when just over 3,000 tenants received notices.

FMTA tenant hotline will be available to provide information to tenants on the notices. 311 has also been briefed to provide some information. The notice letter is very similar to the one sent last year.

Information about the 2010 rent reduction notification is posted on the City's web site (<http://www.toronto.ca/housing/rentreduction.htm>).

All rental properties in Toronto are posted on the city's web site. The lists are posted by ward and then address. Tenants and landlords can look up the per cent change in taxes and rents, whether a notice was sent, the mailing date and the reason (if applicable) that a notice was not sent.

Rent reductions must be based on the final rent level established for January 1, 2011. In some situations, the January 2010 base rent may not be known. For example, some owners applied in 2010 to the Landlord and Tenant Board (the Board) for a technical adjustment to the rent to offset the cost of the solid waste management fee retroactive to January 1, 2010, and the orders declaring the rent amount as of that date are not yet made. The Board may determine a different rent reduction for January 2010 and this would also impact the base rent for January 1, 2011. As a result, tenants in these buildings will not know what their final rent is for 2010 and will not be able to calculate the 2011 rent level until the decision is made. In such situations, they would use the pre-ordered rent as the base rent for January 2011 until such time as the Board decision is issued, however, the tenant should be advised that if the Board order increases the January 2010 rent, this will also increase the January 1, 2011 rent, and the tenant may then owe money to the landlord. The City will add a section to its Q's and A's on its web site to address this issue.

### b) **Blue Rent Reduction Notices – Expanded Notification**

In 2009 Council expanded the notification process.<sup>1</sup> Notices were sent if there had been a decision to reduce taxes during 2010, often after a decision regarding an assessment appeal or a tax class

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<sup>1</sup> Link to Council Decision: <http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2009.CD25.6>

change. These decisions affected 1,300 tenants and 100 owners.<sup>2</sup> They were mailed on November 15, 2010 and were printed on blue paper to distinguish them from the Automatic Rent Reduction Notifications. They do not specify the amount that the rent is reduced. Tenants who received these notices are encouraged to work with their landlord to settle on the amount the rent will be reduced. If an agreement cannot be reached, tenants may apply to the Landlord and Tenant Board to have their rent reduced. Time limits to applications may apply and tenants and owners should contact the Landlord and Tenant Board for information.

- **Action:** copy of Council's decision to be sent to GTAA Executive Director, Brad Butt.

**c) New Homelessness Partnership Initiative (HPI) Funding Update**

The Federal Government approved federal homelessness funding for three years, commencing April 1, 2011. A new community plan is required. The City's priority is to ensure continuity of services provided through HPI funding while meeting the contractual obligations. The funding amount has not been established. A staff report on prior accomplishments and the new plan was approved by Council in September 2010. The Report is available on line at <http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2010.CD35.8>

**d) New "Welcome Home – A guide to services for tenants"**

A flyer with information about the 2011 edition of the Welcome Home Guide was circulated. It is available on line at [http://www.toronto.ca/housing/pdf/WelcomeGuide\\_09\\_WEB.pdf](http://www.toronto.ca/housing/pdf/WelcomeGuide_09_WEB.pdf). Hard copies are being printed. To order printed copies, please send an email to [ssha@toronto.ca](mailto:ssha@toronto.ca) including agency name, address, contact person and phone number along with the number of copies being requested. If requesting more than 30 copies, please include a brief outline of how the copies will be used and distributed.

- **Action:** flyer to be sent to GTAA Executive Director, Brad Butt

**6. Other Housing Related Information**

**a) Bill 112 – Private Member's Bill to Amend RTA**

A private Member's Bill introduced by the NDP has received first reading in the legislature. It calls for:

- Licensing Landlords
- Eliminating the exemption from rent control on new buildings
- Eliminating the Above Guideline Increase in the event of extraordinary utility costs
- Denying landlord applications to the Landlord and Tenant Board where there are outstanding work orders
- Empowering the Landlord and tenant Board to determine rent assistance
- compensation to tenants who are evicted for owners own use.
- Expanding compensation to tenants in the event of demolition or conversion
- Extending time limit for landlord and tenant applications.

**b) Human Rights and No-Smoking Policies in Multi-Unit Buildings**

Gwynne advised RHAC members of

- A publication on Human Rights and No-Smoking Policies in Multi-Unit Buildings circulated at the most recent ONPHA conference
- The Ontario Tobacco Control Strategy 2011-2016 Report, discussed at the Toronto Board of Health, which contained recommendations about disclosure.

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<sup>2</sup> Link to list of affected addresses: [http://www.toronto.ca/housing/pdf/18nov10\\_revised\\_landlord\\_list\\_expanded.pdf](http://www.toronto.ca/housing/pdf/18nov10_revised_landlord_list_expanded.pdf)

#### Discussion Points

- The Ontario Human Rights Commission's Policy on Human Rights in Rental Housing describes the duty to accommodate, which is relevant when considering this issue.
- There have been two recent court cases which are also relevant, one in British Columbia and the second in Peel Region.

#### **c) United Way Hi-Rise Housing Study**

The United Way has completed an extensive survey of people living in high rise buildings as an extension of its Poverty by Postal code research. Participants responded to questions about affordability, physical condition, spaces for common use, social ties between tenants and crime. Three quarters of the study participants live in private sector rental housing and one quarter in social housing. The buildings in the study were built between 1950 and 1979.

The United way study team has met with a number of groups aside to discuss how recommendations in the report could align with other interests. City staff met with the United Way study team to review City housing policies in the HOT plan. City staff also provided contact information for the study team to interested RHAC members.

The final report will be released early in 2011. City staff will advise RHAC members of any special briefings that are scheduled when the report is released.

### **7. Members' Updates**

#### **a) City Planning**

Update on Zoning By-law and Visitor Parking Issue

There were 694 appeals to the City's new zoning by-law that was approved by City Council in August 2010. Some appeals apply to the entire by-law, while others are site-specific or subject-specific in nature. Until the appeals are resolved, the new zoning by-law is in effect, but not in force. For the time being, both the new and existing zoning by-laws are referred to when reviewing an application for planning approval (e.g. for rezonings or minor variances).

The new zoning by-law contains a clause that prohibits a landlord charging for visitor parking in residential and residential apartment zones. A number of the appeals have been made specifically against this restriction. At this point, planning and building staff would generally advise that charging for visitor parking would not be permitted in new residential developments in the affected zones. The degree to which this clause will apply to or be enforced in existing buildings is unclear and requires an assessment of the individual property circumstances. Should anyone wish to inquire about charges for visitor parking at a particular existing building, they are advised to call 311 and ask for a Municipal Licensing and Standards inspector to review the situation and determine if the prohibition would apply to the property in question.

### **8. Next Meeting: The schedule for RHAC meetings in 2011 will follow.**