

From: [Cheryl Duggan](#)
To: [Executive Committee](#)
Subject: My comments for 2019.EX4.3 on April 9, 2019 Executive Committee
Date: April 9, 2019 8:00:14 AM

To the City Clerk:

Please add my comments to the agenda for the April 9, 2019 Executive Committee meeting on item 2019.EX4.3, Accelerating the City's Tenants First Project

I understand that my comments and the personal information in this email will form part of the public record and that my name will be listed as a correspondent on agendas and minutes of City Council or its committees. Also, I understand that agendas and minutes are posted online and my name may be indexed by search engines like Google.

Comments:

EX4.3 Accelerating the City's Tenants First Project

The summary of the report begins with the fact that it “responds to a Member Motion (MM 2.22) that requested a report to Executive Committee on:”

“a. accelerating the Tenants First Project” (maybe the City of Toronto and TCHC should learn to walk before they try to run)

“b. synergies between Toronto Community Housing and City departments” (combine sure ... not overwhelm. Revamping the City's Long Term Care Homes and Services division to Seniors Services and Long Term Care seems to be a high risk alternative. I fear for the Seniors as Long Term Care can apply to those with addiction and mental health issues.)

“c. any governance changes required to accomplish parts a) and b) above” (Am I the only one wondering if that is the real reason behind the apparent gaslighting of Kathy Milson? Maybe the City of Toronto could have recommended that TCHC practiced governance in a more transparent manner on a more regular/monthly basis.)

The report goes on to explain the five key principles “first identified in Tenants First: A Way Forward for Toronto Community Housing (2016.EX 16.11)”

Let's begin with the principle of **Tenant-focussed Approach**. What an unfortunate term. Tenant-centric seems more in line with what I believe tenants would appreciate. Tenant-focussed seems to imply that we are less-than when it comes to decision making about our own lives. With both the City of Toronto and TCHC (in conjunction with service providers) being our primary custodians. Tenant-centric seems more inclusive.

The report states that - “It is essential that Torontonians living in Toronto Community Housing Corporation have the ability to actively participate in helping shape the path forward.” So is that what you call the meetings that took place Thursday and Friday last week? Each scheduled for an hour and a half long. They took place in venues and at times that were inconvenient for tenants who weren't die-hard advocates. Upon entrance participants were handed a single double sided sheet of paper identified as the Summary of EX4.3 Accelerating the City's Tenants First Project. Very few people in those rooms had access to the complete report. Questions asked by tenants were focussed on the single page summary instead of the full document.

That gave Tenants First the opportunity to start on their next matter of business. Pilfering all the ideas that tenants have around safety and security. So we broke up into discussions to answer three questions.

1. In your opinion what factors contribute to issues of disruption, violence, and anti-social behaviour in your community?
2. What ideas do you have to improve safety in our communities?
3. What should city staff know as they work with TCHC?

May I suggest that city staff start watching the committee and board meetings as tenants (myself included) have already identified contributing factors, and solutions. Some of the solutions I have previously mentioned directly to TCH include more cameras, Vulnerable Tenant Strategy (that I heard from someone in-house they were developing and which I was hoping would include an Anti-Bullying Policy as well as an educational component regarding tenants rights), a “Three Strikes Rule” was mentioned in my Manifesto on the Final Report of the Mayors Task Force on TCHC, and finally the overall concept of transparency and accountability I have mentioned countless times when tweeting in frustration about TCHC.

Let me just say that if any or all of my ideas prove fruitful then I will gratefully accept an honorarium as per the agreement laid out for those participating (or not) in official Tenants First initiatives.

Which brings us to the second principle defined as **Real Accountability**

You do understand that “real accountability” comes from “real transparency” don't you? If we are basing future accountability on present transparency there are going to be some serious issues. If Tenants First is an example of what we have to look forward to in the not so distant future then we are in some serious trouble. First of all, we don't know how many members still participate regularly in Tenants First meetings. We are not permitted to see agendas or minutes for any of their meetings with city staff. We are not allowed to view the meetings on line. Thereby raising my suspicions about an imbalance of power given that city staff have a specific mandate they are driven to accomplish that could easily be traced back to the mayor. That impression is reinforced by the fact that the meetings last week were called to discuss Accelerating the City's Tenants First Project. Yet it looks like we have already given them a head start on their recommendation on their single page summary “3) Direct TCHC to partner with City Staff to develop a plan to reduce violence in TCHC communities.”

My biggest concern to date and this should be on everyone's mind when it comes to “Real Accountability” is the transparency at TCHC. In light of the fact that TCHC did not have an effective risk management system at place, we, the public in general, and tenants in particular, are suppose to believe that TCHC, and or the City as primary stakeholder, are capable of responsibly spending the \$1.3B allocated last week by the federal government in the manner that it was intended? You apparently couldn't prevent Kathy Milsom from signing away \$1.3M to Orchange. How do you intend to manage the risk of present and future CEO's squandering that \$1.3B? Maybe you could start with yet another suggestion I have made - have TCHC Board and Committee meetings monthly. I don't mean entire meetings in-camera and confidential either. Full meetings. Fully transparent. So that we as tenants can hold TCHC accountability. Let's face it. The city has not done very well in that regard.

When it comes to accountability with Capital Projects in TCHC neighbourhoods may I suggest creating committees that have both TCHC staff and community tenants that review contracted work from start to finish with a keen eye to keeping them within budget. Similar to the transparency that I have witnessed in the past when it came to Participatory Budgeting. Tenants saw the budgets, scope of work, timelines to completion, and final cost. It may help TCHC with stretching that \$1.3B. Personally, I am tired of seeing situations on my site where contractors have miscalculated the scope of work (our parking lot was supposed to be completed last year yet the contractors managed to slow walk the project so that this year they are working on phase two ... the final phase I hope), which affects the timeline (laundry room reno was supposed to be completed in three weeks - took four months – crossing my fingers it opens as scheduled on Thursday), and obviously impacts the bottom line (I can't even imagine the increased cost associated with the contract for the new pipes in our building that were completed last year then needed to be replaced recently to handle the flow from the new laundry room, then the associated flooding of the underground and the impact on the electrical). There needs to be more attention paid to project planning and management. Otherwise, that \$1.3B is going to cost TCHC far more than it is worth.

Now we can discuss the **Sector-wide lens**. I had a discussion last week with a member of TCHC staff who has been looking at how other cities community housing organizations are dealing with very specific issues. I was told they were interested in how OCH (Ottawa Community Housing) implemented their smoke-free policy. They are light years ahead of TCHC in this area. It shouldn't come as any surprise they are also leading the race on reducing their ecological foot print as well. [With my building being scheduled to have cladding put up on the exterior I am now wondering if TCHC couldn't follow Ottawa's lead and put up some solar panels? (http://www.och-lco.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Case-Study_Solar-Wall-FINAL.pdf)] It would appear that OCH also holds committee and board meetings monthly. Who'd've thunk it?!?

Given that TCHC is looking to improve its Tenant Engagement System someone at TCHC should have identified the Ottawa Community Housing example of a Tenant Circle as an option for engagement. To me that sounds more inviting than Tenant Associations, Tenant Councils, Tenant Reps/Leaders. In short I believe both the City of Toronto and TCHC could identify alternative methods within their sector. They simply haven't done their homework.

It is interesting to note that the next key principle alludes to the idea that **Size and Scale** are significant factors to be considered at both the City of Toronto and TCHC. The positive aspect of Size and Scale should be beneficial in acquiring a great deal on buying security cameras in bulk. Just sayin'.

The negative aspect of Size and Scale will be even more evident when the \$810 million in low-interest loan payments come due. This isn't Trump Community Housing Corporation. That recent \$1.3B gift to TCHC that the PM announced was largely loan based. (Which just so happens to be the amount of TCHC's outstanding mortgage debt.) That is some serious financial commitment that will be compounded (literally and figuratively) whether that comes due ten or thirty years from now.

The final principle listed in the report relates to **Innovation and Competition**. In some respects I believe TCHC needs to consider a back to basics approach. Retaining a CEO for a full term. Holding committee and board meetings monthly. Providing more detailed financial reports. Certainly, any potential partners would be looking at TCHCs accountability to its stakeholders which, may be defined as the City of Toronto, yet, excludes public oversight. If TCHC truly wanted to enhance and innovate with respect to service delivery may I suggest that you start with front line staff. Shuffle the deck once in while. There are some staff at TCHC that are aging in place.

As for competition ... I have suggested before that TCHC have a competition between operating units and communities to see who could improve the amount of recycling diverted from landfills. As bad as the false fire alarms are within TCHC communities (amounting to 60% of overall false fire alarms) I would hate to think of the percentage of recycled materials that could be ending up in the garbage. There does not appear to be an overriding Eco program at TCHC. If there is, they do silly things like show up in our lobby last week with sample packages of Tide advising us to wash with cold water. The people that received those packets will forget by the time the laundry room reopens on Thursday (Yup, fingers still crossed.) A sign in the laundry room by the washing machines may be a more effective method of communicating the objective.

In summation, the principles outlined by the City of Toronto should apply throughout the organization. Not just where the "City" sees fit. Plus, if TCHC showed more initiative in-house the broader community will come knocking on their door for partnership opportunities. TCHC could increase their potential for beneficial collaborations as they increase their level of transparency and accountability.

Otherwise, the title of the document identifies the problem. Accelerating the City's Tenants First Project. This is the City's ... Project. You have direct ownership. I am convinced "Tenants First" only refers to the ideas you co-opt from tenants to facilitate your hidden agenda.

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