



EX6-5.9

**Tenant Voice, Tenant Homes
Deputation to Executive Committee, May 24, 2011**

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.

Social Planning Toronto is a non-profit community organization engaged in research and policy analysis as well as community development and the promotion of civic engagement. SPT works to improve the quality of life of all Toronto residents. Our work includes a strong focus on advancing the human right to safe, decent and affordable housing.

We are here today to recommend that the committee refer the question of selling off 22 Toronto Community Housing single family homes back to the TCHC board once a proper board with TCHC tenant representation has been put in place. We have several concerns about the recommendations of Mr. Case Ootes.

First is the issue of democratic process. This one-man appointed board with no tenant representation does not have the legitimacy to make major decisions affecting TCHC tenants. Mr. Ootes' decisions should be restricted to the necessary routine day-to-day running of TCHC with all other matters left to a properly constituted board with full tenant representation. A decision to sell off these homes would displace 15 tenant families. Tenant representatives must be at the table with a full say in matters affecting tenants.

City Council has required that a new board be in place by Council's June 14/15 Council meeting. Tenants begin voting on their representatives today. Clearly a proper board will be in place within the month. There is no justification to make this decision today.

Secondly, if the new board considers any asset sales, particularly the sale of tenant homes, the board should consult thoroughly with TCHC tenants to establish a policy that thoughtfully informs the question of asset sales, including a clear and transparent rationale and criteria for making these decisions. The social goal of preserving and expanding Toronto's social housing stock should be central to this policy. For any property under consideration for sale, at least three options should be publicly presented: 1) TCHC keeps the property, addressing maintenance issues where applicable, 2) TCHC sells the property to a nonprofit housing provider at below market rates, and 3) TCHC sells the property on the open market. The description of each option should include a detailed breakdown of the short- and long-term social and economic benefits and costs of each. Where property sales are recommended, sales to nonprofit housing providers should be prioritized in keeping with the social goal of preserving and expanding Toronto's social housing stock.

Thoughtful examination of all options needs to be considered rather than a rush to action. Maintenance issues have been cited as a reason for the sale of these 22 homes, but little detail is provided about the housing conditions. What would be required to address the maintenance issues in the 15 units where tenants are living? What are the conditions of these units? What are the conditions of the vacant units? Are they uninhabitable and if so, what would it take to bring them up to an appropriate standard? Past reports have documented that TCHC has many vacant, uninhabitable units. Why is Mr. Ootes suggesting that these be sold in particular? In the current proposal, it appears that 22 single family homes have simply been cherry picked on the basis of the affluence of the neighbourhood where they are located. A properly constituted board with full tenant representation needs to engage TCHC tenants in these important questions before making any recommendations.

Finally, we want to speak to the value of TCHC's single family homes. The value of these homes is not simply measured by going rates on the open market. The value is also in the communities we create. In his Three Cities research, University of Toronto's Dr. David Hulchanski has documented deeply concerning trends in the increased concentration of poverty in Toronto's inner suburbs over the past 30 years - a poverty that is both gendered and racialized. These poor, underserviced communities are home to many residents living in TCHC's high-rise housing stock. In contrast, TCHC's single family housing stock located in more affluent communities contributes to more mixed income neighbourhoods. The sale of these homes on the open market takes us further from the goal of healthy, mixed income communities.

We urge you to ensure a proper process by returning this decision to the new TCHC board for careful examination and tenant engagement. Thank you for considering this submission.

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