

Deputation to Executive Committee re: Item EX16.11: Tenants First - A Way Forward for Toronto Community Housing and Social Housing in Toronto

Submitted by: Kevin Lee, Executive Director, Scadding Court Community Centre (SCCC)

Thank you for taking the time to receive this feedback and congratulations to the Taskforce and team that worked tirelessly to put this report together. As the Executive Director of Scadding Court Community Centre, which is one of the ten members of the Association of Community Centres (AOCCs) that are agencies of the City of Toronto, we feel strongly about the future of social housing given our current crisis situation.

As a Centre that has been working closely with TCH funded communities, and with 70% of our clients accessing services from Atkinson Co-op (the only TCH social housing complex to convert into a co-op), SCCC is very familiar with the challenges of ensuring adequate and effective social housing, with the supports that are required to meet the needs of uniquely under-served populations across the city.

To this end, we have some feedback and questions for consideration as the City develops their implementation plan:

1. *Ensuring implementation planning and execution is appropriately resourced:*

SCCC believes that resourcing the next phase of this critical agenda is a very important consideration. It is well known that conceptual ideas have great potential, however, upon attempting execution, often resources are lacking to secure data needed to create an evidence base, and human resources are lacking to implement various directions. It will be important for the city to identify how they will secure the necessary resources to ensure this exercise is effective, especially as we are in the midst of an affordable housing crisis. It should not be forgotten that TCH is the second largest housing provider in North America. And decisions about its future should not be made without a strong rationale and evidence to support moving forward on any recommendations in the report.

One example is current with the real estate review process, where the recommendation **at this Executive Committee** for consideration reads as follows:

“City Council approve one-time transition costs over the next 9 months of \$1.702 million (\$0.788 million in 2016, \$0.914 million in 2017) and 8 temporary positions with funding provided from the Innovation Reserve Fund (XR1713). This increase is for the establishment of a transition team, including a cross-functional Program Management Office for a 9 month period (\$1.143 million) and for continued support from Deloitte LLP, the City's third-party consultant retained to support the City-wide Real Estate Review (\$0.559 million).”

This recommendation is to ensure smooth execution- it would benefit the city to think similarly of resources that will be required to act on the broad directions outlined in the report that will require significant investment and collection of evidence and data that neither the city nor TCH has collected over time.

- 2. Community development as a core principle and activity in the future:**
TCH has historically been challenged with questions about the need for community development resources. It is integral that the city consider the unique populations residing in TCH properties as the move towards divestment takes place. Being families and populations that are traditionally excluded from both the labour force and mainstream society in general, without the necessary supports such as community services and community development, rent arrears will continue to be a significant issue. TCH has demonstrated success in tying successful community development practice to arrears controls; it would be beneficial to the city to better understand this relationship and how it has been effective as a business tool.
- 3. TCH needs to be at the table:**
There is much experience and learning to be had from TCH's operations since its inception. In particular, the unique nature of TCH in comparison to other social housing providers – scale and scope- is a good learning. It is necessary to have their knowledge available as the city develops implementation recommendations, especially from those who have seniority in both leadership and service delivery roles. This will help the city better understand the context of this specific portfolio and the challenges and opportunities in managing its divestment.
- 4. Questions related to Taskforce directions:**
- a. New Home, Proposed New Non-Profit Organization (NPO):
 - How did the Taskforce determine the 5000 unit number to be transferred to the new NPO in the context of Toronto's unique situation (was this just based on UK best practice as cited in the report)? Were there other considerations beyond the upcoming Provincial social housing modernization plans
 - Who will incorporate the entity and what role will the City have in this process
 - Has their been thought given to the criteria related to what the new NPO would be responsible for and what services it will provide
 - b. Selection of properties to be divested and capital repair
 - Is there an updated building/facility condition index of the portfolios and if so, how will this inform decisions
 - Is the city in a position to deliver on the capital repair commitments to ensure portfolios divested are in a good state of repair for a new service manager and if so, what would be the general timeframe and where are the resources coming from
 - Has the city done an analysis of sector capacity and what have been the learnings
 - How will the regulatory changes to the Housing Services Act (e.g.: income mixing) impact the city's plans for TCH
- 5. Engaging the spectrum of affordable housing providers:**
SCCC strongly believes that, given the unacceptable social housing waitlist and the wide array of affordable housing options, within the context of the affordable housing crisis we are faced with, the city will need to consider new and different opportunities.

Considering what is available through the full spectrum of affordable housing options and social benefits, may afford some deeper and more thoughtful options to ensure the best possible service to residents. There are service managers that have set precedents around this type of thinking (such as St. Clare's) that can provide innovative suggestions to diversify and tailor community needs to relevant and appropriate housing providers, and maximize resources. Co-op housing should be seriously considered and pursued where possible.

6. Consideration of new models that build housing and community capacity together:

One of the most significant challenges for TCH has been addressing the needs of tenants, and TCH's capacity to develop partnerships with service organizations to ensure tenant needs are being met. TCH, by nature, has had to be much more than a landlord; when there are different service standards for people living in poverty there is a problem.

As an example, when residents of TCH call the police and no one shows up, this needs to be addressed- having a separate community safety/policing system within a housing authority builds different city systems- one for those who are not living in poverty, and an entirely separate system for those who do. The portfolio has not changed and we encourage the city to put thought into any recommendations, particularly those that rectify inequities to ensure whatever is proposed addresses these challenges, creates more publicly accountable systems for all, and maximizes resources in the process.

We are encouraged by the general directions the City has proposed and we look forward to being part of the process to help our communities thrive and ensure all Torontonians have a livable and healthy home, and are able to prosper in vibrant communities.



Kevin Lee
Executive Director
Scadding Court Community Centre
klee@scaddingcourt.org
416.392.0335 ext. 222