

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Clerk](#)
Subject: My comments for 2017.EX26.2 on July 4, 2017 City Council
Date: Friday, June 23, 2017 2:40:16 AM

To the City Clerk: Please add my comments to the agenda for the July 4, 2017 City Council meeting on item 2017.EX26.2, Tenants First- Phase 1 Implementation Plan 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.

If the City of Toronto is going to continue to use TCHC as a mechanism to warehouse the poor by applying subsidies to individual units instead of the individual persons then I suspect that the ideas that I included in *A Tenant's Manifesto on the Final Report of the Mayor's Task Force on TCH(C)* need some heavy duty consideration moving forward. (The following document and poem were originally published to my website at www.cherylduggan.ca) Both pieces speak to a need for transparency throughout Toronto Community Housing Corporation and whatever entities it may morph into in the very near future. In order for me to have created either one of these you have to understand that I was feeling utterly helpless trying to facilitate change within the present system. Thankfully, unlike the majority of TCHC tenants, I will never be diagnosed with "learned helplessness". OCD on the other hand ...

A Tenant's Manifesto on the Final Report of the Mayor's Task Force on TCH(C)

Introduction

This is a very personal project. I have lived in Toronto Community Housing for the last thirty years. I have been able to take advantage of many opportunities in large part because I didn't have to flip a coin between paying the rent and putting food on the table. I am grateful for this experience. In all likelihood that's not exactly a claim that many people living in Toronto Community Housing would make.

Since I have moved into subsidized housing I have raised my two children, They are now grown and raising my grandchildren outside of TCH. When I arrived I had a single grade nine credit. Now I have a B.A from the University of Toronto and a certificate in Human Rights from OISE. As you can tell from this website I have explored my creative potential through poetry, and photography. In addition, I have been involved in some advocacy work around poverty, homelessness, and food security,

By no means have I been slacking on my advocacy closer to home. It took a while to introduce the inner advocate to my neighbors. Now they know. I made a successful bid at the Participatory Budget Meeting a few years ago. That resulted in my community receiving \$200,000 (final cost). That is definitely equal to the lions share of an annual budget of \$260,000 to be split between at least ten communities. Then the year before last I took the lead

on writing a grant proposal (and almost lost my mind in the process) to the Partnerships Opportunities Legacy Fund which resulted in a further \$460,000 for my community. That amount was the highest granted in our area - despite not meeting the "partnership" requirement..

Why am I bothering to tell you this? When an opportunity came up to apply to the Tenants First Advisory Panel I jumped at the chance. The requirements were:

- You are a tenant of Toronto Community Housing
- You are interested in helping shape the future of TCH and the non-profit housing sector in Toronto
- You have experience with volunteer or community leadership activities, or you are interested in developing leadership skills
- You enjoy talking and working with others

From the discussion at the Information Session at City Hall the Mayor now wants TCH tenant input on the implementation of the five "transformative ideas" listed in the Transformative Change for TCHC report. As someone with an appreciation of the opportunities a Toronto Community Housing tenant can take advantage of, someone with an ability to translate issues into words or images that people understand, and a proven ability to attract funding for my TCH community I thought I would be a shoe in.

Well ... not so much.

Pride goeth before the fall. At least I have something to fall back on. As part of the application process I submitted comments related to the "transformative ideas" outlined in the Mayor's Task Force's "Transformative Changes for TCHC" report. It will provide an excellent baseline for this document.

"Welcome to Toronto Community Housing. Hope lives here."

Part One

The first "transformative" idea listed in the final report from the Mayor's Task Force on TCH(C) is to **"(t)ransition to a new community-based non-profit housing corporation."**

This option is not something that should be given serious consideration knowing that additional revenues are based on the fact that they would "probably be able to increase borrowing capacity." Most people in the room at the Tenants First Advisory Panel information session were wondering how much more that might mean for Toronto Community Housing. One gentleman in the group asked if it could be billions of dollars expected as a result of distancing Toronto Community Housing from the city coffers.

My only question (which I yelled out during that session) was "How are we going to pay it back?"

That was spoken from the perspective of someone who has recently received a copy of their Certificate/Order of Discharge for personal bankruptcy. It's fiscally irresponsible to borrow

money without any method or means of settling our debts. I have learned my lesson. Toronto Community Housing, nor it's tenants, can afford to learn this lesson the hard way.

I'm surprised, that as an accountant by a profession, the former mayor, Art Eggleton, didn't red flag this idea.

Part Two

The second "transformative" idea was to "[c]reate **mixed-income communities.**"

This is a great idea in theory. Personally, I don't believe that the 70-30% (R.G.I [Rent Geared to Income] to non R.G.I.) goes far enough. It should be more of an equal representation between R.G.I and non R.G.I. tenants. It should also be considered in the context of the larger national affordable housing strategy. This strategy should include the proposed development of abandoned properties and the ideas around setting aside a percentage of units constructed by private or non profit entities for R.G.I. tenants.

If Mayor Tory was serious about creating mixed income communities there needs to be a focus on "community building" not just the construction of new units. The Regent Park rejuvenation project is already 108 million in the hole and nowhere near completion. Part of the reason is because of "delays in timing of sales of market housing resulted in [SURPRISE!!!] delays in the social housing redevelopment." (Torontoist - *Why Regent Park's Revitalization Needs !108 Million More to Keep Going* - February 6th, 2017)

The main reason people are likely hesitating with making purchases of units in that area are quite clear. The Toronto Community Housing tenants that were in that area before have first pick at returning to the same size unit they had when they left ... Subsidized of course. So what guarantees do the purchasers have that the same criminal elements won't be returning? None. What powers do the new owners have when they do return? None.

You can flush billions of dollars down that hole. All you will be doing is making it more appealing for the criminal element to crawl back into.

There needs to be some significant structural/systemic change. I believe that we should start at the top. The TCH Board of Directors should have equal representation of TCH tenants, citizen members (that could include property owners), and city councilor members.

Currently, the board consists of twelve members only two of whom are tenants. So, technically, that means that only two people on that board have lived experience. That's not even remotely empowering to the 164 000 Toronto Community Housing tenants. If, TCH tenants don't have any real say at the Board with only two members, how are the new owners going to feel with no say with no members on Board?

Unfortunately, equal representation at the Board level is not listed among the recommendations. Instead, Recommendation 4 of the TCH Task Force Final Report indicated that the "Corporate Board of Directors of TCHC/NewHome, should be reduced to 7-9 citizen members and should be more appropriately compensated for their commitment and adequately supported." Sounds a tad backwards to me,

Technically, there would have been no need to appoint TCH(C) tenants to become members of

the Tenants First Advisory Panel if the Board of Directors had equal representation. It also would have had a much longer and more effective mandate. Based on information gathered online the Tenants First Advisory Panel is meeting for 7 - 10 times over the next year. Honestly, this is the Tenants Last Advisory Panel. They just wanna find out from us how best to stuff their ideas down our throats without us spewing it all back at them. Just sayin'.

Part Three

The third item on the list for *Transformative Change for TCHC* was "**[b]etter buildings and more of them**".

If, by better buildings, the City of Toronto means the same thing as it does when it is referring to its own Better Buildings Partnership. " A City of Toronto initiative that works with building owners, managers and builders to ensure that buildings achieve high energy performance and low environmental impact. We provide knowledge, resources and financial assistance to maximize the outcomes of a wide range of energy efficiency projects." I'm all in!

On the one hand, there is only an honorable mention for decreasing Toronto Community Housing's ecological foot print. Yet, unbeknownst to outsiders there needs to be a back to basics approach to TCH(C)'s environmental impact. Superintendents have been threatened with fines if their buildings don't increase the recycled materials weight and decrease the trash weight that the recycling/garbage trucks pick up.

TCH(C) staff, tenant reps, and a large majority of residents simply can't be bothered to recycle. In some cases, it's a distance issue. The garbage room on each floor is closer than the recycling bin at the outside edge of the parking lot.. In others, it's an accessibility issue. They can't be expected to pitch their recycling into a dumpster that is six feet high from a wheel chair/scooter or as they are leaning on their walker.

As far as I'm concerned Toronto Community Housing should be leading the city in waste diversion.

On the other hand, the report is very detailed when they describe wanting the ability to put more sardines (intensification on some sites) into more cans (through rejuvenation projects) on the same size of platter (lot size). In addition, they want the ability to have preferential consideration when it comes to the sale of surplus public land. Sprinkle on some capital grants, low or zero interest loans, tax/fee waivers, and debt guarantees. For dessert, they even want to have final say (never mind the "review opportunities" phrasing) when it comes to which units are renovated, demolished, replaced, or sold.

If individuals, businesses, organizations, and governments are being asked to invest in the future of TCH(C) then there needs to be a broader focus. Not only should they work on constructing "better buildings" they should also work on "community development" and make a sincere effort at "tenant engagement" (next section).

For now, it's still called Toronto "Community" Housing. The first step in developing a healthy community is getting rid of the riff raff. Nobody wants to live next door to a drug dealer.

Housing has been declared a human right. Subsidized housing should be considered a privilege. The City of Toronto has gone above and beyond by providing persons with a

subsidized unit. If it is proven that they have abuse that privilege then they are entitled to seek a market rental unit somewhere outside of Toronto Community Housing. It's not TCH's, or the Mayor's, responsibility to make sure serial criminals have a roof over their heads. Here's your eviction notice. Don't let the door hit you on the way out. End of story.

Unfortunately, it's not that simple. We'll discuss why in the next section[s].

Part Four

The fourth item on the list was to "**[d]ecentralize [o]perations/[s]trengthen [p]artnerships**". For your sake I will deal with these two issues separately. This section will deal with the decentralization issues. Strengthening partnerships will be dealt with in Part Five.

When we discuss decentralization issues we need to discuss the current level of performance. Based on personal experience it is very clear that there is a systemic issue involving Toronto Community Housing (Corporation) staff members following up with tenants ... at all. Never mind, in a timely manner.

A TCH(C) staffer in Stakeholder Relations has yet to respond to a detailed outline that a city councilor forwarded to him. Other than promising (via email) to get back to me "in ten days or so" on December 7th, 2016. He even cc'd that promise to the city councilor's office.

Considering, the city councilor forwarded my email to TCH(C)'s Stakeholder Relations, in the first place, should give you some clear indication as to the sheer lack of response from other Toronto Community Housing staffers prior to that point.

During an Operational Assessment Group Meeting in 2015 it was revealed that Toronto Community Housing security does not necessarily respond after a call to their call center. Instead, they wait until they receive a second call about the same incident. Even then, chances are, there was no record made of the first call. SMH Maybe they should be required to supply incident report numbers so that TCH residents have something to refer to when they do call back.

Once Toronto Community Housing staffers have been taught how to properly follow up with tenants (whether that be in person, by phone, or by email) it would be wise to discuss decentralizing both the maintenance and security call center operations during business hours. Within the nine to five time frame calls should be handled by TCH(C) Operating Unit management offices.

This will effectively remove the plausible deniability factor that permeates Toronto Community Housing when it comes to what is happening within those Operating Units. No longer will they say they didn't know about a specific units repeated anti-social or criminal behaviors. Unless of course, it is Toronto Police Services that responds instead of TCH(C) security. (To be discussed in Part Five.)

Once an organizational structure has been defined it would seem advantageous to educate the tenants on each TCH(C) staffer's position, and their respective responsibilities. There has to be at least the illusion of transparency.

Above all there needs to be accountability. Gives us some way within the Toronto Community Housing organizational system to lodge complaints. The sooner a person feels heard, the sooner they can move on to the next order of business.

At any point during this time there should also be a recommendation made for either a flexible work schedule or a limitation put on the amount of time an employee can serve in each position. It is believed that burn out is a chronic issue among Toronto Community Housing employees. Take a page from the tech industry. No employee stays at a tech company until they retire. Innovation breeds change. Change breeds innovation.

Part Five

This section is actually a continuation of the fourth item on the list for *Transformative Change for TCHC*. The first part (decentralizing operations) was dealt with in the last section. Part Five will deal with **strengthening partnerships**.

I'm going to start this section off on a very controversial note. There is one partnership that I think should be demolished. That is the tenant rep system. [Please see The Tenant Rep poem following the conclusion]. If the tenant representatives actually represented the tenants they should have banded together years ago to provide feedback on the Final Report of the Mayor's Task Force on TCH(C).

They could have divided the work up by section across the city. Or a few communities could have met once a month to discuss a section per month. Then compiled a Tenant Reps Perspective on the Final Report of the Mayors Task Force on TCH(C). There should have been no need to wait, for the city to come up with this Tenants First initiative (which really translates to Tenants Last), to hear from our reps

In addition, to abolishing the old tenant rep system there needs to be a system in place that supports and recognizes those of us with the T'N'T (Time eNergy & Tenacity) to blast our own trails. Being told "Don't get your hopes up" with a pat on the shoulder prior to presenting at a Participatory Budget meeting does NOT count as support. Neither does ignoring emails during the Partnership Opportunities Legacy Fund's grant application process. .

One of the partnerships that should already be strengthened is that between Toronto Police Services and Toronto Community Housing security. Once upon a time I used to work as a security guard. During that time if Toronto Police Services appeared on site it was standard procedure to document the time they arrived on scene, the nature of their visit, unit number they were visiting, and the time they left. If that wasn't completed I would have been fired.

So I was absolutely dumbfounded to find out that there is NO automatic handshake between Toronto Police Services and TCH security when they arrive on site. There is NOT even a mandatory reporting system in place to notify the area property management office of visits to Toronto Community Housing sites (*Seriously, I double checked.*) Those police reports would be crucial evidence when going forward with a case for eviction to the Ontario Housing Tribunal. Especially, for those involved in criminal behavior.

Given that many of the Toronto Community Housing units are located in "Priority Neighborhoods" requiring extra police officers is this not the type of cooperation that should already be in place. If TCH(C) security can not be trusted at least open up a dialogue between

the TCH(C) management offices and Toronto Police.

Another area that can use some solid investment is partnering with the youth from the communities. Toronto Community Housing is clearly on side with this issue. They just remain unsure how to resolve it.

Well, how about, instead of just giving youth a token seat on this committee, or that one, why don't we look to partnerships within the community that give youth real job opportunities. How about revamping the approved vendors list to reflect contractors that give Toronto Community Housing youth an opportunity at an apprenticeship?

“Give them a future or they will give themselves a past”

Another area where strengthening partnerships may be effective is bringing in community based mental health services. Anyone spending a significant amount of time in a TCH(C) community can attest to the need for both anger management and addiction counselling. Parenting groups/classes would also be valuable to tenants. Placing a public health nurse in the Operating Unit management offices once a week would be another valuable resource. The biggest push should be made for TCH(C) to hire a team of life coaches. Whether they act as an assistant to defining a persons' goals, or their biggest cheerleader, life coach services would benefit both individuals and communities.

In addition, TCH(C) community service coordinators would be able to make referrals and receive periodic attendance updates. An individual tenants willingness to partake of such resources could be used as one more assessment/evaluative tool to take to the Ontario Housing Tribunal should the situation escalate beyond a certain stage that would require eviction. Especially, if an individuals behaviors are interfering with the rights of other tenants.

Providing these services in a more direct manner to Toronto Community Housing tenants would facilitate their ability to be non-destructive, if not outright productive, members of their communities.

Part Six

This sections details how to go about accomplishing the fifth and final item on the list for *Transformative Change for TCHC* report. That idea was to "**[r]eform the rent geared to income (RGI) System**".

Reforming the Rent Geared to Income system is an idea I have been promoting everywhere possible. This would required that the Ontario Housing Tribunal lift the cap on rent increases for those in subsidized units across the province from a percentage (I believe it will be 1.5% for 2017) to the maximum shelter allowance of their social assistance benefits.

For Toronto Community Housing this would allow for an influx of cash from a tenant base that is approximately 75% social assistance recipients. Personally, my rent is \$139 a month with no explanation as to how the calculation is made. If we were to go to a system that implements a maximum shelter allowance requirement then I would be paying \$479 per month and the calculation is self explanatory.

That's a significant increase across the board for TCH(C) revenues. In addition, Toronto

Community Housing could also demand those amounts be paid direct. That way, the money is technically coming directly from the Ontario government coffers. (An added bonus is that we never again have to worry about a tenant getting behind in their rent.)

That's where Art Eggleton et al and I agree. Unfortunately, as an accountant I do not think he went far enough in his report. I believe he should have done an extensive evaluation of the income and expenses at Toronto Community Housing to determine a more complete analysis of the opportunities for increasing revenues and decreasing losses. ["AUDIT! AUDIT! AUDIT!"]

Another revenue generating option includes putting a premium on real estate sales in Toronto. Similar to fees for international students availing themselves of our world class education system. According to the University of Toronto's website a domestic first year student for the 2016- 2017 semester pays \$6,400 tuition. While an international first year student pays \$41,920. We need to quit undervaluing our own real estate by collecting additional moneys from international buyers. Then we can ear mark those funds specifically for our social housing initiatives including Toronto Community Housing.

As far as decreasing losses the top two that should jump to the front of everyone's mind would be eliminating fines for fire code violations and eliminating construction cost overruns. Both of these items have been broadcast throughout mainstream media.

Toronto Community Housing can not afford to be paying \$100,000 in fines for fire code violations. Nor can it afford the additional legal fees to fight it. I'm sure tax payers could find another way to burn through that money.

As for the construction cost overruns may I suggest a financial incentive for early or on time completion while meeting or exceeding industry standards. Then, of course, I am equally on board with financial penalties or revocation of contract for late completion. The prime example being the Regent Park rejuvenation project.

Make no mistake about it. The contractors building these sites are not in it for the "social housing" aspect. They want to make their money first. They couldn't sell off the market rate units in time to cover the costs of building the social housing component of refurbishing Regent Park. So they siphoned another \$108 million from the city coffers. (That money is earmarked to complete Phase Two of the **FIVE** phase project. They haven't even reached the halfway mark!) I don't recall hearing anything about partial or total repayment of those funds once the remaining market rate units are sold. Have you?

It doesn't take a certified accountant to understand, that until such a time as financial responsibility is built into the system, no matter how many new dollars can be funneled into Toronto Community Housing, they will always find a way to hemorrhage more

Conclusion

Now, I fully understand that there will be people out there that will say I have completed this exercise in an effort to hi-jack the whole Tenant's First Advisory Panel process. Those would be the same people that have me labelled as a quote unquote "Troublemaker". That's ok. Six months ago they only referred to me as "stressed".

(Stressed. LOL Is it any wonder? I was sending emails to the mayor, my city councilor, Toronto Community Housing staff, and a contact at Toronto Police Services, Most of my emails seemed to just disappear into the ether. Every once in a while they would spark a response. In the body of those countless emails is where I flushed out the ideas that became pieces of my application to the Tenant's First Advisory Panel and finally, this document. This truly is A Tenant's Manifesto on the Final Report of the Mayor's Task Force on TCH(C).)

For the record, I am not trying to sabotage the Tenants First Advisory Panel's efforts. I'm hopeful that they would be given this document to use as a baseline for discussion. There is only so much they can accomplish in 7 - 10 meetings over the next year. Especially, if the members are not all seasoned advocates (aka "Troublemakers").

When I was declined a position on the Tenants First Advisory Panel I responded with the following -

"Thank you for the opportunity to at least apply to the Tenants First Advisory Panel.

I would hope that at the very least there will be a public record of these meetings (like minutes to be emailed to those of us who applied as well as tenant reps/leaders). If by chance they will allow a more open process whereas the public could attend these meetings I will be there with bells on.

I will most definitely be editing the material from my application and posting it as My Manifesto on The Mayors Task Force for Toronto Community Housing to my website ASAP. At that point I will send the mayor, my city councilor, members of the media, and yourself links to the document once it's complete. I would be honored if you would share the link with your members but regrettably I would also understand how that may be counter productive for the limitation of TCH Tenants involvement.

The Tenants First Advisory Panel has a very difficult road ahead of them. I wish you all the best of luck. I will still be working towards significantly improving TCH long after the City of Toronto retires the Tenants First Advisory Panel."

This whole Tenant's Last Advisory Panel concept is simply unacceptable. Why were we not represented on the Mayor's Task Force on TCH(C) to begin with? Honestly, as a TCH(C) tenant, to have been included in the discussion from the very beginning would have been ideal.

After all, any change agent will tell you, change comes from within.

"Welcome to Toronto Community Housing. Hope (still) lives here."

The Tenant Rep

She is the rep for my community
Living in a unit on a financial subsidy

With her 30 year long time bed buddy
While he works full time at security
And she collects ODSP - Disability

Maybe that's none of my business ...
But I can't help but think that
TCHC and ODSP should revoke her immunity

She is in charge of the Christmas hamper
The original shipping list she does tamper
She doles the food out to those she can pamper
Then off they scurry and off they scamper
Even the super leaves a happy camper.

Maybe that's none of my business ...
But I can't help but think that
There should be an independent rubber stamper

She lied when she filed a report with a cop
She claimed to be missing HER laptop
After someone had made her door lock go "Pop!"
In fact, the stolen comp belonged to her fop
Lying is her lifestyle .. She'll never stop.

Maybe that's none of my business ...
But I can't help but think that
With fables as good as her's she could be Aesop

She declared personal bankruptcy last year
For our community finances I do fear
The lack of accountability makes everything unclear
After pulling out my hair and shedding many a tear
I can't make the account books magically appear

Maybe that's none of my business ...
But I can't help but think that
This situation needs an unapologetic mutineer

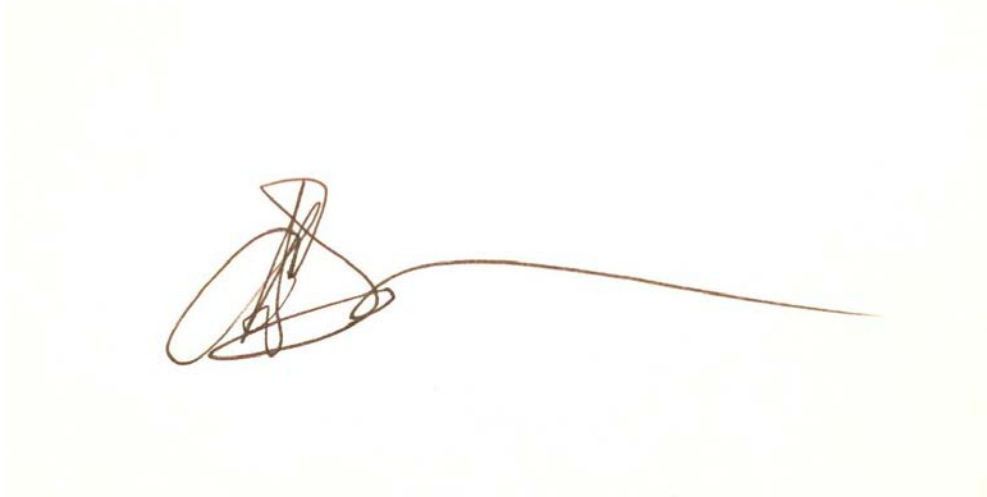
She only recycles the gossip and lies
Her environmental footprint she vehemently denies
Throwing out scraps of truth in bags with twist ties
Oblivious to the approaching cloud as time flies
She may be an old woman but she is far from wise

Maybe that's none of my business ...
But I can't help but think that
Karma is anxiously awaiting her downfall ... her demise

by Cheryl Duggan
August 17th, 2016

Thank you for taking the time to read my submission.

Sincerely,



Cheryl Duggan



Toronto ON



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"I don't lose. I either win or I learn"

