

Ensuring a Successful Tenant Advisory Committee at Toronto Community Housing Corporation

Date: February 13, 2023

To: Planning and Housing Committee

From: Executive Director, Housing Secretariat

Wards: All

SUMMARY

On December 14, 2022, City Council adopted Member Motion 2.16, *Ensuring a Successful Tenant Advisory Committee at Toronto Community Housing Corporation*, which directed the Deputy City Manager, Community and Social Services, to have City staff, through the Tenants First initiative, review the proposal for a new Tenant Advisory Committee including:

- Terms of Reference;
- recruitment and confirmation of members;
- role of tenant directors in a Tenant Advisory Committee; and
- role of the City in a Tenant Advisory Committee

Council directed City staff to report back on the review and recommendations to the February 28, 2023 meeting of the Planning and Housing Committee.

As directed, this report provides recommended direction and advice for Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC) and the City of Toronto to ensure that the Tenant Advisory Committee is successful and that tenants are fully engaged in the process to refresh the broader TCHC tenant engagement system. Working collaboratively, these efforts will support improved communication and engagement between TCHC staff and tenants.

To provide leadership and ensure success in establishing the Tenant Advisory Committee and its Terms of Reference, it is also recommended that the Committee be supported by City staff and co-chaired by the Deputy City Manager, Community and Social Services, and the Chief Executive Officer, TCHC on a transitional basis.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive Director, Housing Secretariat, recommends that:

1. City Council direct the Toronto Community Housing Corporation Board of Directors to ensure that:

a) the terms of reference for the Tenant Advisory Committee be developed in collaboration with the Tenant Advisory Committee and the City with consideration of the recent efforts and approach by Toronto Seniors Housing Corporation in establishing its Senior Tenant Advisory Committee;

b) an additional round of recruitment be completed for the Tenant Advisory Committee in partnership with the City, which targets tenants who are not currently involved in Toronto Community Housing Corporation's tenant engagement system, and that meetings with the new and current Committee members begin early in the second quarter of 2023; and

c) Toronto Community Housing Corporation appoint a current tenant director to the Tenant Advisory Committee to liaise between the Tenant Advisory Committee and the Board of Directors;

2. City Council direct the Executive Director, Housing Secretariat, to ensure that City staff provide support to the Tenant Advisory Committee, to assist with both the development of the terms of reference of the Tenant Advisory Committee and the recruitment of new members; and

3. City Council request that the Deputy City Manager, Community and Social Services and the Chief Executive Officer, Toronto Community Housing Corporation, jointly co-chair the Tenant Advisory Committee on a transitional basis to provide leadership and establish an effective Committee which will provide the basis for stronger voices from tenants within TCHC.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There are no financial impacts to this report.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer have reviewed this report and agree with the financial implications.

DECISION HISTORY

On December 15, 2022, City Council adopted [MM2.16 Ensuring a Successful Tenant Advisory Committee at Toronto Community Housing Corporation](#) which requested that the Deputy City Manager, Community and Social Services to have City staff review the proposal for a new Tenant Advisory Committee at TCHC.

On July 14, 2021, City Council adopted [EX25.12 - Toronto Community Housing Corporation - Annual General Meeting and 2020 Audited Consolidated Financial Statements](#) which approved an updated Shareholder Direction to TCHC

COMMENTS

TCHC Shareholder Direction

The Shareholder Direction requires TCHC to ensure that tenants are engaged in a manner that allows them to be involved in community decision making that affects their housing as appropriate. The Shareholder Direction states that TCHC will ensure it supports an approach to Tenant engagement that includes:

- Opportunities for tenant engagement regarding their housing, and the full TCHC housing portfolio;
- Opportunities for Tenants to provide input on TCHC corporate decisions including capital plans, operating budget, service levels, service delivery and Tenant facing policies;
- Opportunities for Tenant input on setting local spending priorities; and
- Information about opportunities for engagement in other City and community initiatives.

TCHC Tenant Engagement System Refresh

TCHC is currently implementing its tenant engagement system. In July 2019, the TCHC Board approved the Refresh of the Tenant Engagement System ([TCHC: 2019-15](#)). The revised System four main components:

- *Building/townhouse level:*
A focus of the engagement structure at the building/townhouse level is to monitor the implementation of local community action plans which are created in collaboration with tenants and outlines key activities and solutions in response to tenant identified priorities.
- *Hub Level*
This level of engagement structure assess Service Quality Indicators by providing direct input into improving quality of services to tenants.
- *Regional Level:*
Tenant Community Action Tables will be formed based on operating unit boundaries and will have representatives elected/selected by tenants based on the model of their preference at the local level. Each region will work with tenants and stakeholders to address top tenant-identified priorities.
- *City level*
The City-Wide Tenant-Staff Governance Oversight Committee *is a* resource and accountability structure for tenants and staff participating in the Tenant Engagement System.

TCHC's implementation of the Tenant Engagement System occurred throughout 2019 and into 2020. This included engagement within communities to enable tenants to select the local engagement model of their preference (elected tenant representatives, open building/townhouse committee, or independent tenant association).

Full implementation was significantly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic and while completed in 2021, the roll-out took longer than expected. By-elections to fill any remaining tenant representative positions were completed in Q1 2022 and Implementation of the Community Action Table level continued throughout 2022.

Throughout these two phases of implementation, staff and Board members heard from tenants directly, and through tenant deputations at the Board, that there were challenges emerging with the implementation of the system. These challenges were outlined in a report to the Tenant Services Committee in June 2022 ([TSC: 2022-28](#)).

In response, in December 2022, the TCHC Tenant Services Committee adopted Item [8D Tenant Engagement Refresh Update](#), which outlines TCHC's approach to engagement. This includes a four-step plan aimed at consulting tenant leaders, receiving their feedback, and developing recommendations in order to make necessary changes/improvements in the Tenant Engagement System. The creation of the Tenant Advisory Committee is one aspect of this plan.

The role of the Tenant Advisory Committee is to advise TCHC on the implementation of Tenant Engagement System and tenant facing programs including:

- support the implementation of the Tenant Forum
- advise on recommendations that will improve Tenant Engagement System implementation
- advise on key tenant facing programs

Results of Review of Tenant Advisory Committee

On December 15, 2022, City Council adopted MM2.16 which requested that the Deputy City Manager, Community and Social Services, to review and report back with any recommendations on the proposal for a new Tenant Advisory Committee including: Terms of Reference; the recruitment and confirmation of members; the role of tenant directors in a Tenant Advisory Committee; and the role of the City.

The following details the results of this review:

1) Terms of Reference

Through this review, TCHC has confirmed that the Terms of Reference have not yet been completed. Building on the successful development of a terms of reference for the Senior Tenant Advisory Committee, it is recommended that City staff work collaboratively with TCHC staff and tenant Advisory Committee members to develop a terms of reference that promotes tenant voices and is solution focused.

City Advice:

The terms of reference be co-developed by TCHC staff, Tenant Advisory Committee members and City staff ensuring the following are included:

- clear articulation of the purpose of the committee
- timeline for the committee
- code of conduct
- success indicators

2) Recruitment and Confirmation of Membership

Fifteen tenants have been recruited for the Tenant Advisory Committee with five tenants from each region being selected.

The process for recruiting Tenant Advisory Committee in fall of 2022 included:

- an open call for tenants to join the Tenant Advisory Committee
- advertisement through print and digital communications about the application and an information session

Of the successful applicants, only one is not currently involved in the tenant engagement system.

Based on the low number of applications and the result of almost all Tenant Advisory Committee members currently involved in the tenant engagement system, it is recommended that a follow up recruitment be swiftly held. This recruitment should focus on those not currently involved in the TCHC tenant engagement system, with the goal of adding at least five new members to the Tenant Advisory Committee.

It is recommended that the recruitment start shortly to allow for an inaugural meeting of the new Tenant Advisory Committee early in the second quarter 2023. It is also recommended that the criteria be adjusted to highlight community experience outside of TCHC in order to facilitate a diversity of membership.

City Advice:

TCHC and City staff jointly conduct additional recruitment for the Tenant Advisory Committee with a focus on recruiting tenants who are not currently involved in the TCHC tenant engagement system.

3) Role of Tenant Directors on the Tenant Advisory Committee

There is not currently a formal role for Tenant Directors on the Tenant Advisory Committee. City staff recommend one TCHC Tenant Director is invited to join the committee and provide a link back to the Tenant Services Committee and Board of Directors. This has been implemented at the Senior Tenant Advisory Committee and has been an effective tool to keep tenants connected to the Board of Directors.

City Advice:

A TCHC Tenant Director be invited to join the Tenant Advisory Committee.

4) City's Role on the Tenant Advisory Committee

There is not currently a formal role for the City of Toronto on the Tenant Advisory Committee. The Senior Tenant Advisory Committee has benefitted from the attention of senior leadership at the City of Toronto and Toronto Senior Housing Corporation (TSHC) and from the joint support of the committee from TSHC and City staff.

City staff recommend that the Tenant Advisory Committee replicate this model and that the Deputy City Manager, Community and Social Services and the Chief Executive Officer co-chair the Tenant Advisory Committee on a transitional basis to provide leadership and ensure success in establishing the Tenant Advisory Committee, it is also recommended that City and TCHC staff provide support to the committee.

City Advice:

The Tenant Advisory Committee to be co-chaired by the Deputy City Manager, Community and Social Services and the Chief Executive Officer, TCHC and supported by staff from TCHC and the City.

Summary

Engaging with the Tenant Advisory Committee is a critical next step in developing a meaningful tenant engagement system and the recommendations in this report will provide needed support to affect necessary change and establish a strong foundation for future enhancement.

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SIGNATURE

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