

Supporting Toronto Seniors Housing Corporation Tenants through City of Toronto Programs and Services

Date: March 24, 2025

To: Economic and Community Development Committee

From: General Manager, Seniors Services and Long-Term Care

Wards: All

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to provide an update to the Economic and Community Development Committee on how the City of Toronto, through its divisions and agencies, will continue to support the Toronto Seniors Housing Corporation (TSHC) to meet tenants' priorities for programs and services offered in the buildings they manage.

Staff in Seniors Services and Long-Term Care (SSLTC) used data collected by TSHC staff in 2024 on tenants' priorities for agency-led programming to shape this report. The activities and initiatives of City divisions and agencies outlined in this report build on the City of Toronto's existing commitments and partnerships with TSHC and will supplement its current tenant-facing programs and services in 2025 and beyond.

TSHC will continue to leverage its current and future partnerships with the community and health sectors to respond to tenants' unmet program and service priorities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager, Seniors Services and Long-Term Care recommends that:

1. The Economic and Community Development Committee receive this report for information.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There are no financial impacts associated with the recommendation in the report.

Funding to deliver the services in the report to support TSHC through City's Programs and Agencies in 2025 is included in the 2025 Operating Budget of respective Programs and Agencies.

Funding to continue and expand the services in the report for future years will be submitted for consideration as part of future budget processes, subject to the City's financial and resource capacity against other critical City-wide priorities and impacts.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the information as presented in the Financial Impact Section.

DECISION HISTORY

On October 23, 2024, the Economic and Community Development Committee received a report from the Toronto Seniors Housing Corporation regarding the implementation of its service model at each building in the corporation's portfolio. The Committee also requested that the Deputy City Manager, Community and Social Services, report to the April 8, 2025 meeting on the work plans of specified divisions to support the Toronto Seniors Housing Corporation and any programmatic budget matters that may be required to advance programs to seniors in 2025.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2024.EC16.6>

On July 24, 2024, City Council requested that the Toronto Seniors Housing Corporation report to the October 23, 2024 meeting of the Economic and Community Development Committee on the delivery of the Integrated Service Model in each of its buildings, including its program partners.

<https://secure.toronto.ca/council/agenda-item.do?item=2024.EX16.28>

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

Seniors are an equity-deserving community who experience a unique set of social and economic barriers. TSHC is comprised of buildings and tenant communities that were formerly part of the Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC) portfolio of buildingsⁱ. Like TCHC tenants, TSHC tenants reflect the demographic diversity of the City of Toronto, encompassing intersections of ethno-racial diversity, language, ability, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and income. Additionally, they may face challenges related to aging, including poor health, mobility issues, social isolation, and varying degrees of cognitive acuity, which intersect with and exacerbate other vulnerabilities such as racialized and gender-based poverty, structural and systematic racism, and unequal access to resources, services, and opportunitiesⁱⁱ.

Through collaboration, the City of Toronto and TSHC will improve access to municipal programs and services for current and future tenants, enhancing their ability to age in place with dignity and in comfort.

COMMENTS

TSHC provides subsidized rental housing to approximately 15,000 seniors living on low and moderate incomes in 83 buildings. TSHC delivers housing-related services and facilitates access to other programs and supports through an integrated service model that enables tenants to age in place, have more successful tenancies, and enjoy a better quality of life. A key component of the service model is providing tenants, where feasible, with access to a range of health, social, and wellness services desired by tenants.

Building and community considerations, including access to programming, the availability of suitable spaces, and tenants' concerns about privacy and security, fundamentally shape the delivery of services in each building. At the same time, regular and fulsome tenant engagement enables TSHC leadership to understand tenants' priorities and address the gaps that tenants may experience in programming offered by the corporation and in their communities.

Understanding Tenants' Priorities

Between January and March 2024, TSHC staff held 68 in-person tenant engagement sessions across their portfolio to better understand tenants' priorities for agency-led programming. In total, 1,540 tenants participated.

TSHC provided SSLTC with data about the priorities that tenants identified during the engagements that could not be met by TSHC or through existing TSHC partnerships.

In total, 107 priorities were identified as unmet. SSLTC used this data to engage divisional and agency partners to identify programs and services that the City of Toronto could offer to the housing corporation to close these gaps.

The categories of unmet program and service priorities are listed below in ranked order from the category with the most unmet priorities included (i.e., recreation and wellness) to the category with the least unmet priorities included (i.e., safety education):

- Recreation and wellness
- Onsite medical services
- Digital literacy / computer training
- Food access
- Health education
- English-language proficiency
- Safety education

Interdivisional Engagement

In response to direction from the Economic and Community Development Committee, and in close collaboration with TSHC, SSLTC engaged City divisions including Parks &

Recreation, Toronto Public Health, Social Development, Finance & Administration, Toronto Paramedic Services, Toronto Fire Services, Technology Services, and the Housing Secretariat to respond to identified gaps in programs and services for tenants. SSLTC also engaged the Toronto Public Library, the Association of Community Centres (AOCCs), and the Toronto Police Service because of the relevance of their programs and services to tenants' priorities.

SSLTC asked all partners to identify current (2025) offerings or opportunities to respond to tenants' priorities in their buildings or at nearby locations. This report outlines how the City of Toronto and its agencies will support TSHC and its tenants by reallocating resources and piloting new programs that respond to unmet tenant priorities. In all cases, no additional funding is required within the 2025 fiscal year.

Outcomes of Interdivisional Engagements

Recreation and Wellness Programs

Recreation and wellness programs were the most frequently requested by tenants. Tenants in 30 buildings requested programs such as yoga, tai chi, dance, and healthy cooking and eating classes. To meet these priorities, SSLTC engaged Parks & Recreation and the AOCCs through Social Development, Finance & Administration to discuss their program offerings and existing partnerships with TSHC.

To address the reality that some tenants may face barriers to participating in community-based programs, Parks & Recreation will pilot the delivery of fitness programs at up to three TSHC buildings in 2025. SSLTC, Parks & Recreation, and TSHC are working together to assess and determine which buildings are best suited to be pilot sites. Selection of the sites will consider the availability of appropriate spaces in the buildings and tenants' interest in receiving the programs. The continuation or expansion of the pilot in 2026 will be determined by its success and the availability of TSHC and Parks & Recreation resources to support on-going or additional programming. TSHC and Parks & Recreation will work together to determine the criteria to be used to evaluate the success of the pilot.

To increase tenants' awareness of local recreational and fitness programming, Parks & Recreation staff will conduct outreach to enhance their connections with tenants and TSHC staff and to raise awareness of the programs and services offered at community centre locations near TSHC buildings. These activities will enable Parks & Recreation staff to gather information about the types of recreational programming that are important to tenants and use this information when developing programming for older adults and seniors. These activities are scheduled to occur by Q4 2025 and may include conducting outreach at all TSHC buildings; providing information on programming to TSHC Community Service Coordinators to share with tenants at each building; and presenting information at Tenant Regional Meetings.

SSLTC engaged with the AOCCs to assess how their recreational and community development programs could address the priorities of tenants in buildings within their designated catchment areas. Seven AOCCs serve TSHC buildings in their catchment areas and expressed interest in responding to tenants' programming priorities, citing

longstanding relationships with TSHC buildings and tenants. Two of those AOCCs have the capacity to conduct outreach in 2025 to raise tenant awareness about programs aligned with their priorities. TSHC Community Service Coordinators and AOCC staff will coordinate on delivering this outreach based on the availability of resources and appropriate spaces in the buildings. Outreach efforts will provide AOCCs with a clearer understanding of tenant demand for specific recreational and community development programs, enabling them to assess tenants' needs and tailor future programming. Additionally, TSHC and the AOCCs will collaborate to identify opportunities to promote the AOCCs' program and service offerings to tenants who may be unaware of them. Social Development, Finance and Administration Division, the Council-designated liaison division for the AOCCs, will work with the remaining five Centres to enhance outreach and responsive programming.

Onsite Medical Services

Onsite medical services included services such as check-ups and routine screenings. SSLTC engaged Toronto Paramedic Services to determine if these priorities could be addressed through the Community Paramedicine program.

The Community Paramedicine program was supported through a recommendation in the Toronto Seniors' Strategy 1.0 and was expanded through the Toronto Seniors' Strategy 2.0^{iii, iv}. The purpose of the program is to support seniors and other at-risk populations by delivering home visits, and, in some locations, wellness clinics in their apartment buildings or condominiums. During these interactions, community paramedics provide assessments, vital sign checks, health education, chronic disease management, as well as referrals to community programs and services. When a wellness clinic ends in a particular location, typically after 12-18 months, clients who require on-going support are transitioned to Toronto Paramedic Services' Community Paramedic Home Visit Program.

Toronto Paramedic Services currently offers wellness clinics in three of the 15 buildings where onsite medical services were identified as an unmet priority, and home visiting is available in all 15 buildings. In 2025, Toronto Paramedic Services and TSHC will explore initiating wellness clinics at two more buildings where onsite medical services were prioritized. The eligibility and appropriateness of the remaining 10 buildings to receive the service will be assessed by Toronto Paramedic Services and TSHC for possible delivery in 2026 and 2027.

Digital Literacy

Tenants in 15 buildings described a desire for classes on basic computer skills as a priority. Created in 2022, in response to a recommendation in the Toronto Seniors' Strategy 2.0, Toronto Public Library launched the Seniors Digital Literacy Community Librarian service. Toronto Public Library provided the service at 17 TSHC locations between 2022 and 2024. In 2025, community librarians will deliver the program at eight additional buildings. Toronto Public Library will continue the service into the future and will work with TSHC to determine the feasibility of delivering the program to the remaining seven buildings that prioritized this service.

Since 2024, TSHC, Toronto Public Library, and Technology Services have partnered to provide public Wi-Fi in common areas at the eight additional TSHC buildings offering the Community Librarian program in 2025 to support resident access to online municipal resources and services, and to foster digital literacy and adoption.

Health Education

Tenants who prioritized health education requested topics such as mental health, chronic illnesses, and healthy eating. SSLTC worked with Toronto Public Health to respond to this priority.

Toronto Public Health will deliver health promotion activities, including education, in multiple languages at six to eight TSHC buildings in 2025. Site selection for the activities will be undertaken collaboratively with Toronto Public Health, SSLTC, and TSHC and will consider the availability of appropriate mediums and spaces in the buildings and tenants' interest. The continuation or expansion in 2026 will be determined based on evaluation criteria developed by TSHC, SSLTC, and Toronto Public Health

In addition, TSHC is working with health sector partners, such as Ontario Health Teams and community-based health service providers, to meet tenant priorities related to health education.

Food Access

Tenants had specific requests to address food access through food banks or fresh food markets. SSLTC worked with Toronto Public Health to respond to this priority.

Toronto Public Health will work with SSLTC and TSHC to develop materials that identify the locations of food banks and community-based food and nutrition programs in the areas around the 10 buildings where tenants identified this priority. Materials will be developed and circulated to tenants in the 10 buildings in Q2 2025.

TSHC is also actively working with existing community partners, such as food banks and organizations that promote food access, to meet tenant priorities.

English-language Proficiency

Tenants prioritized English language lessons in seven buildings. SSLTC engaged Toronto Public Library, which hosts English Conversation Circles (ECCs) at 27 branches. ECCs offer individuals opportunities to practice their conversation skills in English.

Four buildings where tenants prioritized language skills are within three kilometres of a library branch that hosts an ECC. Toronto Public Library branch staff will conduct outreach in the four buildings to raise tenants' awareness of the program offered at their branches. Through this outreach, TPL staff will also inform tenants about other programs offered by the library system.

The possibility of ECC program expansion to additional TPL branches, including those close to the three remaining TSHC buildings that identified language skills as a priority, will be investigated.

Safety Education

For those who prioritized safety education, topic requests include fire safety, fraud prevention, and elder abuse. SSLTC worked with Toronto Fire Services and Toronto Police Service to respond to these priorities.

Fire safety in TSHC buildings is an on-going priority. Toronto Fire Services provided fire safety education to all TSHC buildings in 2024 and will do so again in 2025, including paying special attention to the two buildings that identified fire safety as a priority.

The Toronto Police Service will provide safety education on requested topics (e.g. elder abuse and fraud prevention) at the four buildings that prioritized receiving this information. The Toronto Police Services will also participate in TSHC's 2025 Tenant Volunteer Regional Meetings to raise awareness of safety-related issues across the TSHC portfolio.

Next Steps

The activities and initiatives of City divisions and agencies brought forward through this report build on the City's existing commitments and partnerships with TSHC. This work will supplement TSHC's current tenant-facing programs and services in 2025. Additionally, TSHC will continue to leverage its current and future partnerships with the community and health sectors to respond to the remaining unmet programs and service priorities identified by tenants. TSHC will report on its service partnerships, including those detailed in this report, through its 2026 annual report.

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SIGNATURE

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REFERENCES

- i 2021.EX23.4. Implementing Tenants First: Creating a Seniors Housing Corporation.
- ii 2021.EX23.4. Implementing Tenants First: Creating a Seniors Housing Corporation.
- iii The Toronto Seniors Strategy, Towards an Age-Friendly City, 2013.
- iv Toronto Seniors Strategy 2.0, 2018.