

NEIGHBOURHOOD LEGAL SERVICES

December 2, 2009

Toronto Community Housing Corporation
Board of Directors
931 Yonge Street
Toronto, Ontario M4W 2H2

Dear Board Members:

I am writing this letter on behalf of the The Interclinic Public Housing Workgroup (IPHW) in support of TCHC's two new policies: "Promoting Successful Tenancies: When Tenants Become Vulnerable" and "The Mental Health Framework."

The IPHW is a group of Toronto legal clinic caseworkers, tenants and other community agencies that have been working on TCHC's Eviction Prevention Policy since its inception. I am a member of TCHC's Mental Health Steering Committee, a former member of TCHC's Mental Health Pilot Project Advisory Group (former CHU 13), and a member of ICPHWG.

On October 16, 2009, Mr. Brian Davis (TCHC's Social Inclusion Manager) attended our meeting and presented the draft protocol for vulnerable tenants. With the exception of a few minor recommendations, this impressive document was completely supported by all group members.

We applaud TCHC for taking important steps in the direction of keeping vulnerable tenants housed and fully endorse the strategies that are going forward.

We are guardedly optimistic and hope that these policies will go beyond what is written on paper. We urge TCHC's board of directors and senior management to ensure the implementation of these policies with a strong accountability mechanism attached to them. It is our hope that once these new policies have been implemented, that a tragedy like the death of Mr. Al Gosling will be preventable.

My colleagues and I want to work closely with TCHC's staff and tenants to promote successful tenancies and tenant's rights. We are willing to offer assistance in education, training and policy making.

Additionally, we want to find opportunities to work together to resolve situations with tenants and avoid taking matters to the Landlord and Tenant Board. This approach has been very successful with a number of legal clinics and TCHC staff in which very challenging cases were resolved. However, this is not a consistent practice across the city.

We are aware of the importance of public housing and that TCHC has the largest number of tenants with mental health challenges in the city. We recognize the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care's mental health and addictions strategy document "Every Door is The Right Door" failed to mention the important role of public housing. This is a disturbing omission given that stable housing is one of the most important social determinants of health. There is another group of community and legal clinic workers that will be providing submissions regarding this document.

We fully support TCHC's new direction and look forward to working closely with all of TCHC in this new partnership.

Yours sincerely,



Anita Barnes
Community Legal Worker
Neighbourhood Legal Services
416-861-0677 x 260