



Youth Tenant Elections - Update

Item 2
June 17, 2010
Tenant and Community Services
Committee

To: Tenant and Community
Services Committee

Report: TCSC:2010-02

From: Chief Executive Officer

Date: June 10, 2010

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PURPOSE:

To update the Tenant and Community Services Committee on youth tenant election results, as well as the next steps for youth councils.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Tenant and Community Services Committee receive this report for information.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION:

The Tenant Engagement System was established to enable and strengthen tenant participation in Toronto Community Housing governance. A key component of the System is the democratic election of tenant representatives to neighbourhood councils by their peers.

From April 8 – May 6, 2010, Toronto Community Housing held its inaugural, portfolio-wide, youth tenant elections. Youth representation is the third branch of the representative component of the Tenant Engagement System. The additional two branches are the family portfolio neighbourhood councils (Operating Units C to M) and the senior portfolio councils (Operating Units A and B), for which elections were held in 2009.

Election Results

Toronto's youth electorate (ages 18-24) has traditionally had a low percentage of voter turnout. During Toronto Community Housing's youth tenant elections, approximately 1700 tenant youth between the ages 14 and 28 cast their votes in 37 polls across the portfolio. This represented a 21% voter turnout for youth in Toronto Community Housing communities in comparison to 31% for tenant representative elections in the family and seniors portfolio and an overall voter turnout of 39% for the 2006 Municipal Election. In

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total, 175 youth tenant representatives received a new two-year mandate – 54 youth representatives were elected and 121 positions were filled by acclamation. Sixty-eight positions remain vacant across the portfolio.

Operating Unit	Elected Positions	Acclaimed Positions	Vacant Positions	Youth Council	Council positions filled	Youth (14-28) Population	% of Youth Population
C	5	16	4	25	84%	3082	13%
D	5	18	7	30	77%	3302	14%
E	2	21	9	32	72%	2320	10%
F	7	1	1	9	89%	1318	6%
G	3	12	3	18	83%	2683	12%
H	8	19	1	28	96%	3380	15%
I	3	11	5	19	74%	1725	7%
J	5	7	14	26	46%	1273	5%
K	0	11	13	24	46%	1270	5%
L	4	5	10	19	47%	1215	5%
M	12	0	1	13	92%	1671	7%
Total	54	121	68	243	72%	23239	

Elected through a democratic process, the 175 youth representatives are the largest elected body of youth in Toronto and will now represent Toronto Community Housing's 23,000 youth. The representatives will form youth councils in 11 Operating Units where they will have increased opportunities to influence decision-making in their communities. Youth councils will also engage youth to work with their peers, staff and local partners to identify challenges and create opportunities and solutions in their communities.

Staff and Tenant Engagement

There was significant engagement of tenants and staff throughout the process leading to the elections. Outreach and community engagement strategies included:

- community information meetings;
- all candidate meetings;
- distribution of promotional materials and flyers; and
- interactive community events.

Promotional materials were translated into various languages based on community need.

Pre-election training was delivered to staff responsible for supporting the election process in their communities. The focus of the training was on promotion and outreach as well as on management of all aspects of the election process, i.e., organization of orientation and all-candidate meetings. In addition, three training sessions were delivered to poll staff.

Almost 200 staff participated in the election and by-election process, staffing election polls as registrars, poll captains, and greeters. A hotline was established to respond to inquiries, manage issues and problem-solve. Mobile staff teams visited communities with large youth populations and were available throughout the process to assist staff with various aspects of the elections management process. Polls were open from 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Votes were counted and tallied publicly at the closing of the polls and results were posted in public areas immediately after the count.

Youth Council Executive

The youth council structure and process were largely derived from both the municipal electoral representative process and student body councils. All youth councils will have an Executive, i.e. a President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Public Relations Officer. Candidates for each position will be selected through a democratic process by youth representatives at the first meeting of each council.

Consultation Process

The youth representative elections were guided by the Youth Engagement Reference Committee (YERC) and the Tenant Engagement System structure approved by the Toronto Community Housing Board in November 2008. The Youth Engagement Reference Committee was comprised of youth from across the portfolio who had an interest in building a governance system that would provide a safe and stable structure for youth to advance community issues.

Post Elections Actions

On Saturday, May 8th a meet and greet was organized for all newly elected youth representatives, and was attended by approximately 100 youth. Elected officials (Councillors Anthony Perruzza and Adam Giambrone) addressed the group, as did the Chair of Toronto Community Housing's Board, David Mitchell.

Immediate next steps to develop Youth Councils will include:

- orientation of incumbents to tenant representative responsibilities;
- establishment of council executives; and
- connection of youth representatives to activities in Toronto Community Housing communities (i.e. Reclaiming Outdoor Space, Summer Safety, youth programs).

To support youth in maintaining leadership roles within their communities, staff will focus on partnering with agencies to develop and implement training modules for the youth councils.

In the longer-term, Toronto Community Housing will focus on creating mentoring opportunities for youth and increasing youth partnership in corporate initiatives (e.g. planning of the tenant forum, membership on the Tenant Engagement Reference Committee and various tenant /staff workgroups)

Participation at this level will help support collaboration between seniors and family portfolio tenant representatives and youth representatives. In communities, this relationship will begin to develop as the youth and seniors and family portfolio tenant representatives begin to jointly plan and host community events and building / cafe meetings. Tenant representatives, youth representatives, tenant leaders, Youth Engagement Coordinators (YECs) and Health Promotion Officers (HPOs) will be integral in the bridging of these roles.

Distribution of Youth Representative Positions

The distribution of representative positions for the 2010 youth elections process was based on the family and senior's portfolio formula of 1 position for every 250 units. However, the ratio of youth population to unit density is not equal. Youth elections are a population-based activity while the general elected representative system in Toronto Community Housing is unit-based. This provides a unique insight into the operationalization of the Tenant Engagement System and provides a discussion point in the merits of any unit-based versus population-based representation. Moving forward, staff will work with tenants to evaluate the need for each of the vacant positions and identify areas that require more representation due to the youth population.

Communications

A communication from Youth Engagement Coordinators has been sent to all new youth tenant representatives to welcome and invite them to participate in a meet-and-greet. An orientation binder will be distributed to all youth tenant representatives before their first council meetings.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS:

The estimated budget for the youth councils and their formation has been included in the 2010 operating budget.

Keiko Nakamura
Chief Executive Officer

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Staff Steve Floros..... 416-981-4355
Contacts: A/Chief Operating Officer steve.floros@torontohousing.ca

Rajesh Kanhai..... 416-981-4093
Manager, Community Engagement rajesh.kanhai@torontohousing.ca