



Toronto
Community
Housing

Tenant Complaint Process

As part of a commitment to delivering quality services to tenants, TCHC will implement a transparent, accessible tenant complaint process..

INTRODUCTION

Toronto Community Housing (TCHC) expects that in the normal course of business, there will be occasions where tenants do not feel that they have received adequate services, or that there are other issues that should be further addressed by TCHC. These circumstances are to be expected in a service delivery business. TCHC will endeavour to meet and exceed the standards of service delivery, and to respond to tenants promptly where concerns have been raised.

The tenant complaint process is not intended to replace the normal interactions that will occur between tenants and staff, and is not intended to be used prior to an issue first being raised with local staff responsible for the particular area. This means for example, that when a tenant has a request for maintenance that this request is addressed to the building or office staff in the local community office. If the maintenance request is not resolved within a reasonable amount of time, or the request has been rejected, the tenant should address this locally with the staff person. If there is no resolution and the tenant feels this is an unreasonable response on the part of TCHC staff, the complaint would then be directed to the Community Manager.

The Community Manager is responsible and accountable for ensuring the physical repair of buildings, the health of their communities and the achievement of specific performance expectations. The Community Manager also has the authority and ability to decide the best solution for each circumstance. If the tenant feels that the decision of the Community Manager is an unreasonable response on the part of TCHC, they can appeal that decision to a senior TCHC manager, as per the process outlined below.

As TCHC moves to implement greater levels of independent governance of business operating units, this complaint process will be reviewed and adjusted. It is likely that modifications will be required over time to ensure the tenant complaint process is relevant in a changing governance and management environment.

PURPOSE

TCHC expects that in the course of delivering services to tenants there will be complaints made about these services or about the manner in which the services were delivered. TCHC is committed to establishing processes to ensure these complaints are heard, the facts of the complaint established, and where required, that remedial actions are undertaken.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the tenant complaint process are to:

- provide a simple process which is accessible to all;
- provide a method for resolution of complaints about TCHC services, harassment, or perceived inequity of treatment of tenants by TCHC;
- provide a mechanism for review of management decisions that tenants do not feel are reasonable, as per requirements of the *Social Housing Reform Act, 2000*;
- recognize the objectives of the Shareholder Direction and the Property Standards Protocol for TCHC Owned Buildings;
- ensure that all complaints are resolved in a timely fashion;
- track and resolve complaints;
- use the resolution of complaints as learning in the development of future policies and practices; and,
- create a process that supports the normal management structures of TCHC and respects the authority and accountability of TCHC front-line managers.

DEFINITIONS

Defining a tenant complaint is not difficult. Any event or action that leads to tenant dissatisfaction is the basis for complaints. More complicated, is defining when a routine matter becomes a complaint for the purposes of the tenant complaint process. For the purposes of this process, complaints are generally defined as:

- requests for maintenance to which TCHC staff has not responded in a timely fashion (within standards set by TCHC);
- actions on tenancy-related matters to which TCHC staff has not responded in a timely fashion (within standards set by TCHC); and,
- events and/or issues that may be an infringement of tenant rights under legislation or TCHC policies governing the conduct of staff and tenant representatives, human rights and harassment.

APPLICATION OF THIS PROCESS

The tenant complaint process applies to all TCHC tenants. This process applies to communities managed directly by TCHC, as well as communities managed by contracted property managers. TCHC will ensure that the principles and practices of this process are followed where TCHC uses third party services to provide housing services to communities.

In addition, for the purpose of this process, “Community Manager” refers to managers of TCHC directly managed, and communities where property management services are contracted.

In all cases, however, tenants should seek to resolve issues with their local managers first. Only when all attempts to resolve issues locally are exhausted should these tenants seek remedies as outlined in this process.

PRINCIPLES

The Tenant Complaint Process has been developed based on these principles:

- TCHC is responsible for ensuring that tenants have the ability to raise a complaint through an open and accessible process and to have it addressed in a timely manner.
- Tenants have the right to quality property management services in a discrimination-free environment.
- Staff at the local level, building and/or community office, should have the opportunity to address a complaint about a service/decision they have applied.
- Community Managers are accountable for their community and the decisions made within their community, and as such, are entitled to an opportunity to resolve or address the situation.
- Tenants have the right to appeal a decision made by the Community Manager.
- Tenants have the right to timely resolution of their complaint/appeal.
- Tenants and staff will be informed of the process and the outcome of the complaint/appeal.
- Complaints and complaint resolution will be tracked and reported on, in line with other performance measures for the organization.
- A communication and education program will be implemented to ensure that all tenants and all staff are informed of their rights and responsibilities under this process.

IMPLEMENTATION

- TCHC will implement a standard issue tracking system for use by all staff by the second quarter of 2003. All staff, upon receipt and resolution of a complaint or appeal, will use the issue tracking system.
- TCHC will introduce a tenant inquiry complaint line for receipt of complaints by the first quarter of 2003.
- Training and education for all staff will take place by the end of the fourth quarter of 2002.
- Quarterly review of complaints and resolution will be included in performance reporting to the Board.
- Ongoing monitoring on follow-up of complaints and analysis will be used to identify training and communication opportunities.
- Resolution of complaints will be used as learning in the development of future policies and practices.

PROCESS REVIEW

The tenant complaint process will be reviewed within 18 months from implementation to determine if outcomes are being achieved. The review will include the feedback of tenants and staff.

TENANT COMPLAINT PROCESS

Service Delivery Issues

1. Tenant informs Community Unit staff of the specific complaint. The complaint may be made either in person at the building or community office, by telephone to the community office, or through a dedicated tenant inquiry line.
2. Community Unit or tenant inquiry line staff will record the complaint on a database and will inform the Community Manager within one day of receiving the complaint.
3. In the event a complaint cannot be satisfactorily resolved by the Community Manager, the tenant can address the matter to the designated senior manager. (At the time of implementation of this process, a senior manager will be designated.)
4. In the event a complaint cannot be satisfactorily resolved by the designated senior manager, the tenant can address the matter to the Chief Executive Officer.
5. Staff responsible for responding to the complaint will respond within 10 working days of receipt. In the event the complaint cannot be resolved, staff will inform the tenant of the anticipated time it will take to resolve the complaint. In all cases, the tenant will be informed of the outcome within 10 working days of the decision being made.

Note: *A tenant may refer a complaint regarding a property standards issue that has been raised with TCHC and not addressed to the Municipal Licensing and Standards Division. This also applies if there is a situation where TCHC has not responded to a complaint related to property standards within 30 days. Tenants have that right under the City's Property Standards Protocol for TCHC owned Buildings which is consistent with what applies to all landlords and tenants in the City of Toronto.*

Service Delivery Issues related directly to a Community Manager

1. Complaints about service delivery issues related directly to a Community Manager can be filed with the tenant inquiry line.
2. Tenant inquiry line staff will forward this complaint, within one day, to the designated senior manager. (At the time of implementation of this process, a senior manager will be designated).

Human Rights or Harassment Complaints that involve a Community Manager

1. Where a tenant has a complaint related to human rights or harassment that involves a Community Manager, this complaint can be made using the tenant inquiry line or directly to the office of the Chief Executive Officer.
2. Where the tenant inquiry line has received a complaint that relates to harassment or infringement of human rights, tenant inquiry line staff would forward this complaint, within one day, to the Office of the Chief Executive Officer.
3. The Chief Executive Officer will respond to the tenant complaint within 10 working days of receiving the complaint.

Approved by TCHC Board of Directors (September 30, 2002)