2017 Tenant Conference: Questions & Answers

Toronto Community Housing hosted the 2017 Tenant Conference on December 2, 2017. At the conference, tenants were encouraged to write questions on cue cards for members of our senior leadership team.

As promised, the questions that could not be answered at the conference have been answered here.

The questions are organized by the following topics:

- Asset Management
- Program Services
- Safety and Security
- Economic Development
- Corporate Governance/Management
- Engagement
- Access and Support
- Tenant Conference

If you have any questions, please contact Samira.Rehman@torontohousing.ca

**Asset Management**

**Why are some of the buildings managed by private management?**
Private management helps Toronto Community Housing to lower our overall costs. Toronto Community Housing strengthened the contracts in 2017 by adding more performance targets specifically related to customer service, maintenance and cleaning and budget achievements.

**Why is the overall condition inside of most buildings not good?**
Over the years, our buildings have been worn down and have aged. Due to underfunding, we were not been able to do all the repairs needed within a reasonable time.
Recently, building conditions have begun to improve due to the amount of capital investment we’ve received over the past three years and will continue to improve. The rate at which breakdowns and service disruptions occur are already showing a decline.

Cleaning standards and investment in cleaning staff are helping to improve building cleanliness. The development of repair standards for Superintendents and more aggressive vendor management will improve how repairs are done.

The challenge ahead is to maintain the buildings once all the capital repairs are done. We hope that the funding from the federal government’s National Housing Strategy and other sources will help us do this.

Supporting vulnerable tenants will also help address building issues in communities.

If you have concerns with the condition or maintenance of your building, please contact the Client Care Centre at 416-981-5500 or by email at help@torontohousing.ca.

Can contractors or repair people (who come from outside) cover their shoes before they enter the house/unit?
Yes. As we improve our vendor lists during 2018, we will make sure this is a requirement. If they don't comply, please report it to the Client Care Centre at 416-981-5500 so that we can take the steps to hold them accountable.

There are cell towers installed on TCHC property. Do we get money for having these? Where does this money go?
We do receive income from the cell towers installed on the properties. The money is used to directly support service to tenants and building repair needs.

What is TCHC doing to get rid of roaches and mice? And how often should TCHC follow up with tenants about this issue?
TCHC has a strong integrated pest management program that works to address all pests, including roaches and mice. The program includes audits to assess the types of pests and level of infestation in each building. The treatment plans are based on these audits.

There is a High Needs Building program that, on an annual basis, oversees the delivery of full building treatments. The program includes tenant education on how to prevent pest infestations. We also have a demand treatment program that responds to tenants when they report pest issues in their unit.

If you have a pest issue, contact the Client Care Centre at 416-981-5500.

Why does it take so long to get a repair done? How long should it take?
Our service target is to complete routine repairs within five business days. However, major repairs often need more time based on their complexity or the availability of a vendor to perform the work.

We recognize that some of our vendors are not consistently meeting service level targets. This is largely because we do not have enough of them on our roster compared with the volume of repairs. To fix that, we are refreshing our vendor lists to have access to the right number of vendors who can do quality work. The contracts will clearly specify the expected service levels, quality of workmanship and standards for customer service.

How do we notify TCHC of people living in our buildings illegally?
If you feel comfortable doing so, you can report your concerns directly to us by calling 416-981-5500. Toronto Community Housing also has an independent reporting service, SECURaLINE, where you can report concerns about fraud or waste anonymously. There is no call display and the website allows you to submit a report without giving your personal information. You can use this secure service 24 hours a day, seven days a week, in your preferred language.
We appreciate your help with preventing fraud and waste, which can take many forms. Here are some examples:

- Underreporting income, assets or additional household occupants
- Subletting a portion or an entire unit (e.g., Airbnb)
- Submitting false information on documents
- Theft or misuse of Toronto Community Housing assets

Contact SECURaLINE by calling 1-877-993-6744 or visit www.tnwgrc.com/torontocommunityhousing/

Many workers who enter do not complete a thorough job. How do we ensure that they complete the job they were commissioned to do? How can we raise accountability to ensure quality service? Please tell us if you feel work is incomplete or not of good quality. This can be done by calling your operating unit office or the Client Care Centre 416-981-5500.

We track all maintenance work and have the capability to track when tenant reports that work is incomplete or done poorly. These statistics help us evaluate vendors and are key in us taking steps to hold them accountable.

Why do we not have internet access included in our tenancy? It has been our experience that tenants want to be able to choose their own internet service providers. These services often come bundled with TV and phone services.

TCHC does have a program with Rogers which tenants can choose to join. It’s called Connected for Success. If you qualify for the Connected for Success program, you can get the Rogers Connected for Success Internet plan for $9.99 a month plus tax.

Call 1-866-689-0758 today to see if you qualify or visit our website or the Connected for Success website for more information.

Is it possible to have better businesses, pop-up shops, recreation spaces and playgrounds on site?
This requires more discussion, as we rely on tenants to engage with us on what services and use-of-space options are best in each community. We will look at having Tenant Councils discuss these opportunities.

As well, through the refresh of our tenant engagement system, we want to provide more tenants with opportunities to be involved in local decision-making that affects their communities. You’ll be hearing more about this in 2018.

**When will you start to think about building new buildings to replace the ever growing list of aging buildings?**

Through our Revitalization program, we demolish aging buildings and replace them with new buildings.

Revitalization is creating vibrant communities with increased opportunities. It attracts investment in the form of new or improved amenities like schools, parks and community facilities. It also provides job and training opportunities for residents and creates opportunities for affordable home ownership.

Throughout the planning process for Revitalization, we involve and engage residents to give them a real say on decisions that affect their lives.

One of the most important factors TCHC considers when determining whether a community is appropriate for revitalization is if there is adequate physical space to allow for replacement buildings plus new market buildings to be built.

The newly constructed units replace the units demolished on a one-for-one basis for all the rent-geared-to-income units. There are no new rent-geared-to-income units created because there is no new funding to pay for subsidies. In some Revitalization communities, TCHC has received funding to build new affordable rental units (in addition to the RGI replacement units) which are rented out at 80 per cent of average market rent for the city.
What does TCHC intend to do to stop the fear among seniors who are now experiencing an infiltration of families in previously seniors only buildings?
There is a major need in Toronto for social housing. While there are some buildings that have typically been mostly seniors, families, like everyone else, have the right to safe, affordable, well-maintained homes.

We will not turn away anyone seeking housing because of age or family composition. If we have a unit available that meets a prospective, eligible tenants’ needs, we will provide that.

We are also investing to improve tenant safety and security. We are adding more special constables and supervisors to the Community Safety Unit, and continuing to add and upgrade security cameras in our communities.

If any tenant feels unsafe for any reason, we encourage them to call the Community Safety Unit at 416-921-2323. In an emergency always call 911.

If housing is deemed a "right,” what do you do with hard to handle tenants when support services are stretched thin?
As a social housing provider, we recognize the responsibility to support tenants in maintaining successful tenancies.

We are growing our relationships with the provincial Local Health Integration Networks (LHIN), community-based social support agencies and the City of Toronto’s various social support divisions to broaden tenants’ access to resources. We are also working to improve our staff collaboration to support vulnerable tenants.

Why is it that some buildings pay Hydro and some don't?
All tenants pay hydro but depending on the way the building was built (metered versus non-metered units), tenants are charged for hydro differently. Some get billed directly for hydro, some have it included in their rent.
Can we place more solar panels on our buildings?
Not at this time. While we would like to pursue greener sources of energy that can reduce both costs and greenhouse gas emissions, financially solar panels are not cost-justified so we would not be looking to add more.

What year should the housing repair backlog be current?
Assuming we receive funding as per the revised 10-year building repair capital plan that was submitted to the City, by the end of 2026 we would have achieved our goal of acceptable conditions for units and buildings.

Can bike storage rooms be built for our buildings?
While we have bike rooms in many buildings, they are not an immediate priority compared with needed capital repairs to elevators, structural components and mechanical upgrades. We can look into bike storage on as-per-request basis if the need is brought forth through tenant engagement.
How do I obtain a transfer to another TCHC building?
To apply for a non-priority transfer, you will need to complete a Transfer Request form and choose (using the TCHC Transfer Maps) which addresses you want to transfer to. The Transfer Request form and TCHC Transfer Maps are available by:
- visiting our website
- calling the Client Care Centre and requesting the forms by mail
- visiting an Operating Unit office

Once you have completed your application package, please return it to your Operating Unit office. The Tenant Services Coordinator will review the request and advise you if more information is needed or if the request is approved. Once your request has been approved, your household is added to the Internal Transfer Waiting list. Please note, if a household has arrears, they will not be added to the Internal Transfer Waiting list. The household must have a zero balance at the time of the request.

Can we have a doctor to evaluate the medical priority list? The lay non-practitioner does not qualify to evaluate the need for priority transfers.
TCHC’s Transfer Policy and priority transfer process is being updated in 2018, to respond to the recommendations made by the Toronto Ombudsman through the review of the process that was commenced in April 2016.

TCHC announced that it will work in partnership with tenants, the City of Toronto and other stakeholders to establish a new Crisis priority transfer category and process by June 30, 2018, as recommended by the Ombudsman. The new Crisis category will have clearly defined and narrow criteria to enable TCHC to identify where a transfer is urgently needed because of a direct, immediate and acute risk to the health or safety of a member of the household.
The Crisis priority category would rank second, below the current top category of Special Priority (used to relocate victims of abuse in their home) and above the current second priority, Overhoused, which would become the third priority. Medical and Safety at Risk transfers are the fourth-ranked priority in the current system. This category will be discontinued, once the new Crisis priority category is established.

TCHC will consult with the City of Toronto, tenants, outside agencies and other stakeholders to clearly define the eligibility criteria and rules of procedure for the Crisis category.

How do you decide who can move into housing?
Toronto Community Housing does not decide who moves into one of our units.

The City of Toronto’s Housing Connections manages the centralized waiting list for subsidized housing in the City of Toronto. They support applicants through the process of applying for and waiting for subsidized housing. Toronto Community Housing accesses the centralized waiting list to match applicants with units available. To be offered a TCHC unit, the applicant has to fulfill eligibility criteria as set in the Housing Services Act and local rules as set by the City of Toronto.

In addition to assessing eligibility for subsidized housing, Housing Connections supports households on the waiting list by making referrals to other services and supports to help address immediate housing needs.

Why are some couples allowed to live in bachelor units while single tenants live in one bedroom units?
Bachelor units are usually given to single persons; however, a two-person family is eligible for a bachelor unit, if the applicant requests it. (A two-person family consists of either two spouses or a parent and child).

What is the process for transitioning from Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) to Old Age Pension (OAP)?
This is a change in income and you are responsible for applying for OA. ODSP staff may help you apply for OA. Rent-geared-to-income, tenants must report and provide documents of any increase or change in income within 30 calendar days of the change.

**Safety/Security**

How will you ensure that Toronto Police are not overly criminalizing but cooperating with the community in a positive light? The safety and wellbeing of our tenants is top priority. Toronto Community Housing and the Toronto Police Service work closely together to help keep our communities safe, support the development of our youth and foster community engagement (e.g., bicycle bell program, Moss Park Summer BBQ, etc.). While police officers have the responsibility to enforce the law, they also have a commitment to work with communities.

We currently have issues with 1. Patrolling stairwells, 2. People sleeping in them and 3. People pulling fire alarms. How can you make security more active to catch this? The Community Safety Unit operates within 17 community patrol zones across the city with dedicated officers assigned to each zone. In addition to responding to dispatched calls and carrying out patrols, officers are assigned to attend at and patrol buildings in a consistent manner. By working together we can help solve these issues. Please call the Community Safety Unit at 416-921-2323 to report any safety concerns.

Do the police have access to our buildings? The Toronto Police Service has the authority to attend our buildings unassisted and, as needed, our building staff or Community Safety Unit officers can also provide them with access. In many cases, the Community Safety Unit conducts joint patrols with the Toronto Police Service.

Why doesn't the first responder have access to our building code? First responders typically include police, the fire department and ambulance. The fire department and most front-line police have access to all our buildings. TCHC is currently working with Toronto Paramedic
Services to determine if they are having challenges accessing our buildings. If it is determined that a challenge exists, we will take reasonable steps to implement a solution in a timely manner.

**The security in housing is not good. How are you going to fix this?**
The safety and security of our tenants is top priority. Recognizing that the security needs of communities are complex and each community has different needs, we are committed to refining our services and practices accordingly.

To this end, the Community Safety Unit has been evaluating the safety and security needs of priority communities and implementing a redeployment model that included the introduction of an afternoon shift during peak periods of service requests. Community Safety Unit officers are assigned to specific communities. TCHC is recruiting more officers to the Community Safety Unit and installing cameras in many communities to help deter anti-social behaviour and crime.

**How can we get other tenants to stop letting other people in our buildings?**
It is important to encourage neighbours not to feel pressured into opening their door to strangers. Be aware of your surroundings so that people cannot try to “double enter” behind you. If you do not know if someone belongs in the building, do not let them in. People who live in a building or are invited will always be able to gain access on their own. If someone is persistent about entering, do not risk your safety: call the Community Safety Unit at **416-921-2323** right away.

**Most of us live in fear in our communities with all the gun violence. What are you doing to help keep our communities safe?**
In addition to patrol initiatives, education and awareness is extremely important. Through community involvement and cooperation, law enforcement and security agencies can be more efficient and better prepared to deal with these challenges. Community members are encouraged to call us at **416-921-2323** regarding criminal activity. The Community Safety Unit also works in partnership with Crime Stoppers Toronto. You can make an anonymous report by calling **416-222-8477**. In an emergency, always call **911**.
Community engagement builds strong relationships and leads to reduced criminal behaviour.

What is TCHC doing about the vandalism of some buildings that tenants cause?
Tenants can play a critical role by reporting vandalism when it happens. Report vandalism by calling the Community Safety Unit at 416-921-2323. The Community Safety Unit will follow up on reports and investigate. Criminal activity by a tenant will result in tenancy management on a case-by-case basis and, in some cases, may lead to an eviction. Where appropriate, criminal charges may be laid.

Can tenants request security camera footage be reviewed if there is a security issue?
Yes. Tenants can request to have the Community Safety Unit review the security camera footage. The Community Safety Unit will review the video for the security concern and determine appropriate action. Keep in mind that video footage is kept for a short period of time, so report issues as soon as they happen.

Are the constables being hired going through anti-racism, mental health, first aid and cultural competency training?
Yes, all new special constables receive this training during their orientation. They also receive updated training annually through the mandatory training program.

How can we get security to stay at our buildings during the evening and on weekends?
The distribution of security resources is based on available information, including safety audits by the Community Safety Advisors. Security resources include both special constables and contract security guards. If you believe there is a problem in your building, a need for security or to increase it, please contact the Community Safety Unit at 416-921-2323 so that a Community Safety Advisor can review the situation and make recommendations.
How can we improve security and safety in our communities?
By participating. When you see illegal activity, loitering, parking issues or have noise complaints or other experience other disturbances, call the Community Safety Unit at 416-921-2323. For life-threatening situations call 911, then place a call to the Community Safety Unit if possible. You can also help to make our communities safer by participating in tenant meetings or safety councils with the Community Safety Advisor and providing feedback. Safety and security is a shared responsibility.

Is there any plan to privatize security at TCHC?
Not at this time.

How can I be connected with the Toronto Police Service to help them deal with drug dealers in the community?
Non-emergency police matters can be reported by calling the Toronto Police Service at 416-808-2222. Specific contact information can be found on the Toronto Police service website www.torontopolice.on.ca. Reports of criminal activity received by the Community Safety Unit are submitted to the Toronto Police Service.

People can anonymously report crime to Crime Stoppers at 416-222-8477.

How do we hold parents responsible for their children’s actions?
Toronto Community Housing cannot control how tenants parent their children. If you witness it or are a victim of anti-social behaviour, please contact the Community Safety Unit at 416-921-2323.
Economic Development

I am currently a new graduate in our TCHC internship program. What are you doing to invest in my future as a TCHC resident? Toronto Community Housing is committed to investing in safe, well-maintained homes for you to live in and enjoy.

Another way we are investing in you is through our internship program. We have worked to identify training opportunities that will increase skills, knowledge and expand your networks. Through our internship program, we have been able to help youth find placement in their field of study. This is just a start but we continue to strive toward making sure there are more professional opportunities for you.

We have other opportunities at TCHC, such as YouthWorx and Journeys to Success, which help to build skills, knowledge and networks.

We have also invested in a variety of scholarship opportunities to help you further your education and reach your future goals.

We continue to explore partnerships with local agencies, organizations and employers in a variety of industries to increase access to employment opportunities for all tenants.

What specific opportunities have you developed to help connect new graduates from TCHC communities to opportunities at TCHC? While we have programming opportunities for various age ranges, our internship program is one of the biggest opportunities we offer students and new graduates living in TCHC communities. Each year on average, we’ve hired at least 12 tenants into the internship program, and at least two interns have been hired into full-time positions each year. We have helped many others find placement in their chosen field of study. We have learned that we need to place a stronger emphasis on youth at TCHC, the future leaders of tomorrow.

We started by organizing a Youth Strategy workshop at the 2017 Tenant Conference which has given us a solid foundation to build on. We received incredible feedback from tenants about how to engage youth and create new opportunities for them, not only at TCHC but in their
chosen field of study/interest. Your feedback is invaluable and we will continue to work closely with you to identify and build more development opportunities.

**Why doesn't TCHC hire residents or former residents for more permanent positions with the company?**
TCHC is committed to having fair and transparent hiring practices. We strive to do our best to select the most qualified candidate in all areas of the job. Knowledge about the organization, gained from a tenant’s perspective, is considered a valuable asset during the hiring process. We encourage all tenants who are interested in working at TCHC to apply for opportunities which become available.

We are proud to acknowledge that many people who are permanent employees at TCHC, such as Tenant Service Coordinators, Community Service Coordinators, Superintendents, and some of our senior management, are or once were tenants of Toronto Community Housing.

Through our economic development programs, we are working toward increasing tenant employment opportunities throughout the city. For specific employment supports, please contact our economic development team at **416-981-6300**.

**The construction companies at Regent Park do not care about tenants who are looking for a job. How can we solve this?**
We trust construction companies to help us provide safe, affordable homes. Many of these companies also offer employment opportunities. If you need assistance with your application or would like guidance for the interview process, contact your Tenant Services Coordinator. They will connect you to the right supports and training opportunities.

**Can TCHC provide more scholarships?**
Toronto Community Housing is committed to increasing our fundraising so we can increase the number of scholarships and amount of money awarded to students every year. We are always looking for new donors to create new scholarships or to increase the funding for existing scholarships. In fact, right now we are recruiting notable Torontonians to approach prospective donors.
- Since 2001, TCHC’s Investing In Our Diversity (IIOD) scholarship program has provided almost $1 million to more than 350 students
- In 2017, IIOD and our new partnership with the Ted Rogers Scholarship, resulted in 76 scholarships, with an additional 20 through our revitalization sites, for a total of 96, our highest number to date

Most recently, TCHC’s President and CEO Kathy Milsom launched a new scholarship for a student admitted full-time in the Faculty of Applied Science & Engineering at the University of Toronto. The student will be selected based on residency in Toronto Community Housing and financial need. Academic merit will also be considered.

We remain committed to increasing access to postsecondary education for tenants and will continue to work toward providing as many scholarship opportunities as possible. If you want more information about scholarship opportunities, contact Vanessa Solorzano at 647-461-1065 or vanessa.solorzano@torontohousing.ca

**Corporate Governance/Management**

**When is social housing going back to the federal or provincial government?**
There are no plans for Toronto Community Housing to be run by the federal or provincial government.

**It seems that poor maintenance drives much of the engagement need and capacity. It also seems that HSI is run with almost criminal negligence. Is real change practical?**
We believe real change is not only practical but necessary.

Providing safe, well-maintained homes is Toronto Community Housing’s mandate and we value the input tenants offer to help guide our decision-making. While lots of engagement opportunities provided in collaboration with tenants focus on how to improve communities, there are many community leaders and tenant representatives who work hard to create
other types of engagement opportunities such as games night, movie night, knitting club, etc.

Housing Services Inc. (HSI) ceased to operate in 2013. Facilities Management Division now delivers these functions, and it strives for value for money, efficiency and cost effectiveness in all that it does.

**The senior managers seem to be identifying similar problems and solutions as many of them before did. Are they aware of this? Do they understand why this is so?**

Managers, along with all staff, try to identify and solve problems as quickly and efficiently as possible. Solutions sometimes need to evolve as the times and circumstances change. This is when we revisit a problem and find improved ways of resolving it. Staff are aware that some issues are systemic, that there are no quick fixes and that the needs of each community must be considered uniquely.

**What are the goals to ensure that the TCHC staff (especially unionized workers) are following the charter as expected?**

The Tenant Charter is a pillar of our organization. It is built on our company values and policies in collaboration with tenants. We are working to provide clarity of expectations to our staff and support them in their efforts to be more tenant-centric and responsive.

We are also implementing performance indicators and expanding the Closing the Loop project (which gathers feedback from tenants about timeliness and quality of repairs) across the portfolio. Through Closing the Loop, we follow up with tenants about service they’ve received to ensure it was done properly and in accordance with the values in the Tenant Charter. If not, there is an investigation process to figure out why and a promise to get the work done right.

By following a complaints process, tenants can have their issues acknowledged and addressed in a timely manner. We expect employees and tenants alike to adhere to the value of respect, integrity, accountability and community collaboration.
"Chief" is a word associated with the brothers/sisters of Indigenous of Canada. Any plans on changing the wording at TCHC?

Toronto Community Housing is committed to providing an inclusive living environment free of discrimination and harassment. Being more responsible in the way we operate as a social housing provider includes making sure we are aware of sensitive issues.

While there are no immediate plans to change the wording, we always seek to be sensitive in how we communicate.

What changes are in store for TCHC now that the Federal Government has announced a housing policy?

The federal government announced a National Housing Strategy in November 2017 at our Lawrence Heights revitalization site. We hope that the National Housing Strategy will provide funding to both improve the quality of homes for our tenants and increase the housing stock.

Why is it that when we build relationships with staff they get moved?

As much as we value the relationships members of our team build in the communities within which they work, we also support career advancement. This can require team members to move to new locations.

There are so many departments in TCHC. Can we get an organizational development chart? Including who reports to who?

We are working on having this available on our website. If you need to reach a specific person at TCHC, you can always call our office services team at 416-981-6014 or the Client Care Centre at 416-981-5500 or visit www.torontohousing.ca/Contacttchc

Can all tenants be allowed to vote on tenant positions on TCHC Board of Directors instead of just tenant representatives?

City Council has approved an interim process for selecting tenant board members for the next two-year term. The process has been underway since February 5. (Read the next question for details.)

How do residents apply for a Board of Directors position? What are the deadlines for this?
City Council has approved an interim process for selecting tenant board members for the next two-year term. The process has been underway since February 5 and applications will be received until March 4, 2018.

The process mirrors the process used to select the citizen board members. Interested tenants are encouraged to apply to the City to become a board member, and the City will review all applications through its Public Appointments process. There will be an interview process through which two tenants will be selected; their names will be put forward for City Council approval.

**How will you ensure that all tenants have a say in how TCHC operates and what is delivered?**
We have committed to refresh our tenant engagement process. The ideas and feedback you gave us at the 2017 Tenant Conference will also help us to move forward using a more tenant-centric approach that seeks tenant input and involvement along the way.

**Is TCHC sending buildings to the City of Toronto? If so, which ones?**
One of the recommendations in the Tenants First report is to transfer ownership and operation of Toronto Community Housing Corporation's agency houses, rooming houses and certain single-family homes to qualified non-profit housing operators with expertise in providing vulnerable tenants with the supports they need for successful tenancies. There is also a recommendation to transfer TCHC’s seniors buildings to an entity more closely aligned with the City. Toronto City Council will make a decision on this proposal in 2018.

[you can read the full report here](#).

**Why does TCHC not privatize security? Private security is $15, TCHC pays $90.**
There are no plans to change the security model, which includes a mix of Community Safety Unit special constables and private third-party security. Our Special Constables have levels of training and expertise that are of considerable value in working to enhance the safety and
security of our buildings, and have established relationships with Toronto Police that are also of benefit to the safety and security of our tenants.

**Can tenants be given a chance to vote on the "break up" of the TCHC senior portfolio?**
Decisions to transform TCHC will be made by City Council through the City's process of implementing the recommendations of the Tenants First report, which includes, consultation with the Tenants First Advisory panel.

**Social housing often receives a negative reception from politicians because of direct subsidiary. How do we deal with it and how can we attract great talent to work for TCHC?**
We believe that all three levels of government recognize the importance of social housing and the need to provide adequate funding. We have seen evidence of this, through the City of Toronto’s and the Province of Ontario’s contributions to our capital renewal program, and the federal government’s housing strategy commitment.

We are committed to offering challenging and rewarding work for employees, and are striving to make TCHC a terrific place to work. We have a number of initiatives underway to achieve this goal.

**Is it the goal of TCHC to help a person move out of long term housing at TCHC?**
Toronto Community Housing’s mission is to provide, clean, safe, well-maintained homes to people with low to moderate incomes.

Being a social housing provider means we have to do more. That means providing supports, connecting tenants to services and building capacity for growth so that tenants can move out of TCHC if they choose to do so.
Questions to Kathy Milsom

Kathy, are you going to visit all our communities? We really appreciate an active and involved CEO.
“I try to spend as much time in our communities as possible. Meeting with you, listening to your concerns and ideas on how we can improve our buildings, helps me to understand the areas of greatest concern, and helps me make informed decisions with respect to priorities. I am grateful to everyone who has reached out to me to share their thoughts and ideas. I will continue to visit as many communities as I possibly can over the coming months.” – Kathy Milsom

Kathy, are you going to visit all our tenant councils?
“As noted above, hearing tenants’ views, concerns and suggestions has been of great benefit to me, and I look forward to continued opportunities for getting such input. In the five months since my arrival, I have made it a priority to meet with as many tenants as possible, to hear what you think is working, what isn’t and what we need to do better.” – Kathy Milsom

Kathy, what will your top three priorities be for the year?
“My priorities are those that our tenants have told us are their priorities: Tenant safety, particularly fire safety, is top priority. We are accelerating our enhanced fire safety program in partnership with Toronto Fire Services to make our buildings as safe as possible.

Invest in our buildings to improve the cleanliness, safety, security, and condition of homes for our tenants. We’re also working to be more responsive to our tenants’ needs.

If I might, I would like to add an overarching priority that I consider essential to deliver on the above three priorities: to create a work environment that is conducive to high levels of employee engagement, motivation and morale, where our employees are supported and recognized for their contributions.” – Kathy Milsom
Kathy, what is your goal? What would you like to achieve? How can we help you?
“My goal is to provide tenants with the comfortable, clean, well-maintained homes they deserve and responsive services meeting their needs. By extension, I would like TCHC to be an organization the entire city can be proud of.

You can help by continuing to offer your input and feedback, and working with your neighbours to help us create vibrant, safe and secure communities.” – Kathy Milsom

Engagement

What is the plan to change the tenant representative system?
We’re going through a tenant engagement refresh in consultation with the City to strengthen our collaboration with tenants. We will consult with you regarding the proposed changes.

What is the purpose of a tenant representative?
We look to the elected tenant representatives to be advocates for their community, and to provide us with feedback about issues and concerns in their building.

What is TCHC doing to get more male staff and volunteers?
Toronto Community Housing deeply values tenant engagement and does not discriminate against anyone who is looking for an opportunity to be engaged. We look to recruit the right person for a given job/volunteer position. We recognize that in some areas of the portfolio, we need to proactively encourage broader-based participation.

How can the tenant representative system be reformed so there is trust and transparency?
One of the challenges is that right now we have both tenant representatives and tenant leaders. In some communities, tenant leaders have the ability to be at the discussion tables and participate, but in other communities they are unable to participate because those tables are made up of tenant representatives only. We are looking to create a
system where everyone is equally able to participate and tenants’ interests are most broadly represented.

**What happened to the “foundation program” at Regent Park?**
The Regent Park Foundation Program is on hold while we work with the City to review the eligibility criteria of the program with respect to the price of new housing. For more information contact Jed Kilbourn at 416-981-4047 or email Jed.Kilbourn@torontohousing.ca.

**How come I did not get a tenant satisfaction survey?**
The tenant satisfaction survey was conducted by a third-party. The survey was based on a random sample of our tenant population. Households were chosen randomly, which means they were not chosen because of any characteristic or requirement, and the random selection meant everyone was just as likely to be chosen.

**How do we get more positive groups to come and support our community?**
We need to encourage more diverse agency groups to help bring people together, especially children.
We have a population-based approach. We are trying to work with new groups and agencies who can provide the much-needed supports to our diverse populations at the local-level.

In 2018, there is going to be a lot more focus on youth. We will provide youth with more support and programming so there are more opportunities for them to be actively engaged, and build their skills and relationships. Our staff will be focussed on securing more sponsorships and connecting with agencies that can provide programming for our young people.

**How will you teach young people about TCHC? Are there programs and events to do this?**
Yes, there are. We have groups that inform youth about what we do. As one example, in Lawrence Heights, we have “Revite NERDS (Neighbourhood Experts on Revitalization Developments).” Members teach others about TCHC and the revitalization and why it’s important, and what is being done to make sure the revitalization process is
successful and creates long-lasting outcomes. These groups are very diverse and offer a lot of valuable information.

**Can we have more programs for youth?**
Yes. We are working to provide more programming specifically for youth. We have a pilot youth strategy that youth have helped to develop, and we believe this strategy will lead us in the right direction. We are consulting with youth to see what interests they have and what solutions they can suggest.

**I feel like no one hears our voice. How can we change this?**
We continue to strive to improve at listening to as many of our tenants as possible. We are open to listening and have people in place to address your thoughts and ideas. Going forward, we are committed to creating more focus groups that gather feedback and ideas from a diverse range of tenants.

**How do you plan on engaging tenants from different communities?**
One of the things we are working on is creating a stronger relationship between the Resident and Community Services team and the Communications team. We have heard from tenants that there is inconsistent messaging or missing messaging in some communities. Strengthening our alignment will help us make sure we are reaching tenants from different communities through tailored, local communications.

**What happens when a tenant representative resigns? What are the timelines to hold an election to replace them?**
Currently there are no timelines. We are currently planning a refresh of our tenant engagement process and will be seeking tenant input.

**Why are tenants not held accountable at TCHC? We hold staff accountable so tenants should be held accountable.**
One of the ways we are anchoring accountability is through the Tenant Charter. The charter is an example of how we are working with tenants to make sure staff and tenants are held accountable for their actions.
The charter was built on our core values: integrity, accountability, community collaboration and respect. Moving forward, we hope the charter lays the foundation for better communication and clearer expectations from staff and tenants.

**How can we better mediate communication between TCHC staff and tenants at tenant council meetings?**
The challenge is to make sure our team is providing tenants with the best possible customer service. By remembering our core values of Integrity, accountability, community collaboration and respect, we can make sure tenant meetings are a success. When there are challenges, it’s our job to iron out what the issues are and to help bring people back on track.

**Can we have integrated working groups of staff and tenants to give input on how to solve the housing crisis?**
The National Housing Strategy is a positive step forward in helping to solve the housing crisis. We are currently reviewing a tenant engagement process that will invite tenants to help us address various policy issues, which in turn, helps to shape the future of our organization as a social housing provider.

**Access and Support**

**What can be done to help tenants with hoarding?**
Hoarding a disorder that involves excessively collecting possessions that impact a person’s life. The collection of items like newspaper, clothing and animals can create a fire hazard or an uncomfortable odour for your neighbors. As such, it can impact a person’s tenancy.

Resident Access and Support staff will connect tenants with hoarding tendencies to supports to deal with the disorder. A tenant has to agree to the support before receiving it. We will refer the tenant to our partner Toronto Hoarding Support Services Network which support tenants.
What can we do to help those who are sick or elderly?
For a tenant who is sick, Resident Access and Support staff will assess and connect the tenant to appropriate services which will help them maintain their tenancy. For an elderly tenant, again we will assess the person’s needs and connect them to supports. Although our hope is for our tenants to be able to age in their homes, if a tenant cannot live independently any more, we will make a referral to the Community Care Access Centre whose staff will help determine the right care or health supports required by the tenant.

Tenant Conference

How much did Tamarack consulting cost to facilitate at the conference?
Tamarack’s consulting fee was $15,000. This was an all-inclusive fee covering:
- designing the conference
- securing internal and external facilitators
- designing workshops
- delivering workshops
- preparing conference evaluation

The cost for each registered participant breaks down to $173 compared with an estimated cost of $1,280 per tenant to attend the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association conference. This was a valuable investment in our tenants. We thank those tenants who offered feedback that the experience was positive and worthwhile.

Will the tenant conference be a yearly event?
Yes. This is one of the ways we are proactively seeking out greater degrees of tenant engagement and input. With more time available for planning, we will engage tenants in helping us plan the next conference.

Can the tenant conference materials be distributed to tenants?
TCHC materials will be available online shortly or by request by emailing Samira.Rehman@torontohousing.ca