



Tenant Services Committee

931 Yonge Street,
Toronto, M4W 2H2

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The Tenant Services Committee (“TSC”) of the Toronto Community Housing Corporation (“TCHC”) held a virtual Public meeting on July 13, 2023 via Webex, commencing at 8:46 a.m.

TSC Directors Present: John Campbell (Chair)
Marcel Charlebois
Debbie Douglas
Ubah Farah
Ziva Ferreira
Councillor Paula Fletcher

TSC Directors Absent: n/a

Management Present: Jag Sharma, President & Chief Executive Officer (“CEO”)
Nadia Gouveia, Acting Chief Operating Officer (“COO”)
Darragh Meagher, General Counsel & Corporate Secretary
Lily Chen, Chief Financial Officer (“CFO”)
Jessica Hawes, Acting Chief Development Officer (“CDO”)
Barbara Shulman, Chief People & Culture Officer
Allen Murray, Vice President, Facilities Management
Paula Knight, Vice President, Strategic Planning & Communications
Julio Rigores, Manager, Engagement Refresh
Ceilidh Wilson, Assistant Corporate Secretary

Guest Present: Tom Hunter, Chief Executive Officer, Toronto

Seniors Housing Corporation
Jenn St. Louis, Manager, Housing Stability
Services, Housing Secretariat, City of Toronto
Emily Gaus, Project Manager, Housing Stability
Services, Housing Secretariat, City of Toronto

A quorum being present, Mr. Campbell, serving as Chair, called the meeting to order, and Ms. Wilson served as recording secretary.

ITEM 1 CHAIR'S REMARKS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

DEPUTATIONS

The Chair polled for any deputations to be heard at the meeting. The following verbal deputations were presented:

- Item 5 – Business Arising from the Public Meeting Minutes and Action Items Update (*Catherine Wilkinson*)
- Item 6B – Tenant Complaints Update (*Miguel Avila-Velarde*)
- Item 6C – Tenant Engagement Refresh Update (*Veronika Hering*)
- Item 7B – Status Update on TCHC's Air Conditioning Exchange and Replacement Program (*Catherine Wilkinson and Charlie Macchia*)

The following written deputation was presented:

- Item 6B – Tenant Complaints Update (*Miguel Avila-Velarde*)

ITEM 2 APPROVAL OF PUBLIC MEETING AGENDA

Motion carried **ON MOTION DULY MADE** by Mr. Charlebois, seconded Ms. Ferreira and carried, the TSC unanimously approved the Agenda for its Public meeting of July 13, 2023.

ITEM 3 CHAIR'S POLL RE: CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The Chair requested members of the TSC to indicate any agenda item in which they had a conflict of interest, together with the nature of the interest.
No conflicts were declared.

ITEM 4 CONFIRMATION OF TSC PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES OF JUNE 13, 2023

Motion carried **ON MOTION DULY MADE** by Ms. Farah, seconded by Mr. Charlebois and carried, the TSC confirmed the above-captioned minutes as amended.

ITEM 5 BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES AND ACTION ITEMS UPDATE

A verbal deputation was received from Catherine Wilkinson with respect to this item.

Mr. Meagher was available to answer questions of the TSC. Highlights of the discussion include:

- It was noted that site staff are not currently able to view CCTV footage in real time.
- Action item: Management to report back regarding the possibility of providing site staff with access to CCTV viewing access and footage.

Motion carried **ON MOTION DULY MADE** by Ms. Douglas, seconded by Mr. Charlebois and carried, the TSC received the updates provided as Business Arising from the Public Meeting Minutes and Action Items Update.

ITEM 6A TCHC'S OPERATIONAL PERFORMANCE MEASURES TSC:2023-32

The above-captioned report was circulated to TSC members prior to the meeting.

Ms. Gouveia was available to answer questions of the Committee. Highlights of the discussion include:

- While the number of households in arrears varies month over month, approximately 25-30% of tenants are in arrears, with approximately 5% of those households carrying high value arrears.
- Operations staff track the number of households with repayment agreements.

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- The vast majority of arrears are being managed through the Arrears Collection Process (“ACP”), with many households in repayment agreements. Supports have been put in place to help prevent tenants from breaching their agreements.
- There are limited parking spaces available in some communities, so there is a focus on ensuring tenants continue to pay for the spaces that they rent. Based on feedback from the TSC, Operations is looking into limiting access to spaces where tenants are not paying their parking fees.
- The Committee recommended revising the format of the report to separate out the different data sets being reported on (e.g. financial data, service requests data, etc.).
- Action item: Management to work with the Chair of TSC to revise the report template of the Operational Performance Measures report.
- The Committee flagged the importance of understanding the costs associated with units that are taken offline during a revitalization.
- Action item: The next iteration of the Operational Performance Measures report to include:
 - the costs associated with maintaining non-rentable vacant units; and
 - the breakdown of arrears by rent-geared-to-income (“RGI”), parking, market and commercial, including the number of households/ tenants in arrears within each category and the number within those categories in repayment agreements.
- It was noted that it is important for the TSC to understand the success rate of repayment agreements, and any trends based on the category of tenant (e.g. RGI, market, etc.).
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a significant increase in commercial arrears. Pre-COVID, commercial arrears were around \$800K, with approximately \$500K of that attributed to one tenant, much of which was recuperated with the support of the City of Toronto (the “City”). Post-COVID, commercial arrears went up to approximately \$3.2M.
- Facilities Management (“FM”) staff are working with the City to understand their process for forgiveness of COVID arrears, and recommendations will be presented to the Executive Leadership Team (“ELT”) to determine a way forward to address them.

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- TCHC's commercial tenants are a mix of both small, independent businesses and larger chain businesses. Each individual commercial tenant's arrears situation is being reviewed, and staff will take into consideration whether the tenant was able to stay open and operate during COVID-19.
- There is a relatively high number of market tenants in arrears. Operations staff are looking at a strategy specific to market arrears.
- Concern was raised that the higher the arrears amount climbs, the harder and harder it is for TCHC to recover the full amount owing.
- When a tenant is behind in rent, their Tenant Services Coordinator will send a letter and reach out via a phone call within the first 15 days. Staff are also to issue an N4 notice 14-17 business days into the month.
- TCHC staff have a limited ability to enter into long-term repayment agreements. The Office of the Commissioner of Housing Equity ("OCHE") has the ability to enter into repayment agreements beyond two years.
- Management are exploring whether aged arrears beyond a certain time period could be written off. Management have reached out to Ottawa Community Housing and CityHousing Hamilton to learn from their arrears write-off policies and practices, and whether they can be applied to the TCHC context.
- The East Region's arrears are highest, with the lowest amount of managed arrears. This is in part due to staffing vacancies and also as a result of several formerly contract managed buildings being inherited by the East Region, for which they are working through a backlog of arrears.
- 'Unmanaged Arrears' refers to arrears that have accumulated, but the ACP has not been initiated (e.g. no N4 issued, no repayment agreement initiated). Management are working with staff to ensure tenants are engaged to have their arrears paid down.
- Repayment agreements are a component of 'Managed Arrears'.
- Operations is working with Finance to ensure tenants' accounts are credited as soon as possible post-rent payment.
- The updated ACP should reflect more prolonged timelines to prevent the issuance of false or premature N4 notices, especially if the payment is received, but just later in the month.

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- There are nuances to the types of arrears (e.g. tenants in chronic arrears that regularly require reminders to pay their rent, tenants in good standing who have a one-off missed payment, etc.). Different approaches are required depending on the circumstances that the tenant is in.
- The ACP previously required that reminder letters be sent out in advance of an N4 notice, however concerns were raised that too many letters were being issued. The procedure was changed such that when an N4 notice is sent out, it is accompanied by a cover letter to contextualize the situation. As part of the review of the ACP, Management are exploring whether to reinstate warning letters in advance of issuing the N4.
- The Committee recommended working with the Service Manager to determine the best approach to notifying tenants of arrears.
- Action item: Management to host a workshop with members of the TSC regarding TCHC's Arrears Collection Process and arrears trends.
- The Committee commended staff for the low vacancy rate, which was 1.45% in June 2023.
- TCHC will house around 500 tenants through the Rapid Rehousing ("RR") program in 2023, which is a target set by the Service Manager and the Housing Secretariat. There has been a low eviction rate for these tenancies.
- The RR program comes with one year of community agency supports. Management are working with the Service Manager and external service providers to establish supports for buildings where there is a disproportionate number of vulnerable tenancies.

Motion carried **ON MOTION DULY MADE** by Ms. Douglas, seconded by Councillor Fletcher and carried, the TSC received Report TSC:2023-32, being TCHC's Operational Performance Measures report, for its information.

ITEM 6B TENANT COMPLAINTS UPDATE

TSC:2023-33

The above-captioned report was circulated to TSC members prior to the meeting.

A written deputation was received from Miguel Avila-Velarde with respect to this item and was circulated to the TSC.

A verbal deputation was received from Miguel Avila-Velarde with respect to this item.

Motion carried **ON MOTION DULY MADE** by Ms. Douglas, seconded by Ms. Ferreira and carried, the TSC received Report TSC:2023-33, being the Tenant Complaints Update, for its information.

ITEM 6C TENANT ENGAGEMENT REFRESH UPDATE

TSC:2023-34

The above-captioned report was circulated to TSC members prior to the meeting.

A verbal deputation was received from Veronika Hering with respect to this item.

Ms. Gaus and Mr. Rigores provided the TSC with a presentation in relation to this matter, highlights of which include:

- Tenant Advisory Committee (“TAC”) purpose and initial recruitment;
- 2023 TAC recruitment process;
- TAC applications received;
- TAC applicant shortlisting; and
- Next steps.

Ms. Gouveia was available to answer questions of the TSC. Highlights of the discussion include:

- All three Tenant Directors on the Board are members of the Tenant Advisory Committee (“TAC”) by virtue of their position on the Board.
- The second and third rounds of outreach garnered more applications for the TAC. While there are some communities with clusters of applicants, the majority of applications are spread across the

portfolio.

- Action item: The next iteration of the Tenant Engagement Refresh Update report to include details of possible avenues for engagement with unsuccessful applicants of the Tenant Advisory Committee.
- With the Toronto Seniors Housing Corporation (“TSHC”), their tenant advisory committee is involved in advising on how best to communicate with the broader tenant population. The Committee suggested looking into ways that the TAC can provide feedback beyond their core mandate of advising on the engagement system refresh.
- TAC members will receive a one-time stipend for their participation. The Committee cautioned that a one-time payment may act as a disincentive to participation.
- Transit costs and childcare are covered for TAC members who attend meetings in person.

Motion carried **ON MOTION DULY MADE** by Councillor Fletcher, seconded by Ms. Farah and carried, the TSC received Report TSC:2023-34, being the Tenant Engagement Refresh Update, for its information.

UPDATE ON TENANT LED IMPROVEMENTS
ITEM 7A IN BASEMENT SPACES TSC:2023-35

The above-captioned report was circulated to TSC members prior to the meeting.

Mr. Murray was available to answer questions of the TSC. Highlights of the discussion include:

- Staff have reached out to the Housing Secretariat’s office to ensure they are onside with moving ahead with a tenant-led basement renovation pilot.
- If the Housing Secretariat is onside and the pilot proceeds, next steps would include identifying tenants interested in participating, confirming they have sufficient funds to complete the design work required to obtain the necessary permits, identifying the approximate construction costs, and confirming they have sufficient funds to pay for the renovation work.

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- One potential negative impact would be that if creating an additional bedroom as part of the basement renovations, this could potentially cause the household to become overhoused based on the occupancy standards set by the province.
- Housing Secretariat staff are reviewing the proposed pilot with City Legal to identify any possible unforeseen consequences for tenants who may proceed with renovations.
- Each situation would have to be reviewed on a case-by-case basis to determine if the creation of an additional bedroom would impact their unit size eligibility or rent rate.
- The Committee expressed concern that the conditions associated with the proposed pilot are creating barriers for tenants to participate, particularly those looking to undertake minor renovations to make their basement spaces more useable.
- As the owner of the property, TCHC would require a mechanism to confirm the required funds to be paid to the consultant and the contractor are available upfront to ensure TCHC does not become responsible, and to prevent the potential dangers associated with a partially completed renovation.
- TCHC must ensure that we are in compliance with all requirements (e.g. Fire Code, permits, etc.). If the pilot goes forward, it is important to ensure tenants are able to undertake basement renovations without causing unintended consequences or creating a false set of expectations in terms of what can be done.
- The Committee recommended that once the details of the pilot are confirmed, that a report be brought to the Board of Directors for approval in relation to how to proceed.
- Even if the tenant is paying for the renovations, the unit/building ultimately belongs to TCHC and any associated liabilities are attached to TCHC, thus it is important to understand all considerations prior to proceeding with the pilot.
- Action item: Following consultation with the Housing Secretariat, management to report to the Board of Directors regarding the implications of proceeding with a pilot for tenant led improvements in basement spaces.

Motion carried **ON MOTION DULY MADE** by Councillor Fletcher, seconded by Ms. Farah and carried, the TSC received Report TSC:2023-35, being the Update on Tenant Led Improvements in Basement Spaces report, for its information.

**STATUS UPDATE ON TCHC'S AIR
CONDITIONING EXCHANGE AND
REPLACEMENT PROGRAM**

ITEM 7B TSC:2023-36

The above-captioned report was circulated to TSC members prior to the meeting.

Verbal deputations were received from Catherine Wilkinson and Charlie Macchia with respect to this item.

Mr. Murray was available to answer questions of the TSC. Highlights of the discussion include:

- There are some green roofs within the TCHC portfolio and we are moving towards more green roofs through the revitalization process. It is a significant undertaking to retrofit existing buildings with green roofs as their original designs have much of the mechanical equipment, elevator rooms and duct work housed on the roof.
- TCHC does work with the Toronto Atmospheric Fund.
- The Design & Engineering team is always looking for ways to reduce energy consumption and improve tenant comfort in buildings.
- It was suggested that there may be value at looking into creating a working group to address heat issues faced by tenants.
- There are programs available through the City and other agencies to assist in the purchase of air conditioning units for individuals who face financial constraints, but require access to cooling (e.g. individuals with certain medical conditions).

Motion carried **ON MOTION DULY MADE** by Ms. Farah, seconded by Mr. Charlebois and carried, the TSC received Report TSC:2023-36, being the Status Update on TCHC's Air Conditioning Exchange and Replacement Program report, for its information.

TERMINATION

A motion to adjourn the meeting was moved by Ms. Douglas and seconded by Ms. Farah. The TSC resolved to terminate the public meeting at 10:46 a.m.

Secretary

Chair, Tenant Services Committee