



Tenant Engagement Refresh Update

Item 6D

June 13, 2023

Tenant Services Committee

Report: TSC:2023-29

To: Tenant Services Committee (“TSC”)

From: Nadia Gouveia, Acting Chief Operating Officer

Date: May 15, 2023

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to provide the TSC with an update on the implementation of the Tenant Engagement System Refresh.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that the TSC receive this report for information.

BACKGROUND:

In June 2022, TCHC developed and presented to the Board a four-step plan aimed at consulting with tenant leaders, receiving their feedback, and developing recommendations to make necessary changes to the Tenant Engagement System.

The plan includes the following:

- (i) Launch of Community Actions Table at the regional level;
- (ii) Establishment of Tenant Advisory Committee;
- (iii) End-of-year Regional Forum; and
- (iv) Launch of Citywide Tenant Forum in 2023.

The implementation of this transformative four-step plan is already underway, demonstrating TCHC's commitment to enhancing tenant engagement and fostering positive change.

TENANT ADVISORY COMMITTEE:

In August 2022, TCHC initiated a city-wide outreach process to identify prospective members of the Tenant Advisory Committee ("TAC"). The goal of the TAC was to ensure diverse representation from tenants across the East, West, and Central regions to provide oversight to recommendations on changes and improvements to the tenant engagement system.

After a comprehensive selection process conducted by regional staff, 15 tenants were chosen as members of the TAC. This selection process aimed to identify individuals who demonstrated a strong commitment to tenant engagement, possessed diverse perspectives, and were representative of the housing community.

On December 14, 2022, a virtual orientation session was held, marking an important milestone in the TAC's journey. During the orientation, Committee members had the opportunity to introduce themselves, fostering a sense of connection and collaboration. In addition, the members expressed their enthusiasm about working closely with TCHC staff to advance the Tenant Engagement System's goals and objectives and to contribute to improving programs within their respective communities.

In November 2022, in parallel with the TAC selection process, the City Council issued a directive to the Deputy City Manager, Community, and Social Services, tasking City staff to thoroughly review the proposal for a new Tenant Advisory Committee through the Tenants First initiative. The review covered various aspects, including Terms of Reference, member recruitment, the role of tenant Directors, and the City's involvement. The findings were reported at the February 28, 2023 Planning and Housing Committee meeting for review and recommendations.

Recognizing the importance of broader tenant representation, the City of Toronto and TCHC have initiated a process to expand the existing TAC. The aim is to ensure a more diverse and inclusive membership on the Committee.

To facilitate this expansion, two information sessions have already been conducted to provide interested tenants with details about participating on the TAC. In addition, these sessions have served as a platform to engage and encourage tenants to contribute their perspectives and experiences. A total of 49 applications were received by initial deadline of May 12, 2023. At the May 17, 2023 Governance Communications and Human Resources Committee (“GCHRC”), it was noted that some tenants may have experienced technical barriers when attempting to apply, and also may not have been able to attend information sessions. In consultation with the Service Manager, TCHC has revised the deadline for application submission to June 16, 2023. Additional information can be found in Attachment 1.

Furthermore, an updated meeting has been scheduled for late May, specifically for tenants who are already members of the TAC, to provide essential updates and serve as an opportunity for ongoing communication and collaboration.

The goal is to establish the first Tenant Advisory Committee in June 2023. This Committee will serve as a vital platform for tenants to actively participate in shaping policies and programs that directly impact their lives. By expanding the membership and promoting broader tenant representation, the City of Toronto and TCHC aim to ensure that diverse voices and perspectives are considered in decision-making processes, fostering a more inclusive and tenant-centered approach.

COMMUNITY ACTIONS TABLE - Q1 2023:

The Community Action Table brings together a diverse group of stakeholders who collaborate closely with tenants, staff, and partners. Its primary objective is to address the tenant-identified priorities within each community, forming the Tenant and Community Action Table. To achieve this, the following key objectives have been established:

1. **Share information and resources:** The table aims to facilitate the exchange of information and resources, with a specific focus on addressing community priorities. By sharing valuable insights and knowledge, stakeholders can collectively work towards addressing pressing issues and promoting community development.

2. **Build a Community of Practice:** The Community Action Table fosters the development of a vibrant community of practice. By nurturing a supportive network, members can learn from one another, share best practices, and collectively contribute to achieving common goals.
3. **Capacity building of community representatives:** A vital focus of the Community Action Table is to enhance the capacity of community representatives. Through various training and development opportunities, members gain valuable skills and knowledge to actively contribute to the Table's objectives. This capacity-building empowers representatives to advocate for their communities and drive positive change.

Summary of Events

The Community Action Table's meetings in Q1 2023 happened as follows:

Region	Location	Time	Date	Number of Attendees
Central	150 River St.	10:00 am - 4:00 pm	04/26/2023	31
West	3710 Chesswood Drive	4:00 am - 8:00 pm	04/26/2023	35
East	20 Gordonridge Pl	10:00 am- 4:00 pm	04/29/2023	51

The meetings commenced with a comprehensive review of ongoing initiatives, including progress updates on actions identified during the end-of-year regional forums. The meeting facilitated constructive discussions among Tenant Representatives, fostering the exchange of ideas and potential solutions to address common community challenges. The presence of regional management teams provided an opportunity for real-time conversations with tenant leaders, enabling them to share concerns and provide input for service delivery improvements.

The capacity development focused on conflict resolution, emphasizing the importance of resource sharing when addressing conflicts among community members, tenant leaders, and the wider community. As part of

the event, all attendees received copies of the "Accessibility is for You" package, promoting inclusivity and accessibility.

The following key themes were identified as a result of the Community Action Table meetings:

1. **Dissatisfaction with Work Orders:** Tenants expressed their frustration with the lack of ongoing communication regarding the progress of work orders. It was suggested that tenants should receive copies of the work orders to stay informed about their status and developments.
2. **Concerns about Vendor Service Quality:** Tenants expressed disappointment with the quality of work carried out by TCHC-approved vendors. They requested the opportunity to provide input on the quality of services rendered by vendors to ensure satisfactory outcomes.
3. **Safety-related Issues:** Tenants highlighted an increase in safety-related matters within and outside their buildings, which they associated with the presence of non-TCHC tenants. This raised concerns about maintaining a safe living environment.

Overall, the events drew the participation of 117 Tenant Representatives at the regional Community Action Tables.

REVIEW OF CURRENT TENANT ENGAGEMENT SYSTEM AND DECISION-MAKING OPPORTUNITIES FOR TENANTS:

As highlighted in the March 28, 2023 TSC meeting, tenants and stakeholders have expressed dissatisfaction with the current Tenant Engagement System and its implementation. In an effort to review the current system and make recommendations on amendments, TCHC has hired a dedicated staff to work with stakeholders to develop a proposed updated system. The review will take a holistic approach to evaluate the current state of tenant engagement within TCHC programs.

The review process commenced on March 29, 2023, with several key activities underway, which have provided valuable insights and facilitated a comprehensive evaluation of the existing system.

Key Activities of the Review:

1. **One-on-one Conversations:** Conversations have occurred with 33 TCHC staff members from various departments and areas of work. This includes management and frontline staff from departments such as Tenant Engagement, Community Safety and Support Programs, Communications, Program Evaluation, Tenant Relations, Strategic Planning, and more. These conversations have allowed for a deeper understanding of each department's role in tenant.
2. **Community Action Tables:** The review team has actively participated in Community Action Tables with tenant representatives from the Central, West, and East Regions. These tables have served as a platform for open discussions, enabling the review team to gather insights, listen to tenant perspectives, and identify areas for improvement.
3. **Categorization Update:** The review team has observed frontline staff updating the categorization of TCHC communities in the Central and East Regions. This process allows for a better understanding of each community's unique characteristics and needs.
4. **On-the-ground Tours:** A comprehensive on-the-ground tour of the East Region has been completed, providing firsthand exposure to the region's challenges and opportunities. Similar tours are scheduled for the Central and West Regions, enabling a holistic understanding of TCHC's diverse communities.
5. **Collaboration with Tamarack Institute:** Discussions have taken place with the Tamarack Institute to explore tenant engagement strategies and the implementation of Asset-Based Community-Driven ("ABCD") assessments. These insights will contribute to the overall review process.
6. **Ongoing Conversations and Research:** The review team will continue engaging in one-on-one conversations with the executive leadership team ("ELT"), Directors from the Tenant Services Committee ("TSC"), and staff members from various departments and City of Toronto divisions. Furthermore, research is being conducted to identify best practices in tenant engagement from public housing

corporations in Ottawa, Hamilton, Calgary, Vancouver, and New York, USA.

Future extensive tenant consultation is being planned including regional focus groups, connecting to established tenant groups and working closely with the TAC to collect their insight and input.

High Level Observations to-date:

The Tenant Engagement Continuum: During the review process, staff members emphasized the need for tenant engagement, particularly involving youth, to be integrated more extensively throughout all aspects of TCHC. They highlighted that tenant engagement should not solely be the responsibility of the Tenant Engagement unit, but rather a collective effort involving all stakeholders within TCHC.

The concept of the Tenant Engagement Continuum emerged as a result of these discussions. It signifies a shift in mindset and approach towards tenant engagement, emphasizing its holistic and continuous nature. Rather than viewing tenant engagement as a standalone unit or limited to specific initiatives, the Tenant Engagement Continuum recognizes that tenant engagement should be seamlessly integrated into all of TCHC's operations and decision-making processes. Meaningful tenant engagement includes a range of activities, including:

1. Sharing information;
2. Consulting tenants to get their views on specific issues;
3. Involving tenants in the implementation of projects;
4. Collaborating with tenants to facilitate tenant-driven activities; and
5. Supporting tenants to organize community projects by themselves.

Engaging by Example – Lessons Learned from the Capital Renewal, Revitalization, and Community Economic Development Teams: There are successful practices in the organization that effectively help to achieve TCHC's primary goals of positive tenant experiences and quality homes, namely in the work of the Capital Renewal, Revitalization, and Community Economic Development teams. These teams have demonstrated effective methods of tenant engagement through their inclusive approach to monitoring, evaluating, and decision-making processes. These teams take a proactive approach, viewing challenges as opportunities for community

improvement and a further opportunity to align TCHC's collective tenant engagement strategies and contribute to improved tenant outcomes.

“Connected” Staff: Staff have highlighted that in order to do consistent, meaningful tenant engagement, there is an urgent need for improved connectivity by enhancing collaboration and coordination amongst TCHC staff and with community organizations, social service agencies and City of Toronto divisions.

Supporting the Creation of Vibrant Communities: To effectively achieve TCHC's goal of facilitating and supporting vibrant communities, staff have emphasized prioritizing community development led by democratically-elected tenant leaders. In addition, tenants should be empowered as the architects of their future, fostering a sense of ownership and empowerment within their communities. By fostering tenant-led initiatives and promoting active participation, TCHC can support the creation of vibrant communities that address residents' specific needs and aspirations.

NEXT STEPS:

TCHC is committed to promoting tenant involvement, fostering communication, and improving the overall tenant engagement experience within TCHC. TCHC will:

1. Share the invitation with all three Tenant Board Directors to participate in the upcoming Tenant Advisory Committee; and
2. Conduct ongoing consultations and research to develop recommendations for changes to the implementation of the Tenant Engagement System, which is planned to come to TSC in Q4 2023.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS:

The City's Shareholder Direction requires TCHC to maintain a democratic system of active tenant participation and involvement that will:

- (i) Provide a Tenant council structure or similar organization;
- (ii) Provide Tenant input into decisions at the corporate and local levels;
- (iii) Provide Tenant input for setting local spending priorities and service levels; and
- (iv) Include Tenant representation on the Board.

SIGNATURE:

“Nadia Gouveia”

Nadia Gouveia
Chief Operating Officer

ATTACHMENT:

1. Information regarding Tenant Advisory Committee Application Extension

STAFF CONTACT

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Tenant Advisory Committee Extension of Application Deadline



To: Governance, Communications and Human Resources Committee

From: Nadia Gouveia, Acting Chief Operating Officer
Paula Knight, Vice President, Strategic Planning and Communications

Date: May 19, 2023

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to update the Governance, Communications and Human Resources Committee on recent activities related to the Tenant Advisory Committee. The successful recruitment of additional applicants was completed May 12, 2023. There was a subsequent motion at the most recent meeting calling for an extension of the deadline because of concerns that some tenants may have missed information sessions and that the PDF application form may have had glitches leading to tenants not being able to apply.

BACKGROUND:

The Tenant Advisory Committee (TAC) is a committee of tenants who advise Toronto Community Housing (TCHC) on the implementation of the Tenant Engagement System and other tenant facing programs. The advisory committee will also work with staff to develop recommendations based on issues raised at the Community Action Table meetings. The committee was conceived as an outcome of the Tenant Engagement System Review process, with the goal of TAC making recommendations for changes to the current Tenant Engagement System.

The initial recruitment for the TAC took place during the period of October and November 2022. The process included outreach, recruitment, selection and a first meeting of the committee in December 2022. In December 2022, a motion was made at City Council to increase the diversity of the committee and the overall number of members.

In January 2023, a motion was put forward in City Council directing the Deputy City Manager, Community and Social Services to have City of Toronto (“City”) staff, through the Tenants First initiative, review the proposal for a new Tenant Advisory Committee including: Terms of Reference; the recruitment and confirmation of members; the role of tenant directors in a Tenant Advisory Committee; and the role of the City, and to report to the February 28, 2023 meeting of the Planning and Housing Committee on the review and any recommendations.

TCHC was also directed to invite the three current tenant Directors to join the committee. Jag Sharma, TCHC President and CEO, will co-chair the committee with Paul Raftis (Deputy City Manager, Community and Social Services). As a result, City Council directed the City Manager and TCHC to re-open recruitment and work collaboratively to meet the goals of increasing representation on the committee. The role of tenant Directors and the two co-chairs have not yet been defined. Please reference [Item 9D - Tenant Engagement Refresh Update FINAL.pdf](#) from the Board of Director’s Meeting on April 24, 2023 for additional details.

TCHC collaborated with the Service Manager, represented by Jenn St. Louis and her office to re-open the recruitment process. A cross-functional team at TCHC worked on communications, outreach in communities, and the delivery of two online information sessions held Thursday, April 27, 2023 and Thursday, May 4, 2023 from 6 to 7:30 p.m. The communications plan included a wide-range of channels targeting the general tenant audience and youth through in-building posters and notices, website notices, email newsletters to tenants (general, youth and tenant leaders), website updates, a social media campaign, City of Toronto website materials and a mailer that was delivered to all TCHC households. TCHC also activated direct outreach to potential engaged tenants as identified by TCHC staff.

All materials were checked and reviewed (including both online and offline forms) as part of the implementation of the communications plan. Full staff

support was provided by each regional TCHC team including a centralized email, local CSC or TPC support staff and management staff. This support was put in place in the event of any technology issues or other questions and inquiries. The outreach, support and communications campaign was highly successful as we received 49 applications for just six open positions. This round of recruitment closed Friday, May 12, 2023.

ISSUES RAISED

At the Governance, Communications and Human Resources Committee Meeting held on Wednesday, May 17, 2023, a tenant deputed on Item 7 – TCHC’s 2023 Strategic Communications Plan with attachment. In the deputation the tenant raised two concerns. First, she noted that she had challenges completing the PDF application form and that it was not working properly. Second, she communicated that the mailer received at her household was not delivered until after the information sessions had taken place. This information was accepted by the committee as accurate, and a motion was made at committee for an extension of the TAC application process and the need to make sure all tenants are fully aware about the call for applications..

Upon further email engagement with the tenant after the meeting, it was discovered via screen shots of her computer that she was using an outdated operating system (Windows 8) and an out-of-date browser (older Google Chrome) which may have caused her issues with completing the PDF form. In addition, the tenant was offered in-person or staff support to complete the form if technology presented a barrier. Her application form was ultimately successfully received by TCHC staff according to the timelines set for submission by May 12th.

It is unlikely that the PDF form was in fact the issue, but rather the use of an outdated operating system and browser. However, with this finding we will continue to provide support to tenants who may encounter technology issues, as well as provide alternative methods noted below to support their successful application.

We will also ensure that we clearly communicate to tenants that we are committed to providing support should they require it and how they can receive that support. While we cannot guarantee that outdated software and equipment will allow tenants to complete all forms, TCHC staff will be prepared to support.

The timing of the mailer was previously noted in the course of confirming the planned communications campaign. TCHC's communication team advised that it is difficult to predict the timed delivery of mail from Canada Post and there would be a chance that it would arrive in some households after the information sessions took place. The TCHC communications team advised that the mailer was still worth using as a communications vehicle for recruitment because it is the only communication that is sent to every TCHC household. It was also very likely to arrive in all households before the application deadline of Friday, May 12, 2023, which would support overall recruitment efforts. To mitigate any challenges with the delay of the posted communications, TCHC in concert with the City team made sure that additional mechanisms were used to communicate the information sessions. This included posters and local outreach by TCHC staff, internal and external emails to raise awareness about the sessions, website updates and social media campaigns.

ADDITIONAL COMMUNICATIONS WITH TENANT APPLICANTS

It should be noted that the most recent round of recruitment generated 49 tenant applications for six available roles. Managing the selection process for these applicants will be a challenge given that some tenants have applied several times to join the committee. Extending the deadline may be perceived by this group as unfair because they submitted their applications on time. They may also question the need for a greater applicant pool if a large group of tenants already exists for only six roles.

TCHC will communicate directly with this group to explain the extension and mitigate any potential issues.

IMPLEMENTING GCHRC MOTION

In consultation with the Service Manager, we have revised the deadline to submit applications to Friday, June 16, and will offer an additional information session on Thursday, June 8 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. online. Direct outreach will commence on May 24 and run until June 7, ahead of the information session. TCHC will begin rolling out a communications plan

including wide-reaching channels (with the exception of the posted mail for budgetary reasons). This will provide two full weeks to promote the remaining information session and to ensure participation and awareness as well as sufficient time for applicants to submit their forms afterwards.

To mitigate potential technology challenges tenants may have, TCHC will provide three versions of the application form including a simple word document, an online web form (to collect information digitally) and the PDF option with instructions. TCHC will once again include a contact email and details about connecting with TCHC staff if any technical challenges arise or if the applicant has any questions.

Finally, customized communications to applicants in the most recent recruitment round and a communication to existing committee members (waiting from December) will be drafted and delivered. Feedback about the additional extension period will be gathered and written in a report back to TCHC management.

TCHC continues to be committed to securing diverse and robust representation on the Tenant Advisory Committee. As we continue to evolve the use of digital tools by tenants, we will continue to improve and build our process for outreach in the future.

“Nadia Gouveia”

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Acting Chief Operating Officer

“Paula Knight”

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Vice President, Strategic Planning and Communications