

Toronto Community Housing Corporation
931 Yonge Street
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Briefing Note: For Information

To: Tenant Services Committee (“TSC”)

From: Allan Britton, Acting Senior Director, Community Safety Unit

Date: April 28, 2023

Re: CSAC Meeting of March 8, 2023 – 2023 Public Community Safety Advisory Sub-Committee Work Plan [CSAC:2023-05] (Public Action Item #2, as referred to the Tenant Services Committee)

PURPOSE:

At its March 8, 2023 meeting, the Community Safety Advisory Committee (“CSAC”) referred a request to the Tenant Services Committee (“TSC”) to look at lobby safety, and to take the matter up with the TSC Chair. This briefing note responds to that request and provides background information on lobby camera footage access for TCHC tenants.

BACKGROUND:

As service providers have transitioned away from analog and digital television systems, tenant access to DVR/CCTV systems has become a challenge. In the past, Toronto Community Housing (“TCHC”) tenants could view live lobby camera footage to monitor who entered and exited the building. At that time, service providers could connect directly to the TCHC CCTV system, allowing for access to specific cameras. However, as technology has advanced, service providers have changed their services, including access to live lobby camera footage.

For example, when Rogers Communications transitioned from analog to digital services, TCHC tenants were unable to view live lobby camera footage, which Rogers resolved at that time through a conversion box. However, when technologies shifted from digital to Internet Protocol (“IP”), service providers no longer supported the ability to view live lobby camera footage due to technological limitations and security concerns, particularly the risk of independent services accessing TCHC's secure networks.

In the current state, Rogers Communications no longer provides digital television services and has moved toward an IP-based alternative service known as Rogers Ignite, which no longer supports the TCHC Lobby Channel.

While tenants with the existing digital television services and Rogers equipment can still access the Lobby Watch Channel (998, 989, 889), Rogers no longer supports this technology and all customers are being transitioned to the new IP-based Rogers Ignite service and this will ultimately result in a loss of the Lobby Watch Channel. However, tenants who have not yet been upgraded to Rogers Ignite may request a Digital to Analog (“DTA”) converter from Rogers Communications to continue accessing the channel. It should be noted that TCHC has no control over whether or not Rogers Communications will provide this support.

Bell Canada discontinued Lobby Watch services over 10 years ago. However, when consulted by the Smart Buildings and Energy Management (“SBEM”) team in 2019, they advised there are no plans to return this service as Bell Canada has also transitioned to an IP-based service known as Bell Fibe TV.

Although no overhead costs were associated with the previous lobby watch service, the SBEM team indicated an annual cost of approximately \$55,000 to repair and maintain the service. As noted, service providers are unable to provide tenants with a lobby watch channel due to technological limitations and do not have plans to offer this service in the future. The Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (“CRTC”) does not require service providers to offer lobby camera access, therefore TCHC has no means of compelling service providers to develop a solution.

TCHC's SBEM team has thoroughly investigated the possibility of TCHC providing an-in-house lobby watch service to our tenants.

To construct and implement its own in-house lobby watch system, TCHC would require significant financial investment and physical resources to install the necessary hardware into each TCHC residential unit in every building throughout the portfolio. However, even if this option were explored, tenants would not be able to view lobby DVR/CCTV footage

proactively, and would only be able to do so if, for example, a visitor or delivery person rang the tenant's buzzer, activating camera access.

In addition, implementing this service would present privacy and security risks to the corporation, as outlined in Confidential Attachment 1 to this briefing note.

ISSUES:

In a 2019 report presented to TCHC's Executive Leadership Team ("ELT") (see Confidential Attachment 1), the Legal Services team and SBEM team identified risks related to provisioning live lobby camera access to tenants.

Although TCHC tenants and tenant groups have expressed concerns about their inability to access lobby camera footage and view lobby camera access as essential to their security, TCHC must consider the financial costs and privacy risks associated with provision of this service.

CONCLUSION:

TCHC has conducted extensive investigations and consultations into lobby watch services since external service providers began to transition services from analog to digital, and now to IP. Unfortunately, due to technological limitations, service providers can no longer assist TCHC in providing a lobby watch service and implementing an in-house lobby watch system presents privacy, security and financial risks to the corporation.

SIGNATURE:

"Allan Britton"

Allan Britton
Acting Senior Director, Community Safety Unit

ATTACHMENT:

Confidential Attachment 1: 2019 Briefing Note to Executive Leadership Team re: Plan to Change Lobby Channel Service

Reason for Confidential Attachment: Matters involving the security of the property of the Corporation, and legal advice that is subject to solicitor-client privilege including communications necessary for that purpose.

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