



2022 Annual Pest Control Report

Item 6E

June 13, 2023

Tenant Services Committee

Report: TSC:2023-31

To: Tenant Services Committee (“TSC”)

From: Chief Operating Officer (Acting)

Date: May 29, 2023

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide the TSC with an annual update on the provision of pest control services at Toronto Community Housing (“TCHC”).

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that TSC receive this report for information and forward it to the Board for its information.

BACKGROUND

The provision of pest control services is governed by municipal by-laws and federal regulations, and is a key responsibility of the landlord as set out in the *Residential Tenancies Act* (“RTA”). The provision of pest control services is an essential component of a broader clean buildings and maintenance strategy, which is intended to establish achievable service standards sustainable service models, and enable consistent and cost-effective delivery of service geared to enhancing tenant satisfaction.

PEST MANAGEMENT DATA AND TRENDS

The pest management program was deemed an essential service and continued to be available throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2022, TCHC staff fielded 54,870 work order (“WO”) requests related to pest management issues (see Table 1). Of those issues, the top pest management treatments were for bedbugs and cockroaches.

Some factors influencing pest control requests seasonal fluctuation and the integration of contract managed buildings

The COVID-19 pandemic presented challenges in safely and effectively addressing pest control concerns. Where standard chemical application measures require tenants to vacate their units for a period of four to six hours, TCHC worked with vendors to establish interim measures to complete treatments while limiting the need for tenants to leave their units for extended periods of time. Staff maintained service levels related to preventative maintenance treatments for common spaces and building exteriors throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

At the end of Q2 2022, TCHC ceased emergency COVID-19 measures and resumed pest control activities at a pre-pandemic service level.

With the transition of the contract managed east and central region portfolios into direct management, there was an increase in the total number of residential units that received services from TCHC pest management program in 2022. Regional environmental health staff worked to stabilize program delivery in these communities throughout the year.

Additionally, there was a higher volume of service requests for bedbug treatments in 2022 compared to 2021. This is attributable to the loosening of COVID-19 restrictions, which in turn allowed more households to participate in the treatment process comfortably.

Table 1: Pest Treatment (Demand & Preventative) by Categories

										2022	2021	2020
Region	Bedbugs	Bedbugs Total	Cock-roaches	Cock-roaches Total	Mice	Mice Total	Other	Other Total	Grand Total	Grand Total	Grand Total	
Q1 2022	East	679	3,070	660	3,126	612	3,201	305	1,809	11,206	11,727	11,495
	Central	588		661		371		136				
	West	585		950		1,773		991				
	TSHC	1218		855		445		377				
Q2 2022	East	1121	3,897	813	3,072	830	3,487	279	1,462	11,918	12,007	8,616
	Central	836		619		528		175				
	West	554		809		1,549		660				
	TSHC	1386		831		580		348				
Q3 2022	East	1526	5,331	1,158	5,044	843	3,385	284	1,583	15,343	14,985	17,296
	Central	1147		1,037		458		232				
	West	876		1,446		1,459		698				
	TSHC	1782		1,403		625		369				
Q4 2022	East	1433	4,961	1,514	5,983	878	3,563	686	1,896	16,403	13,503	13,223
	Central	1133		1,247		456		173				
	West	709		1,637		1,542		694				
	TSHC	1686		1,585		687		343				
Totals	TCHC Portfolio	11,187		12,551		11,299		5,313				
	TSHC Portfolio	6,072		4,674		2,337		1,437				
			17,259		17,225		13,636		6,750	54,870	52,222	50,630

Table 2: Quarterly Average Number of Treatments in 2020, 2021 and 2022

Categories	2022 Average	2021 Average	2020 Average
Bedbugs	4,314	6,232	5,585
Cockroaches	4,306	3,819	4,058
Mice	3,409	1,863	1,832
Other	1,687	1,141	1,183

REQUIREMENT FOR MULTIPLE PEST TREATMENTS

Most pest incidents require more than one pest management treatment to be fully addressed as per Health Canada Guidelines, with the timing between each treatment being equally vital to successfully addressing the pest issue. At TCHC, contracts with pest vendors highlight clear expectations for follow-up treatments, including the provision of a mandatory inspection as part of the warranty program in cases of bedbugs.

Some considerations that contribute to increased per unit treatments are:

- Limitations to Health Canada approved product application methods¹;
- Adherence and accommodation are related to COVID-19 safety protocols²;
- Modifications to a treatment plan to accommodate tenants in-place; and
- Onboarding and reset activities with former contract-managed sites.

SUPPORTING TENANTS

In 2022, an estimated 20% of the units visited by the Environmental Health team needed additional support, including access to support, de-cluttering, and preparation assistance for treatment or extreme cleaning services. Our partnerships with Toronto Public Health, Ontario Works, and Toronto

¹ Health Canada regulates the use of pesticides, including the application methods, in order to control the amount of pesticide exposure for individuals. The regulation includes where and how much pesticide can be applied in a given area and by which method. These regulations can lead to certain treatments requiring multiple visits to complete follow up treatments. Additionally, Health Canada limitations on the formulation of pesticide products may require additional visits to units to change the type of pesticide being used, as the tolerance for a particular product may be reached.

² Due to concerns about COVID-19, some tenants have refused pest control professionals from entering their units. In some cases, the tenants refusing treatment reside in units adjacent to the focal unit, hindering the effectiveness of the treatments, resulting in additional infestations and the need for additional visits to the focal unit.

Employment and Social Services have helped tenants access over \$119K in additional funding and services. These supports have included replacing mattresses, providing bedbug covers, helping tenants prepare their units for pest treatments, and de-cluttering units. The Regional teams are actively working on developing and implementing resources, partnerships, and tools to ensure ongoing support and monitoring of units.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

A vital lever to pest reduction is ensuring that staff engage in dialogue with tenants and communities. This provides staff with a better understanding of our tenants and provides tenants with the information and resources they require to support a proactive approach to pest management in their units and communities. Although in-person tenant education was paused due to COVID-19 safety restrictions, Operations staff continue to work with the Strategic Communications team to update education and preparation materials, including translation into 24 languages. In-person tenant education will resume in late Q3 2023.

PEST MANAGEMENT 2023

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, there were significant limitations in how pest management programs could be delivered. TCHC was required to adjust and modify how treatments were delivered, which inadvertently created conditions for pests to significantly increase in several of its communities. Throughout this period, tenants also encountered limitations in their ability to access external services and supports to address issues pertaining to unit conditions and treatment preparation, posing significant obstacles to effectively treat their living spaces. Based on our conversations with both building staff and tenants, it has become evident that a program refresh and a focused, expert approach to pest control are necessary to reset the situation and make progress going forward.

As part of the 2023 Pest Management Strategy, the Manager of Environmental Health role will be reinstated to oversee a program refresh within the department. The Manager of Environmental Health will begin the refresh by initiating a new Request for Proposal (“RFP”) for pest management contracts and lead their team in developing a range of initiatives including enhanced building supports, data-informed responses

tailored to specific buildings, an improved vendor quality assurance framework, increased collaboration with external partners (including Toronto Public Health and Toronto Employment and Social Services), and engagement strategies with communities, such as educational materials and information sessions. The Manager will engage with both the pest management and broader housing sectors to build on best practices and further develop success measures.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Pest problems within TCHC buildings can significantly disrupt the comfort of our residents and limit the enjoyment of their homes. Without a solid and sustainable pest management program in place, the organization potentially faces orders and costs related to any perceived mismanagement, including potential awards of rent abatement at the Landlord and Tenant Board, Municipal Licensing and Standards (“MLS”) orders for failure to maintain the premises “pest-free,” and Health Protection orders from Toronto Public Health.

SIGNATURE:

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