

Toronto Community Housing



Toronto Community Housing Corporation
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Briefing Note: For Information

To: Tenant Services Committee ("TSC")

From: Nadia Gouveia, Acting Chief Operating Officer

Date: November 9, 2023

Re: Tenant Services Committee Meeting of October 5, 2023 – Business Arising from the Public Meeting Minutes and Action Items Update (Public Action Item #5 re: Tenant Funds for Common Area Projects¹)**A Note about the Program Name**

To date, Toronto Community Housing ("TCHC") has referred to the program in question as 'Participatory Budgeting'. Initiated by concerns raised by members of the Board of Directors and by tenant deputations, staff have changed the program's name, pending tenant input and approval of the new model. To minimize any confusion or risk of misapplication of the term 'Participatory Budgeting' ("PB"), going forward, and until the tenant-led process described in this briefing note unfolds, staff will refer to the program as 'Tenant Funds for Common Area Projects'.

BACKGROUND

From 2000 to 2016, TCHC designated approximately \$5-\$8 million in capital funding each year for inclusion in a tenant-involved decision-making process. This tenant-led process involved tenants and TCHC staff working together to evaluate proposals. Staff members were responsible for obtaining quotes for building priorities, such as playground repairs and carpet replacements. Tenants met and presented their building priorities to other tenants. During these tenant meetings, a structured process identified

¹ Refers to the program formerly known as Participatory Budgeting

tenant allocated capital priorities for the entire Operating Unit, with the top priorities advancing to the City-wide level for prioritization and funding.

Transition to Non-Capital Projects (2016 – on hold)

Consultation sessions on the PB process were held in fall 2016, where tenants identified that capital projects were complex with numerous technical details and components. These factors acted as roadblocks to communicating the scope, price and construction details of projects when voting during allocation days.

As a result, TCHC proposed the introduction of two new processes: a tenant engagement model focused specifically on the capital repair plan, and a tenant distribution process for non-capital items (such as furniture, gardening supplies, plants, exercise equipment, etc.) that enhance tenant engagement in their communities. In December 2016, the Board of Directors approved a motion to suspend the existing PB process for 2017 to allow tenants and staff to work together to improve decision-making in capital repairs and social investment projects ([Report TCHC:2016-52](#)).

During consultations, tenants emphasized that the same level of funding should be available under the revised PB model as was previously available with the original PB program. As 10% of projects previously funded through the PB program were for non-capital items, TCHC's Board-approved 2018 operating budget included \$800,000 (10% of the \$8 million allocated in 2015 for PB) for this revised process. Given the ramping up of funding for TCHC's ten-year capital plan in 2017 and into 2018 (discussions with the City and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation were underway, and the team was optimistic that the plan would be funded), the integration of the capital portion of the eight million into TCHC's larger capital plan was also implemented at this time. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on TCHC's ability to engage with tenants in person, the revised PB program was paused in early 2020.

In 2022, TCHC announced plans to extend the pause on the program to allow for a comprehensive program review. Specifically, the review would evaluate aspects of the program to improve service delivery, develop an improved accountability framework with enhanced procedural controls, and adjust the program to be reflective of the new operational structure implemented in recent years.

TCHC staff are continuing with the evaluation and implementation of the program redesign. To ensure comprehensive input from the newly formed Tenant Advisory Committee (“TAC”), tenant consultations initially scheduled for Q3 2023 have been rescheduled to Q4 2023, which will be targeted tenant consultations to gather valuable insights for the program redesign. Through these consultations, staff will work alongside tenants and tenant leadership to co-create a program that is meaningful, impactful, and reflective of the diverse voices within our communities.

The Future of the Program

The future direction of the program will be shaped by input from tenants and key stakeholders. The program aims to empower tenants to make decisions about their communities, while also addressing challenges and opportunities in their common areas, all while upholding principles of community development and equity.

The redesigned program will maintain its core features, which include:

- Facilitating the allocation of funds to support community-driven projects within common areas of TCHC buildings.
- Involving tenants in the decision-making process related to the allocation of program funding.

The redesign will also incorporate:

- Stakeholder input and insights to reposition and align the program with expectations, needs, and available resources.
- A fair, transparent, and accountable resource distribution process.
- The integration of financial controls within the program.

Tenant Consultation Process

TCHC staff will consult with tenants on funding eligibility criteria, funding cycle frequency, funding amounts, regional distribution of funds, and the process for allocating funds.

Tenant consultations will run in parallel with a survey as part of the general outreach to tenants. During the October 26, 2023 TAC meeting, TCHC staff shared the list of survey questions and TAC members were asked to review the questions and provide feedback to staff prior to the survey being launched for all tenants over a three-to-four-week period.

Following the analysis of survey results, staff will develop questions for focus groups. Additional touch points will take place with Community Representatives and Building Committee members.

Program Name

As part of our commitment to a collaborative, inclusive and tenant-centric approach, TCHC will engage tenants and stakeholders in selecting a name that accurately reflects the program's objectives and values.

Program Funding

Discussions regarding the funding for this program will take place within the framework of the 2024 budget process.

NEXT STEPS

The comprehensive program proposal will be presented to the TSC in Q2 2024.

SIGNATURES:

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Acting Chief Operating Officer

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