

# City of Toronto Budget Workshop

## Report Back



# Report Back

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## A message from the Mayor



On March 7, 2024, I met with Tenant Leaders from across the City to hear their stories and learn about what the issues of TCHC residents are. I heard from those who are making a difference in their neighbourhoods on what matters to them.

I was moved by their stories, their willingness to get involved, along with their neighbours. I asked them, “What would you do if you were Mayor?” And the answers ranged from building more affordable housing, opportunities for young people, more mental health support, improving public transit, and more. As Mayor I will continue to get Toronto back on track, and this report reflects the start of important work we’ll do together.

- Mayor Olivia Chow



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## Introduction

In March 2024, Toronto Community Housing (TCHC) and the City of Toronto partnered to host a City of Toronto Budget Workshop with tenant leaders. This event was held at Central YMCA at 20 Grosvenor Street and brought together over 100 tenant leaders.

With facilitation from Mayor Olivia Chow and words of support from City Councillor Paula Fletcher, Acting TCHC CEO Tom Hunter, Acting TCHC COO Nadia Gouveia, and staff from various TCHC and City of Toronto divisions.

This event was not just a workshop with our city's mayor. It also reflected in action the vision of the Tenant Engagement System to foster relationships with tenants and build vibrant communities through diverse, inclusive, and collaborative methods. This event gave our tenant leaders another opportunity to voice and provide input into enhancing city level services. This opportunity underscored a vital perspective: **that every voice deserves a place at the decision-making table.**

Conversations during the roundtable discussions highlighted the importance of tenant participation in broader civic engagement.

Participants highlighted various city programs and services that directly impacted them and other community members. We also asked participants to role play as the Mayor and provide suggestions on how to fix and address issues.

## Access to broader City of Toronto Services

### What we heard...

- Challenges accessing city services, like community centres and recreational facilities.
- Concerns about long wait times for ambulance services and insufficient support for mental health and youth services.
- Limited library hours and closures on certain days impacts access to resources.

### What if you were the Mayor?

- Suggestions included improving communication about closures and involving communities in decision-making about programming and facilities.
- More resources to support the staffing and work of emergency services (**9-1-1** dispatchers, ambulance/paramedics, crisis support teams).



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- Prioritizing increased funding and resources to make sure libraries are open every day with longer hours and expanded programs.

## Accessibility

### What we heard...

- Challenges with how accessibility in public spaces, including buildings, sidewalks, and public transit impacts residents with mobility issues.
- Need for stronger enforcement of accessibility standards and enhanced planning to make sure these standards are included in development and transit projects.

### What if you were the Mayor?

- Enhance accessibility in public spaces and transportation by improving sidewalks, enforcing accessibility standards, and holding businesses/organizations accountable for creating accessible environments.

## Community safety

### What we heard...

- Concerns about safety within their communities, including issues with crime, drug dealing, and violence.
- Need to prioritize a trauma-informed care approach and better support services for victims of crime.
- The importance of collaboration between law enforcement, community organizations, and government agencies to improve safety measures.
- The impact of violent incidents (including shootings involving loved ones) has deeply affected tenants, leading to fear and mistrust within the community.
- Reported dissatisfaction with the responsiveness and effectiveness of bylaw officers, particularly in resolving disputes and enforcing regulations.
- Need to address safety issues as broader socio-economic issues.

### What if you were the Mayor?

- Addressing violence and safety concerns requires a multifaceted approach, including increased funding for community-based programming.



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- Collaborating with different community stakeholders and enhancing trust between tenants and law enforcement.
- Investing in youth programs and mental health services to help address the root causes of violence and to promote community resilience.
- Increasing the budget for bylaw officers and making sure there are adequate staffing levels in each region to improve responsiveness and enforcement.

## Housing

### What we heard...

- Accessibility to affordable housing and supportive services emerged as a significant concern.
- Recognizing that housing services are a critical aspect of individuals' well-being.
- Issues with maintenance and repairs emphasize the need for investment in existing buildings.

### What if you were the Mayor?

- Increase funding to develop more affordable and supportive housing.
- Construct housing that is accessible.
- Increase funding for housing programs and social services to address maintenance issues and to improve safety.
- Importance of investing in social programs and infrastructure to support vulnerable populations.

## Lack of youth programs

### What we heard...

- The absence of youth programming and community spaces has left younger tenants without opportunities for recreation and personal development.
- Many long-time community members spoke about past programming and events. They expressed a desire to see similar programs return.
- Lack of investment in youth programming not only limits opportunities for personal growth but also contributes to social isolation and disengagement among young people.





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## What if you were the Mayor?

- Prioritizing renovation and repurposing unused community spaces for youth programming.
- Provide more recreational and educational opportunities for youth.
- Engaging young residents in the planning and implementation of these programs
- Reallocating budget resources from other areas, like policing, towards youth programs would demonstrate a commitment to investing in their future.

## Mental health support

### What we heard...

- There is insufficient funding and staffing for mental health services, with requests for more resources, training, and supportive housing.
- Concerns were raised about the inadequacy of mental health support services, including long wait times and insufficient staffing at crisis hotlines (like **2-1-1**).
- A lack of funding and training for crisis staff and a need for more supportive housing options were also emphasized as critical issues affecting community members.

### What if you were the Mayor?

- Advocating for more funding to improve mental health services, including crisis hotlines, supportive housing options and training for staff.
- Collaboration with different levels of government and community stakeholders would be essential to address the root causes of mental health issues and provide comprehensive support to residents in need.

## TTC (transit services)

### What we heard...

- Issues with public transit, like limited bus services during peak hours and delays, cause some to rely on cars instead.
- For those who cannot access a car, extreme delays can impact work, school, and appointments.
- Multiple complaints were made about the TTC, including inconsistent service, safety concerns, accessibility problems and disruptions due to construction.



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- There were discussions about the need for better coordination and transparency among government agencies to address these issues effectively. An example given was the Crosstown LRT, leading to traffic congestion and disruptions in neighborhoods.

## What if you were the Mayor?

- Importance of prioritizing customer satisfaction and responsiveness within the TTC.
- Implementing changes like making sure express buses stop at critical intersections.
- Open communication channels for customer feedback.
- Investing in safety measures to address concerns about transit safety and enhancing accessibility features.
- Increasing the frequency of buses.
- Improving customer service training provided to TTC staff.
- Improve coordination and transparency among government agencies and stakeholders involved in infrastructure projects like the Crosstown LRT.

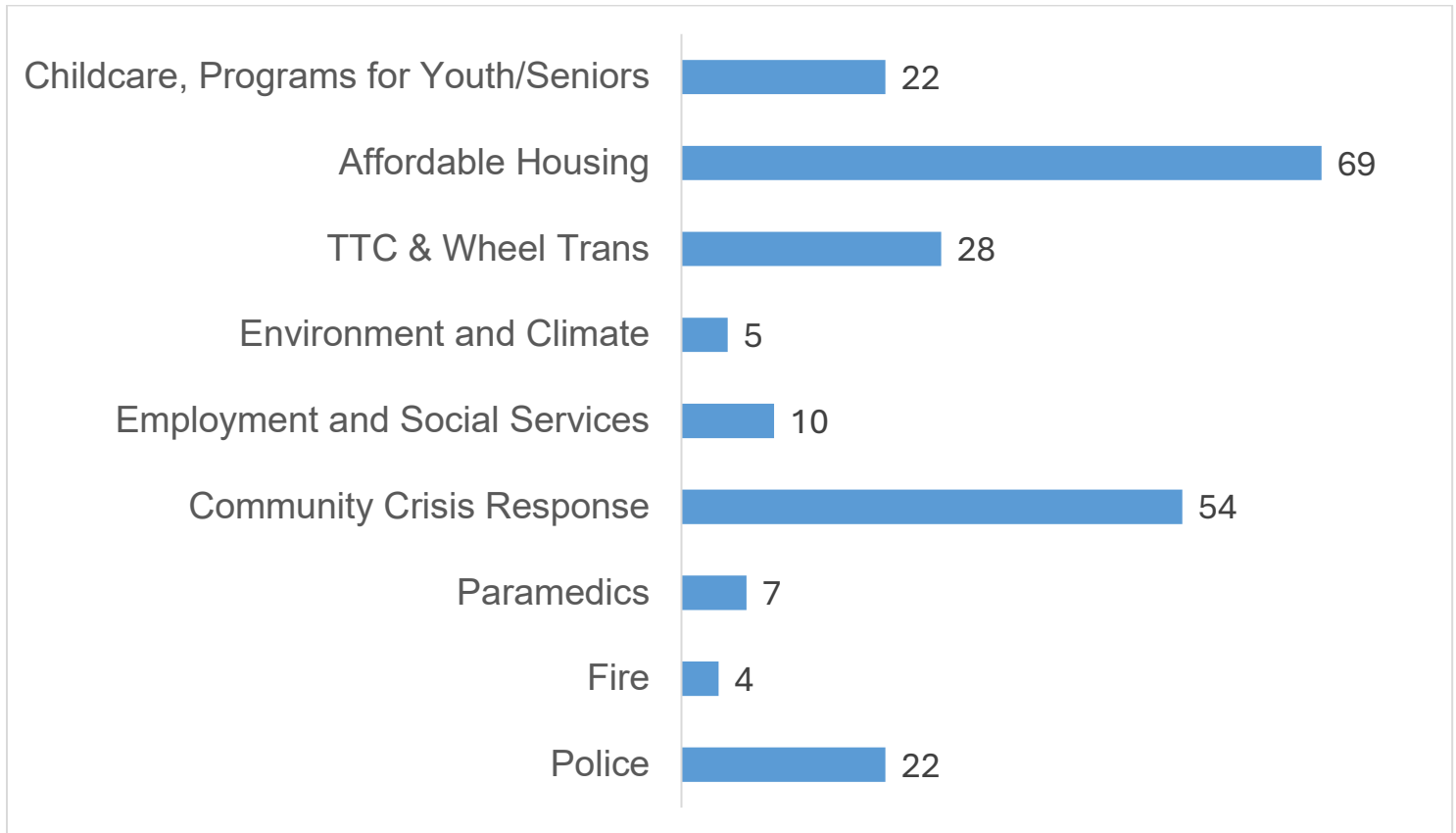
## TCHC issues

- Various issues related to community safety were discussed, including the need for increased crisis management training for CSU officers and increased CCTV coverage.
- Concerns were raised about the lack of trauma-informed care with a desire for more qualified staff with compassion to assist tenants/families in crisis.
- Need for transparency within Toronto Community Housing, with suggestions for restructuring processes and increasing accountability.
- Maintenance issues, including staffing shortages and delayed repairs, were reported in several buildings.
- Concerns were raised about the difficulty of transferring to other units.
- Tenants reported issues with maintenance, security, and community engagement.
- Need for live-in superintendents to improve building responsiveness.



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## Dotmocracy results





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## Question and answer report back

These questions were submitted to Mayor Chow as part of the general question and answer period at the end of the evening. These answers were provided by the Mayor's engagement team or Toronto Community Housing, depending on the nature of the questions.

### **Why do seniors have to wait so long to get housing?**

The City's Access to Housing program is responsible for administering the Centralized Waiting List (CWL) for Toronto's Rent-Geared-to-Income subsidy.

The average wait for a senior household looking for a studio or one-bedroom unit is nine years. In 2023, there were 85 thousand eligible households on the CWL. 34,500 of those were senior households. In the same year, 2788 units were filled off the CWL, of which 1380 senior households were housed.

The waiting period for senior households is impacted by a high volume of senior households on the waiting list and the relatively small number of units that become available for rent within a calendar year.

### **Is it possible to approve additional money for Toronto Community Housing to cover maintenance, improve security, and fund programs for every demographic?**

As part of the 2024 budget, the City made new investments in TCHC to help support operating and maintenance costs. These investments included:

- An increase of \$40 million (14.7 per cent) to TCHC's operating base subsidy to address the increasing cost of doing business and delivering front-line services to tenants.
- An additional \$33.6 million in one-time funding to help with TCHC and TSHC's operations.
- \$198.8 million to support new Revitalization projects over the next 10 years.
- Capital funding of \$1.6 billion over the next 10 years to support repairs and maintenance of aging buildings.

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We encourage tenants to stay tuned for the 2025 budget process which will involve broad community consultations. This will be your opportunity to provide more direct feedback and suggestions on what investments you'd like to see in TCHC.

TCHC has continued to deliver on our mandate with the funding and resources that we have available, maximizing what we have to maintain an aging housing stock and to provide supportive services to our tenants.

## **What can be done to see more youths get jobs in the City where experience would not be a setback for children?**

The City offers a range of employment-related services and supports for youth looking to find work. [You can learn more about these programs on the City's website.](#)

## **Can you bring back manufacturing jobs to this city? All the companies have left like Campbell, Coca Cola, etc.**

Manufacturing has been a critical component of the origins of Toronto's success as the economic engine of Canada. Manufacturing has declined for a variety of reasons (including a high Canadian dollar, recession(s), globalization, off shoring and near shoring to name a few). Despite this, the manufacturing sector has stabilized in the last decade and now represents almost 8.5 per cent of total employment in Toronto and close to 130,000 jobs.

While our existing manufacturing base remains strong, it is not immune to immense competition and pressure locally, nationally, and internationally.

The City of Toronto is working hard to support manufacturing in Toronto and help to protect employment areas across the entire City where manufacturing operations exist. You can read more about employment areas and their importance in ["Our Plan Toronto" report \(PDF\).](#)

## **Why does the Mayor not ask for additional funds (from the Province per renter) to subsidize rent to help pay for community improvement?**

The Mayor was key in advocating for a New Deal for our City, calling on both the Province and Federal governments to contribute their fair share towards housing, transit and the other big issues in the City.

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The City secured a historic New Deal for our city with the Province of Ontario. This deal unlocks billions for people. Money that will be used to build more affordable housing, with all the things we love in our neighbourhoods like parks, libraries, recreation centres. It will also be used to fix our aging subway system.

The Mayor will continue to advocate for other levels of government to support the City in tackling the major challenges we face, particularly around housing.

## **Will we have affordable housing for low-income families to own? Similar to Habitat for Humanity?**

The City is working with TCHC to develop opportunities for TCHC tenants to purchase affordable home ownership housing.

The City, TCHC, and Habitat for Humanity have recently launched an affordable ownership program for the Alexandra Park community. This approach could be replicated at other TCHC revitalization communities, but it is completely subject to funding availability. Funding from the federal or provincial governments would be needed to scale up the program.

## **Why is Nathan Phillips Square still fenced off at the North side? They did it during COVID. Why have they not removed it?**

This fencing was put up as a heightened security measure.

## **Why are heritage buildings being demolished to build towers?**

Every development application is unique and must be reviewed for compliance with the policies in the City's Official Plan, and with Provincial planning policies. These policies include the requirement to conserve our significant heritage buildings. Conserving our heritage buildings is not about preventing changes to them but managing those changes so that they can be adapted to meet modern requirements and meet the City's priorities (such as the need for affordable housing). It is also important to make sure that what makes them significant is preserved for future generations.

When a development application is submitted that affects heritage buildings, City staff look to integrate the heritage buildings into the development. There are many examples of

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this across the City where towers are situated behind or to the side of heritage buildings. Very few designated heritage buildings are demolished in Toronto. Where this does happen, it is normally because of structural issues that would prevent their conservation.

## **How do you ensure your investments in City services create sustainable improvements?**

The 2024 City of Toronto Budget represents significant, multi-year, investments in housing, protecting and empowering renters, transit, safety and more. The Mayor is committed to building a more affordable, caring, and safer city, for the long term.

## **What are you doing for TTC safety?**

Safety on the TTC is a key priority. The Mayor worked with the TTC to develop a plan for hiring 178 more front-line TTC workers. This includes more supervisors, customer service agents and support staff to make stations safer.

The TTC is also continuing mental health and social support for people experiencing homelessness and individuals with complex needs.

[You can read more about the steps the city and TTC have taken on safety in a recent announcement.](#)

## **How do we stop the crisis revolving door?**

Mayor Chow has worked with City Council to provide greater support to those experiencing crisis in our communities. As part of this work, last year Council expanded the Toronto Community Crisis Service (TCCS) city-wide to become the fourth municipal emergency service alongside Toronto Fire Services, Toronto Paramedic Services and the Toronto Police Service.

TCCS provides free, confidential, in-person mental health supports from mobile crisis worker teams. The service provides a non-police-led, community-based, client-centered, and trauma-informed response to mental health crisis calls and wellness checks.



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## **What roles can the Councillors play in engaging our communities?**

An essential part of being a City Councillor is working to engage the communities they represent. Councillors can help gather community members together, and then bring their voices right into City Hall. Many Councillors host town halls in their Wards to bring residents together, or will head out themselves to knock on doors, and hear directly from their constituents.

## **What will it take for Councillors and their teams to be on the ground and get an understanding of our area, so that things can be accurately reported to committee and council meetings?**

Getting an issue on your Councillor's radar is often about reaching out and alerting them to the issue. You can do this by inviting them to join you for a meeting or emailing/calling their office to make sure they are aware of what's impacting your community. Councillors are generally very responsive to their constituents and are keen to know what's going on in their Ward.

If you do not know who your Councillor is, or how to get in contact with them, you can find the appropriate details at [toronto.ca/city-government/council/](https://toronto.ca/city-government/council/) or by calling 3-1-1.

## **How does the City of Toronto and Toronto Community Housing intend to reduce the shortages of Toronto Police and Community Safety Unit staff?**

Toronto Community Housing will address any shortages through hiring and recruiting up to our approved complement of staff with board approval. We will also use a temporary leverage of additional private security guards to support vulnerable communities.

## **How do we get cameras in the building to stop fire alarms? It occurs too many times a day at 10 Glen Everest Rd. Scarborough.**

On March 26, 2024, Toronto Community Housing's acting East Region General Manager approved the scoping of work to install cameras at 10 Glen Everest. The design is 90 per cent complete. We are in the process of site visits with internal stakeholders to make sure the correct design is implemented. This project will be going out for quotes close to August 2024.



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## **Will there be a time when we have consistent security in housing?**

TCHC's Community Safety Unit (CSU) will continue to lead community safety efforts at TCHC for the foreseeable future. TCHC uses third-party security contracts to augment the CSU's work. Security companies are identified through a public tender process on 3 to 5-year terms. As a public organization, TCHC is required to engage in the RFP process and this process determines what security company will be successful in getting the contract.

As long as TCHC relies on the services from third-party security companies, it should be expected that the contracts will change from one provider to another with some regularity. TCHC does work with the successful companies and the outgoing provider to retain as much of the workforce as is possible. The goal is that even if the security company changes, there will be some continuity in the Guards who are providing the services.

## **How can we make transit more reliable for students who commute?**

The Mayor is working hard to get the City back on track. An essential part of that is improving the reliability of transit service for Torontonians. While there is still a way to go, the City has already begun making improvements to service reliability. Starting with the 2024 Budget, the Mayor invested new money into the TTC budget to improve service.

## **What can be done to clean our neighborhoods better? There are also issues with public spaces, health matters, and drug dealers who use our public spaces and make them dirty.**

There is a lot of work underway right now. The Mayor has been committed to making our City a safer, more affordable, and caring place. Those priorities were reflected in the 2024 Budget where there were significant investments in the services that will improve our communities. One example is the increased budget for Municipal Licensing and Standards to hire more By-Law Enforcement Officers, who will help keep our public spaces cleaner.

## **When Metrolinx opens up the transit cross country line, will you be hiring tenants who are willing and able to work?**

This is out of scope for both the City of Toronto and TCHC to answer.



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## **If you are no longer allowed to smoke in public and the City no longer cleans the sidewalk, why not make the bars and nightclubs responsible for keeping sidewalks free of butts?**

You are allowed to smoke in public in Toronto, as long as you are further than 9m away from the entrance of a public building. The City does clean the sidewalks on major arterial streets. Municipal by-laws require all business licensees to keep public sidewalks free of litter. Business licensees are also required to install and maintain temporary cigarette butt receptacles on the pedestrian right-of-way during business hours.

Entertainment establishments/nightclubs are specifically required to keep the areas around them clean and free of litter, waste, and other debris.

## **How do you plan on bringing consistent transparency within the budget?**

The City of Toronto strives for transparency within all its divisions. In the case of the Toronto Community Housing Corporation, you can review a detailed budget breakdown here: [2024 Capital and Operating Budget Notes - Toronto Community Housing Corporation and Toronto Seniors Housing Corporation \(PDF\)](https://toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2024/bu/bgrd/backgroundfile-242349.pdf) ([toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2024/bu/bgrd/backgroundfile-242349.pdf](https://toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2024/bu/bgrd/backgroundfile-242349.pdf)).

## **Will you close the hubs that are not working?**

Tenant Service Hubs were created to provide “one-stop shop” services by bringing staff closer to tenants in their buildings and communities. In 2023, TCHC started a review of the Tenant Service Hub model. The review identified challenges with staff availability and consistency of service.

TCHC is currently conducting a full review of the Tenant Service Hub model that focuses on improving the overall quality and consistency of services delivered at our Hub locations.

## **Tenant action fund needs to go. Will you really see what is going on?**

Tenant Action Funds (TAF) are resources available for tenants and tenant-led groups to fund projects and initiatives that will respond to tenant-identified priorities. They are an important part of the TCHC Engagement System; tenants can apply for these funds, while other tenants sit on the Tenant Action Fund Tables to review and approve requests.

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Last year, 347 Tenant Action Fund applications were approved to support tenant-led programs and services. Some of these applications included:

- Ongoing programming in our buildings including breakfast clubs, food security, art, and afterschool activities.
- A back-to-school BBQ
- CPR and first aid, food handlers and Smart Serve trainings
- A basketball tournament, Ontario Science Centre, and Toronto Zoo trips
- Community room equipment upgrades

Not all applications are approved, and we understand that can be frustrating. We are always open to learning from tenants. If you have feedback on the TAF program, please send it to [tenantengagement@torontohousing.ca](mailto:tenantengagement@torontohousing.ca).

Tenant Action Funds will continue to be available while we are doing consultations on the program formerly known as Participatory Budgeting.

**Can TCHC get an anti-Asian group? There is already an anti-Black group but as an Asian person, I am targeted all the time.**

Additional anti-racism initiatives have not yet been explored, as TCHC aligns these strategies with those from the City of Toronto. The Centre for Advancing the Interests of Black People (or The Centre) was established as part of the city's and TCHC's broader Confronting Anti-Black Racism strategy. The City of Toronto has not yet established a corresponding anti-Asian racism group, but future conversations regarding anti-racism initiatives can occur. They will be part of ongoing discussions with the City of Toronto.

While these discussions are ongoing, it is important to report these critical issues through the human rights complaint process. You can submit a complaint or learn more about the process, and supports available to you, at [torontohousing.ca/humanrights](https://torontohousing.ca/humanrights).

**What should I do about the people who do not put the garbage where it belongs [at my building], or the people who want us to open the door and if we do not, they start banging on the window?**

Staff in TCHC buildings work to address issues of cleanliness and improper disposal of



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garbage as quickly as possible. Where there is an ongoing issue with tenants putting garbage in hallways or in front of garbage chutes, building staff implement a number of tactics to address the issue. This includes improved signage, increased hallway and garbage room monitoring and cleaning, and review of garbage bag contents to determine tenants who are chronic offenders. If tenants have specific concerns about improper disposal of garbage by their neighbours we ask that they contact the Client Care Centre (**416-981-5500**) or raise the issue with their local building superintendent.

Non-tenants attempting to gain access to TCHC buildings is an ongoing and significant safety issue. We appreciate tenants' diligence on not opening the lobby door for strangers. These situations can be scary and challenging for tenants when those trying to gain access are aggressive. Tenants who have concerns for their immediate safety should always contact **9-1-1** if it is an emergency. Ongoing concerns of this nature should be reported to our CSU team (**416-921-2323**) and to the local building staff. They will work to implement a safety plan in the building to attempt to stop the frequent attempts to enter.

Additional comments about City Services were submitted to the Mayor, but they were not in the form of a question. The Mayor has added these to the overall learnings from the session and will use them to help inform her team's work going forward.

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