

Toronto Community Housing



Deputation Policy for Stakeholders

Item 10

July 3, 2024

Governance, Communications and Human Resources Committee

Report: GCHRC:2024-20

To: Governance, Communications and Human Resources Committee (“GCHRC”)

From: General Counsel and Corporate Secretary

Date: June 24, 2024

PURPOSE:

This report proposes actions arising from the review of Toronto Community Housing Corporation’s Deputation Policy for Stakeholders.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that the Governance Communications and Human Resources Committee direct staff to:

1. Create educational resources for tenants, including updates to the Deputation page on Toronto Community Housing Corporation’s website, to provide advice to tenants and members of the public regarding the way they can make deputations;
2. Develop and implement an email distribution list advising interested parties of matters that are going to be considered at future Board and Committee meetings; and
3. Undertake a review of Toronto Community Housing Corporation’s Deputation Policy for Stakeholders to simplify the language used in the Policy.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

Report History:

At its January 30, 2023 meeting, the GCHRC considered [Report GCHRC:2023-03](#) regarding the 2023 GCHRC Public Work Plan, and directed management to review the Deputation Policy as part of the annual policy review process.

At its April 11, 2023 meeting, the GCHRC considered [Report GCHRC:2023-16](#) regarding the 2023 Policy Review Schedule, which noted that management had identified one policy requiring Board approval for review in 2023, the Deputation Policy for Stakeholders.

At its July 14, 2023 meeting, the GCHRC considered [Report GCHRC:2023-23](#), which provided an update on the plan for the review of the Deputation Policy for Stakeholders. In its discussion of the report, the GCHRC stressed the importance of providing education related to the deputation process as part of consultations.

Consultations

While preparing this report, TCHC has engaged in a consultation process to gain input regarding the actions to be recommended as part of this Policy review.

Tenant Survey

In March of 2024, TCHC conducted a survey of tenants to understand their opinions about the deputation process. Roughly seven hundred tenants responded to the survey, which included fourteen questions. While this survey response is welcome, only seventeen (17%) percent of respondents advised that they had ever watched a Board or Committee meeting and only thirteen (13%) percent of respondents advised that they had previously made a deputation to the Board. Nevertheless, survey responses provide insight into the way tenants perceive the deputation process to respond to their needs and interests. However, not every respondent to the survey responded to every survey question. Survey responses with a low response rate may not be representative of those views. A breakdown of survey responses is provided in Attachment 1 to this Report.

Survey responses with a higher response rate would suggest that respondents have not previously deputed to the Board because they did not know that they could do so or did not know how to make a deputation. Seventy-three (73%) percent of survey respondents indicated that this was

the case. A lower percentage of respondents indicated that technology limited their ability to do so.

Survey respondents expressed the greatest interest in the topics that are considered at the Tenant Services Committee and the greatest desire to make deputations at that Committee. In addition, survey respondents indicated that they would be interested in receiving email notification of upcoming Board and Committee meetings.

Attendance at the Tenant Advisory Committee

On March 6, 2024, the members of the Governance team attended the meeting of the Tenant Advisory Committee (“TAC”) to discuss the Deputation Policy. TAC members suggested that TCHC simplify the language used in Board and Committee reports so that they are more accessible. A similar recommendation was made about the Deputation Policy itself.

TAC members also made suggestions regarding the meeting process. They suggested that TCHC consider shifting the time at which Board meetings take place, as tenants may be at work or at school when the Board is meeting. They also suggested that it was important that Board meetings are scheduled consistently at one location so that tenants know where to go if they want to attend. Additionally, they suggested that TCHC consider adopting measures that would expand the ability of tenants to depute at meetings that they cannot attend, by recording their deputation in advance.

TAC members made suggestions regarding the need for tenant education. They suggested that TCHC host tenant education sessions at which they teach tenants how to participate by focusing on giving a good deputation and the requirements in the Deputation Policy. Alternatively, TAC members suggested that TCHC create a staff position to assist tenants in preparing deputations or worksheets that would provide step by step instructions on how to prepare a deputation.

TAC members suggested that members of the Board who are TCHC tenants might provide regular updates to tenants regarding matters before the Board.

Focus Group Discussions with Prior Deputants

In April of 2024, TCHC undertook two Focus Group discussions with prior deputants. Each Focus Group session was attended by approximately 6 to 12 former deputants. Participants were asked to respond to three questions, and in response, provided the following advice that is summarized in Attachment 2 to this report. In general, participants expressed an interest in greater, more effective communication about matters that are being

considered by the Board and its Committees and opportunities to provide education to tenants regarding the deputation process so that it is more accessible to them.

Board Survey

Between April 17, 2024, and May 3, 2024, TCHC conducted a survey of Board members to learn their views about the deputation process. Generally, directors who responded to the survey indicated that they believed that it was important to hear from deputants, that the process through which tenants can use deputations to communicate directly with the Board contributed positively to the Board meeting process and that the five (5) minute limit to deputations was appropriate.

Directors expressed differing views regarding elements of the deputation process that did not work well. Directors generally expressed an interest in expanding the number and diversity of tenants who make deputations to the Board. Directors expressed different views as to the importance of ensuring that tenants hold to the Agenda topic to which they are deputing. Some directors expressed concerns regarding the amount of meeting time that is required for deputations when they are unrelated to topics on the Agenda, while others expressed the opinion that the Board should apply leniency to this requirement.

One Director suggested that the Board might consider receiving pre-recorded video deputations and another suggested that TCHC might work with tenant groups to promote engagement with the Board. A Board member recommended that the Board should be clear with deputants about the expectation that they should be on topic, and another expressed the view that only the Board or Committee Chair should determine whether deputants have done so.

NEXT STEPS

No major revisions to the Deputation Policy are proposed because of this Policy review. However, based upon the feedback that TCHC has received through its consultation process, there are several actions that we can take to improve upon the way we provide tenants the opportunity to depute to the Board and its Committees and to be aware of the matters that are being discussed at the Board. These matters include:

- The addition of educational resources for tenants, including updates to the TCHC Deputation page on Toronto Community Housing

Corporation's website, incorporating advice to TCHC tenants and members of the public regarding the way they can make deputations;

- The introduction of communication tools such as an email distribution list advising interested parties of matters that are going to be considered at future Board and Committee meetings; and
- Reviewing the Deputation Policy to simplify the language used in the Policy, to make it more accessible.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS:

Pursuant to the City of Toronto's Shareholder Direction, the Board is required to conduct its business through meetings that are open to the public, subject to certain identified exemptions that authorize the Board to consider certain matters in a closed meeting. Through the Board's existing Meeting Procedures, members of the public are provided with the opportunity to make deputations to the Board, as part of its public meeting process.

In this regard, the Board recognizes that deputations to the Board are an important aspect of the Board meeting process through which deputants provide the Board with information and clarify issues, not available in writing or not brought before the Board as part of a staff report. The information provided to the Board in this way can and does facilitate better decision making by the Board.

At the same time, Directors are required, in the exercising of their powers and discharging their duties, to exercise the care, diligence and skill that a reasonably prudent person would exercise in comparable circumstances. Complying with this standard of care requires that meetings of the Board and its Committees are conducted efficiently and effectively and that directors are afforded the time that they require to address the various matters on the Board agenda.

SIGNATURE:

"Darragh Meagher"

Darragh Meagher
General Counsel and Corporate Secretary

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Summary of Tenant Survey Responses
2. Summary of Focus Group Recommendations

STAFF CONTACTS:

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Item 10 – Deputation Policy
 Public GCHRC Meeting – July 3, 2024
 Report #: GCHRC:2024-20
Attachment 1

Q1: Have you ever watched a Board or Committee meeting in-person or online?	
Yes	124 (17% overall; 18% of those who responded)
No	548 (78% overall; 72% of those who responded)
Blank	34 (5%)
Response rate	95% (672/706)

Q2: If yes, when was the last time you watched a Board or Committee meeting in-person or online?	
In the last year, but only once	31 (4% overall; 25% of those who responded)
In the last year, more than once	44 (6% overall; 35% of those who responded)
Never	2 (0% overall; 2% of those who responded)
Not in the last year, more than once	16 (23% overall; 13% of those who responded)
Not in the last year, only once	31 (4% overall; 25% of those who responded)
Blank	582 (83% overall)
Response rate	18% (124/706)

Q3: Have you ever read any Board or Committee reports created by TCHC staff on work being done across the organization?	
Yes	212 (30% overall; 32% of those who responded)
No	457 (65% overall; 68% of those who responded)
Blank	37 (5%)
Response rate	95% (669/706)

Q4: If yes, when was the last time you read any Board or Committee reports created by TCHC staff on work being done across the organization?

In the last year, but only once	58 (8% overall; 28% of those who responded)
In the last year, more than once	104 (15% overall; 50% of those who responded)
Never	2 (0% overall; 1% of those who responded)
Not in the last year, more than once	23 (3% overall; 11% of those who responded)
Not in the last year, only once	19 (3% overall; 9% of those who responded)
Blank	500 (71% overall)
Response rate	18% (206/706)

Q5: Have you ever deputed/shared your experience and insights on a topic being discussed at a Board or Committee meeting?

Yes	93 (13% overall; 14% of those who responded)
No	563 (80% overall; 86% of those who responded)
Blank	50 (7%)
Response rate	93% (656/706)

Q6: If yes, when was the most recent time you made a deputation to the Board or its Committees?

In the last year, but only once	25 (4% overall; 27% of those who responded)
In the last year, more than once	27 (4% overall; 29% of those who responded)
Never	1 (0% overall; 1% of those who responded)

Not in the last year, more than once	15 (3% overall; 16% of those who responded)
Not in the last year, only once	24 (3% overall; 26% of those who responded)
Blank	614 (87% overall)
Response rate	13% (92/706)
Q7: If you have deputed in the past, would you be inclined to depute again?	
Yes	69 (10% overall; 75% of those who responded)
No	23 (3% overall; 25% of those who responded)
Blank	614 (87%)
Response rate	13% (92/706)

Q8: If you would not be included to depute again, why? Please check all that apply.	
The timing of the meetings does not work with my schedule	4/8 (50% of those who responded)
The location of the meetings is difficult for me to get to	3/8 (38% of those who responded)
I do not have access to the necessary technology to depute (e.g. computer with Internet to attend a virtual meeting, email to submit my deputation, etc.)	1/8 (13% of those who responded)
Blank	698 (99%)
Response rate	1% (8/706)

Q9: If you have not deputed in the past, why? Please check all that apply.	
I did not know I could depute at Board and Committee meetings	286 (41% overall; 70% of those who responded)
I do not know how to make a deputation	228 (32% overall; 56% of those who responded)
I do not have access to the necessary technology to depute (e.g. computer with Internet to	49 (7% overall; 12% of those who responded)

Q9: If you have not deputed in the past, why? Please check all that apply.

attend a virtual meeting, email to submit my deputation, etc.)	
The location of the meetings is difficult for me to get to	75 (11% overall; 18% overall)
The timing of the meetings does not work with my schedule	88 (12% overall; 22% of those who responded)
Blank	300 (42%)
Response rate	58% (406/706)

Q10: Are you interested in the topics that the Board or its Committees have oversight of? Select all that apply.

Building Investment, Finance and Audit Committee	294 (42% overall; 45% of those who responded)
Governance, Communications and Human Resources Committee	284 (40% overall; 43% of those who responded)
Tenant Services Committee	492 (70% overall; 75% of those who responded)
Board of Directors	252 (36% overall; 39% of those who responded)
I am not interested in any of the topics discussed by the Board or its Committees	122 (17% overall; 19% of those who responded)
Blank	53 (8%)
Response rate	92% (653/706)

Q11: If yes, would you be interested in providing feedback or your insights (written or verbal) when relevant reports are discussed at Board and Committee meetings? Select all that apply.

Building Investment, Finance and Audit Committee	252 (36% overall; 45% of those who responded)
Governance, Communications and Human Resources Committee	257 (36% overall; 46% of those who responded)
Tenant Services Committee	459 (65% overall; 82% of those who responded)

Board of Directors	255 (36% overall; 45% of those who responded)
I am not interested in any of the topics discussed by the Board or its Committees	35 (5% overall; 6% of those who responded)
Blank	145 (21%)
Response rate	79% (561/706)

Q12: Are you aware that the Board and each of its Committees meet at least once per quarter (four to six times per year) to discuss TCHC's work in the above areas?

Yes	182 (26% overall; 27% of those who responded)
No	488 (69% overall; 73% of those who responded)
Blank	36 (5%)
Response rate	95% (670/706)

Q13: Are you aware that you can subscribe to TCHC's Board Live YouTube channel to be notified of upcoming meetings and to watch them?

Yes	130 (18% overall; 20% of those who responded)
No	526 (75% overall; 80% of those who responded)
Blank	50 (7%)
Response rate	93% (656/706)

Q14: How would you like to be informed of upcoming Board and Committee meetings? Select all that apply.

Email notifications	387 (55% overall; 82% of those who responded)
Information posted on the TCHC website	84 (12% overall; 18% of those who responded)
Notifications on TCHC's Board Live YouTube channel	76 (11% overall; 16% of those who responded)

Q14: How would you like to be informed of upcoming Board and Committee meetings? Select all that apply.	
I am not interested in being informed of upcoming Board and Committee meetings	50 (7% overall; 11% of those who responded)
Blank	233 (33%)
Response rate	67% (473/706)

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Attachment 2

Question	Advice
<p>What areas of the deputation process are currently working well?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenants can submit deputations in various formats (in person, virtual or in writing) • Tenants can depute directly to the Board • The deputation process is accessible to deputants who require mobility devices • Governance staff with whom deputants engage are helpful
<p>What are some barriers with the deputation process? What improvements can be made to overcome those barriers?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TCHC could be more effective in sharing matters that will be or have been the subject of discussion at Board meetings • TCHC tenants may be intimidated by the deputation process and would benefit from education regarding how to make a deputation • While the Board’s business is conducted in English, it may not be a tenant’s first language • Changes to the time or location of meetings may more significantly impact tenants who rely on Wheel-trans to attend • At times, Board members may not be engaged by a tenant’s deputation • The requirement to limit a deputation to a matter on the meeting Agenda may limit the ability of a deputant to speak about an issue that is important to them • Reducing the amount of time for a deputation, when there are multiple deputations, may limit the ability of deputants to speak on that topic

Question	Advice
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The distribution of meeting materials less than seven days before the meeting may limit the ability of a deputant to prepare • Follow up with deputants after the deputation may not be effective • Greater communication about the Deputation Policy is required • Board reports could be written more clearly • It is not always clear to a deputant that the Board or Committee considered their comments in its decision making
<p>What are some of ways to improve communication to tenants to increase their awareness of the Board and its Committees, and the opportunity to provide their feedback on matters considered by the Board and its Committees?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TCHC could consider a Board newsletter and posters in TCHC buildings as tools to communicate matters considered at the Board and its Committees • Consider issues that are important to tenants when creating Board and Committee meeting Agendas • Suggestions related to the Tenant Advisory Committee were brought up by meeting participants • Create a tenant-staff working group to educate tenants regarding the deputation process • Identify tenant leaders and direct communications to them regarding matters taking place at the Board so that they can share them with others