

Toronto Community Housing



## Confronting Anti-Black Racism Strategy Update

Item 10

February 15, 2024

Board of Directors

**Report:** TCHC:2024-05

**To:** Board of Directors

**From:** Acting Director, Centre for Advancing the Interests of Black People

**Date:** January 12, 2024

### PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to provide a Year 2 annual update on the ongoing work of The Centre for Advancing the Interests of Black People (the “Centre”) and the Confronting Anti-Black Racism (“CABR”) Strategy and Action Plan, which captures corporate and divisional priority actions for 2023. This report highlights the progress made to advance the action items under the 8-Point Plan.

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that the Board receive this report for information.

### REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Centre is responsible for providing subject matter expertise to Toronto Community Housing Corporation’s (“TCHC”) leadership and corporate divisions on the implementation of TCHC’s CABR Strategy and inter-divisional action plan.

The advancement of the CABR Strategy and 8-Point Plan will continue through collaborative efforts across TCHC to successfully complete deliverables within the CABR Action Plan.

## **1. Addressing Anti-Black Racism and Cultural Redress**

Systemic racism and discrimination demand substantial shifts in policy and practices across TCHC. While individuals may encounter instances of interpersonal racism, it is the entrenched institutional barriers to achieving equitable outcomes that cause the greatest harm.

One of the priorities of the 8-Point Plan includes Addressing Anti-Black Racism and Cultural Redress at TCHC by working to shift the corporate culture. This will aid in better understanding and actively confronting anti-Black racism in TCHC practices, policies, and service delivery. The status of the major deliverables under this priority will be discussed in greater detail below, including:

- Develop and deliver staff trainings;
- Driving systemic change;
- Tenant Advisory Committee; and
- Establish a cross-functional project team to design, implement, and monitor the collection of disaggregated race-based data.

### **Develop and Deliver Staff Trainings**

This action emphasizes the importance of enhancing TCHC staff competence, training, and comprehension in relation to the application of an anti-Black racism analysis. This work is critical for dismantling systemic obstacles and harnessing the diverse experiences, expertise, capabilities, and talents of the Black community for TCHC residents.

The CABR Strategy outlines 2,100 staff should receive training, totaling 12,000 hours, which was prior to Toronto Seniors Housing Corporation (“TSHC”) becoming a separate entity from TCHC. In 2023, 1,054 staff across TCHC and TSHC received CABR training, for a total of 6,324 hours through 61 sessions. The average planning and coordination time is six to eight weeks for each division or business unit when accounting for the coordination with people leaders, communication to staff, booking spaces, and scheduling.

16 focus groups with TCHC divisions and/or business units have been facilitated with TCHC business units to align CABR training to the work of the business units. The focus groups were conducted to assess learning needs through workplace case studies, and to create focused sessions for each staff group. Focus groups spanned one to three hours.

795 of the 1054 staff were trained in 2023 were TCHC staff. Approximately 4,746 hours of training were delivered to TCHC staff and leaders in the respective divisions over 47 sessions delivered weekly to 20 to 30 staff per session, with make-up sessions at the end of the month before shifting to the next staff group.

Divisions trained include:

- People and Culture;
- Finance;
- Communications;
- Planned Project Services;
- Operations (including frontline staff across the regions); and
- Office of the Commissioner of Housing Equity.

In addition, 259 TSHC staff received training between April and July across 11 sessions. Three make-up sessions were delivered in September 2023, with 14 total sessions delivered.

### **Staff Response to CABR Training**

Learner responses to training surveys are sent to all staff who take training at TCHC through Talent Connect. In September 2023, due to low completion of post-training surveys, a pilot was launched to get feedback from CABR training participants. Through collaboration with the Communications division, a pre-and-post training survey was developed. Survey completion increased by 23% when participants were provided time at the training session.

Participant feedback from the pre-training survey indicated an average of 43% were aware of the CABR strategy prior to being registered for the training and 57% were unsure or not aware of the CABR strategy. Approximately 72% of staff indicated they understand anti-Black racism in the pretraining survey.

97% of participants indicated in the post training survey that they could explain anti-Black racism, 79% stated they would use the knowledge to improve customer service, and 59% stated they would commit to learning more about all forms of oppression.

Overall, training participants indicated increased understanding of anti-Black racism and impact on Black communities.

### **ELT DiversiPro Individual Assessment and Coaching**

The Centre, in collaboration with People and Culture, procured *DiversiPro*, a Black-led, anti-racism and Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (“EDI”) firm, to work with TCHC’s executive leadership team (“ELT”) to develop a roadmap to deliver on the EDI and CABR strategies. The consulting team engaged with TCHC leadership in a series of individual assessments during Q3 and Q4 2023.

ELT participated in the Culturally Adaptive Leader Coaching program, which provides the process, structure, and expertise to guide participants in awakening their potential to champion Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Antiracism (“IDEA”). Participants discover their strengths and areas for development in navigating and bridging across differences. In addition, they develop the mindset, knowledge and skills that are critical to advancing IDEA in their organization or community.

One-to-one coaching with all members of the ELT will be completed in Q2 of 2024.

### **Driving Systemic Change**

Driving systemic change requires a proactive approach to address anti-Black racism across TCHC and its communities. The CABR strategy and 8-Point Plan both outline TCHC’s comprehensive approach to drive systemic change by addressing the root cause of racial disparities and fostering inclusive and equitable spaces for tenants to live and thrive. Actions geared towards driving systemic change are listed below.

The Centre provided over 219 hours in coaching and planning support across all TCHC divisions and business units working to integrate CABR lenses into the planning, creation, execution, and assessment of policies, services delivery, practices, and projects. Some of the supports offered to TCHC divisions include the following:

- Developing a workflow for addressing anti-Black racism incidents in the Operations division.
- Ongoing participation as the TCHC lead on the City Leads Circle, led by the City of Toronto’s CABR unit. This group acts as a medium to engage City divisional leads and shareholders on best practices,

identify resources and support, and maintain momentum on the implementation of the City of Toronto's CABR 8-Point Plan.

- Developed several key partnerships through the development of our Lunch and Learn and Fireside Chat speaker series with diverse Black scholars, and public and private sector groups to shed light on the intersections of anti-Black racism and areas outlined as part of the 8-Point Plan.
- Represented TCHC and its work in addressing anti-Black racism in the social housing sector efforts at several major conferences, including the Social Science and Humanities Conference and the Municipal Innovation Symposium.
- A draft toolkit has been created to support TCHC front-line staff with recognizing incidents of anti-Black racism and responding to incidents at a local level.
- A draft toolkit has been created to support TCHC policy and program developers in considering how Black tenants may be affected by existing and developing policies and programs.
- The Centre re-engaged Black leaders in management across TCHC and enhanced collaboration efforts with TCHC's affinity group, the Black Staff Caucus, to identify opportunities to engage Black staff and allies across TCHC and identify opportunities to support professional development and engagement.
- The Centre is invested in exploring partnerships in 2023 and 2024 to support Black tenants and staff in partnership with agencies and organizations such as Housing Services Corporation, Black Legal Clinic, Eva's Initiative, Black Construction Association, Black Housing Network, Rooftops, and the Black Refugee Association.
- In 2023, the Centre reviewed its staff and tenant complaints process with support from TCHC's ELT. The Centre will be pivoting in 2024 from directly managing complaints to providing systems navigation support for complaints that contain issues of anti-Black racism and will partner with the Legal Services and People and Culture divisions to provide expertise in addressing race-based complaints.
- Of the 32 action items from the CABR Action Plan, as of December 2023, nine items were completed, 14 were currently in-progress, three were in-planning, four have not started, and three actions were revised.

### **Black Tenant Advisory Committee**

During the development of the 8-Point Plan, Black staff and tenants identified the need for consistent community engagement throughout the implementation of the CABR Strategy. As part of the 8-Point Plan, staff created the Tenant Staff Oversight and Advisory Board (“TSOAB”), comprised of 11 diverse Black staff and tenants. For Year 2, staff members of the TSOAB and the Centre leadership recognized the need to build capacity of tenants as part of the TSOAB, and decided the best path forward was to separate the staff-tenant advisory into two separate advisory boards.

The leadership of the Centre has worked with the outgoing co-chairs and members of the TSOAB to re-establish a CABR Black Tenant Advisory Committee. The Centre will continue to work alongside the outgoing staff co-chairs to establish terms of reference for the new iteration of the CABR Black Tenant Advisory Committee, which will be shared with existing members for feedback. Recruitment for the new CABR Black Tenant Advisory Committee began in Q4 2023.

### **Establish a Cross-Functional Project Team to Design, Implement, and Monitor the Collection of Disaggregated Race-Based Data**

This priority demonstrates the commitment to enhance the quality and effectiveness of customer service experienced by TCHC tenants who identify as Black. Work is currently underway to establish a framework to collect human rights/sociodemographic data for tenants, staff, and vendors of TCHC. This framework will include the following:

- Establishing guidelines for demographic data collection questions;
- Identifying a methodology to collect and analyze data;
- Identify existing and developing new methodologies to collect sociodemographic information for tenants, vendors, and staff; and
- Develop a communication plan on the collection of human rights/ sociodemographic data collection.

The Centre engaged in a pre-scoping exercise across TCHC from Q2-Q4 2022 to gather information on the current state of race-based and sociodemographic data collection for tenants, staff, and vendors. In 2023, the Centre led various consultations with Legal Services and Strategic Planning & Communications to further scope and define the best means to collect sociodemographic data. Through the pre-scoping exercise, the Centre identified four key areas of our business operations where sociodemographic data collection could occur:

1. Sociodemographic/human rights data collection for staff through People and Culture;
2. Sociodemographic vendor data collection by services procured by TCHC through Finance;
3. Sociodemographic tenant data collection through Strategic Planning; and
4. Sociodemographic community data collection using Toronto and Ontario wide census data.

## **2. Healthy Children, Youth, and Families**

Another Year 2 priority was for TCHC to invest in long-term, tenant-led, sustainable programming for children, youth, and families that will provide access and support to programs needed to create healthy and vibrant communities. The major deliverables under this priority includes:

- Targeting communication to Black tenants around new opportunities available at TCHC; and
- Implement a cadet program for TCHC youth to help develop good citizenship, leadership, and life skills.

### **Targeting Communication to Black Tenants Around New Opportunities Available at TCHC**

In 2023, the Centre was involved in a variety of initiatives to promote information sharing to Black tenants regarding new opportunities available at TCHC, including engagements with external stakeholders such as Toronto Police Service (“TPS”), multiple Black History Month initiatives, and safety and wellness initiatives offered by both TCHC staff and our partners, among others. For a full list of the initiatives that the Centre was involved in, see Attachment 1.

### **Implement a Cadet Program for TCHC Youth to Help Develop Good Citizenship, Leadership, And Life Skills**

In Q2 of 2023, TCHC began the rollout of the Cadet Program, which resulted in 445 candidates applying, of which approximately 50 were TCHC residents. Of the 50, the Centre, along with the Community Safety Unit (“CSU”) and People and Culture division, shortlisted a total of nine candidates who live in TCHC communities. Three candidates received a high score, but unfortunately due to budgetary constraints, it was not possible to proceed with an offer of employment. The ability to proceed with the Cadet Program is contingent on available budgetary resources. At a CSU management meeting in January 2024, management confirmed they hope to have a plan

in place for clear next steps on the Cadet Program following the outcome of the City's consideration of TCHC's budget submission in February 2024.

### **3. Meaningful Economic Opportunities**

TCHC has committed to supporting and providing meaningful economic opportunities through investments, the creation of pathways to employment and promotion of Black staff, and mobilizing local resources such as people, capital, and organizations for staff and tenants. The status of the major deliverables under this priority are outlined below.

#### **Developing Employment and Advancement Opportunities for Black Tenants and Staff**

As part of the Centre's commitment to meaningful economic opportunities, the Centre has supported ongoing initiatives such as YouthWorx and TCHC internship programs. In Q2 2023, the Centre participated on the hiring panels for these programs, with an interest in increasing the number of Black hires. 78 of the 95 hires were Black-identifying individuals, thus TCHC has meaningfully impacted the career development and economic means of 78 Black youth.

The Centre participated in three mentorship sessions, one being a panel with managers and senior directors across TCHC. Stemming from this, interns from other divisions shadowed Centre staff on specific workdays for broader work exposure and career development.

Individual representatives from the Centre met with the 14 interns from the spring internship session for career coaching sessions and mentorship. The Centre has also worked with the Strategic Procurement unit to diversify TCHC's vendors procured for cleaning and janitorial services. The Centre collaborated with the Canadian Black Chamber of Commerce and the Community Benefits Network to develop market research on Black-owned and tenant cleaning companies and develop a list of potential vendors. This diversification will have a positive economic impact on the Black community and tenant-owned businesses.

### **4. Community Centered Safety and Wellness**

TCHC recognizes that the impacts of anti-Black racism create unsafe spaces for Black tenants and staff. Creating a community centered approach to the safety, well-being, and equitable treatment of tenants, while addressing anti-Black racism, is a multi-faceted and crucial endeavor. The status of the major deliverable under this priority is outlined below.



### **Body Worn Cameras Feasibility Study**

The Body Worn Cameras Feasibility Review Working Group was created and included leads from the Centre, Operations, and CSU. Several working group meetings were held to develop a consultation plan, survey, and communications plan in relation to completing a Body Worn Camera Feasibility Review. In Q2 of 2023, given the resource implications of proceeding, the project was suspended and rendered a low priority. In the forthcoming months the Centre will work with Operations leadership to understand if the review remains a CABR goal for TCHC.

### **5. Divesting from Police Culture**

In line with the wider calls for transformation in how policing is done and how it impacts the Black community, this priority supports TCHC's actions to invest in creating a culture of policing reform within CSU. The status of this deliverable is outlined below.

### **CSU Mandate Review and Black Employee Life Cycle Review**

The aim of the CSU Review is to produce an in-depth analysis of CSU's operations, approaches, and growth trajectories within the context of the City's new and expanding commitments to developing future forward approaches to community safety and well-being.

The CSU review commenced in Q4 2023, and the decision was made to integrate the Black Employee Lifecycle ("BEL") Review into the work of the consultants conducting the CSU Mandate Review. The goal is to launch the BEL review in Q2 2024, with both reports planned to be sent to the Board in either Q3 or Q4 2024.

### **6. Decent and Fair Housing**

This priority supports TCHC's actions to provide vibrant communities and quality homes and to support successful tenancies by improving service delivery and customer service. The status of this deliverable is outlined below.

### **Implement an Integrated Communications and Engagement Program in Targeted Developments, and Targeting Black Tenants to Raise Awareness of The Centre, the Office of the Commissioner of Housing Equity ("OCHE"), Anti-Racism, etc.**

As part of Black History Month activities, the Centre coordinated and hosted a tenant round table with Black community leaders on mental wellness. The

discussion focused on creating access to culturally responsive health and mental health services. TAIBU Community Health Centre-Crisis Mobile Unit delivered a mental health workshop and information session to Black tenant leaders. 10 communities were represented at the roundtable, and three staff from the East region supported the event. The roundtable resulted in a series of workshops delivered by the Centre to TCHC communities between Q2 and Q4 of 2023.

Five workshops were made available to tenants to build on community strengths, supporting targeted engagement with youth to enhance youth connection and leadership through the facilitation of a needs assessment with tenant leaders. Workshops topics included Anti-Oppression, Emotional Intelligence, System Navigation, Trauma Informed Practice, and Confronting Anti-Black Racism.

Following a series of community requests and needs assessments, 10 workshops were delivered across 15 communities with 477 tenants to enhance capacity building for community leaders to support their communities. In addition, the Centre supported and collaborated with 12 initiatives impacting 630 tenants through the following:

- YouthWorx;
- Midnight Basketball;
- League of Her Own;
- Tenant Action Tables;
- Regent Park Summer Jam;
- Community Benefits Oversight Working Group;
- Wanasah Mental Health Forum;
- Black Families Unconfrenced;
- Pride Poster;
- Chester Le Court Launch; an,
- Customer Service Improvement Workshop.

## **7. Access to Culturally Responsive Health and Mental Health Services**

TCHC employs a rigorous anti-Black racism analysis to pinpoint and rectify the interconnected dynamic of race, housing, and the social determinants of health. Our goal is to create an environment where tenants feel comfortable regardless of their cultural heritage. The status of this deliverable is outlined below.

### **Review and Make Available Black Health and Wellness Vendors**

The Centre conducted a mapping of Black health and mental health services available across TCHC's East, West, and Central regions, and provided information on anti-Black racism and the Centre's available supports during workshop sessions for TCHC tenants.

As part of Pride Month activities, the Centre developed a resource poster in collaboration with TCHC's PRIDE Network and Strategic Communications division to support with outreach and engagement of TCHC's LGBTQI2+ tenants, including health and wellness resources.

The Centre supported several engagements and consultations with various external stakeholders that have requested the Centre's subject matter expertise on anti-Black racism and social housing, and its intersections with mental health. Some examples include the Centre's participation at the Ubuntu – Community Youth Forum and Wanesah Mental Health Forum in Q2 and Q3 of 2023.

### **8. Uplifting Social Supports**

Another Year 2 priority was for TCHC to continue investing in self-organized mutual support networks within Black communities and fostering actionable solutions. The status of this deliverable is outlined below.

#### **Black Staff Mentorship**

The Centre has been working closely with the Black Staff Caucus ("BSC") to identify their needs regarding the development of a Black staff mentorship program. Preliminary conversations with the BSC, the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion team, and the Learning & Organizational Development team will continue into 2024, with major project planning and a roll out for a pilot staff mentorship program for affinity groups through the Black Staff Caucus to take place in 2024.

#### **Staff Engagement Survey**

To better understand the role and supports the Centre can provide, a corporate-wide questionnaire was finalized and approved in Q4 2023 to identify areas of interest to continue staff engagement. In addition, the corporate-wide questionnaire will help to better understand staff's knowledge about anti-Black racism in the workplace, and how the Centre can better

support teams to deliver their action plans and combat anti-Black racism. The questionnaire will be launched in Q1 2024.

**NEXT STEPS:**

This report reflects the 2023 full-year progress on the Confronting Anti-Black Racism Strategy and the Confronting Anti-Black Racism Action Plan goals and deliverables. The Centre will provide a report of all progress to date once the three-year mandate of the Centre has been completed including recommendations for the future state of the Centre and CABR at TCHC.

**SIGNATURE:**

*“Barry Thomas”*

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Barry Thomas  
Acting Director, Centre for Advancing the Interests of Black People

**ATTACHMENT:**

1. List of Targeted Communication and Engagement with Black Communities

**STAFF CONTACT:**

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Item 10 – Confronting Anti-Black Racism Strategy Update  
Public Board of Directors Meeting – February 15, 2024  
Report #: TCHC:2024-05  
**Attachment 1**

## **Targeted Communication and Engagement with Black Communities**

### **Black Youth Engagement**

#### **Collaboration with Toronto Police, Malvern Employment Social Services, Violence Reduction Program**

In 2022, TPS released new data around Use of Force within the organization. Reports indicated that there was an overrepresentation of use of force towards Black people in Toronto. Through collaboration with East Community Economic Development, Malvern Toronto Employment & Social Services, and Central VRP staff, the Centre supported a TCHC Youth and Policing Meeting. The goal of this initiative was to connect youth to Toronto's police chief and express concerns or ideas around police reform, community policing, and individual experiences with police. This event included eight TCHC youth from various communities including Regent Park, Shaughnessy, and Brahms.

In Q2 2023, in partnership with Malvern Employment & Social Services, staff from TCHC's Programs and Partnerships team and the Violence Reduction Program ("VRP") team, along with Black youth from TCHC and service users of Toronto Employment & Social Services ("TESS") engaged in an intimate dialogue with the executive leadership team of Toronto Police Service ("TPS"). Stakeholders at the engagement discussed and presented the ongoing exposure to, and impact of, negative police interactions on Black youth, and recommendations were provided to TPS on a path forward on rebuilding relations between Black youth and TPS.

#### **Black Youth Focus Group**

The Black Youth Focus group worked to identify the unique experiences of Black youth in TCHC post COVID-19. The project worked to gather insight from youth from various communities including Canlish in the East region and Regent Park in the Central region. Altogether, the initiative collaborated with 15 Black youth across TCHC.

## **Entrepreneurship and Youth**

The Centre sponsored two tables for the Black Business and Professional Association (“BPPA”) and Visions of Science to provide programming donations towards TCHC youth in 2023.

## **Tutoring Support in Chester Le**

The Centre is piloting Ashaware Afrocentric Educational Software to promote knowledge and understanding as well as increase motivation, self-esteem, reading and numeracy skills for children and youth in the Chester Le community through remedial education sessions after school.

## **Black History Month**

### **Regent Park Mom’s Group**

In partnership with the Regent Park Revitalization Team, The Centre was able to deliver a CABR workshop for a group of 25 women from the Regent Park Women’s Health Social Circle Support Group. The group consists of a diverse group of women who come together to empower themselves by discussing and sharing issues they face, reflecting, learning new skills, exploring career/job opportunities, collectively building solutions, and creating a network of support with other women.

### **Black History Bus Tour with TTC**

As part of Black History Month Celebrations, the Centre engaged in outreach in TCHC East region to gather seven Black tenants from the Galloway community to participate in the Black History Month Bus Tour in collaboration with the Toronto Transit Commission (“TTC”). The TTC delivered a bus tour throughout Toronto that highlighted historical and significant sites within the city that highlight the experiences of Black Canadians. The relationship with the Galloway community began in 2022 through the Centre’s Community Funds Project and has flourished since.

### **Black History Community event at 200 Wellesley**

The 200 Wellesley community put together a Black History Month event in February 2023. The event demonstrated the unique experiences of Black tenants in TCHC, while simultaneously highlighting the great work carried out by Black residents in the St. James Town community. The event consisted of 63 participants, six community volunteers, and one community ambassador. The role of The Centre at this event was to further orient the

St. James Town community with the work of the Centre and the CABR Strategy. The 200 Wellesley community event was also attended by prominent Toronto leaders including City Councillor Chris Moise. The relationship with The Centre and 200 Wellesley community began in 2022 through the Community Funds Project and has flourished since.

### **City of Toronto Black History Month Closing Ceremony**

The City of Toronto's CABR unit held a closing Black History Month Ceremony event in 2023. The food for this event was catered by TCHC tenants from the Gordonridge community.

### **Outreach And Relationship Building with Diverse Groups**

#### **Regent Park Safety Network**

The Regent Park Safety Network meets monthly to discuss ways to keep the community safe with the Central region's VRP team. In February 2023, the Centre took part in the meeting to orient Regent Park tenants to the role of the Centre and to highlight initiatives that the Centre has worked on.

#### **Dementia Training Workshops in Glendower**

As a continuation of the Community Funds Project, the Glendower community hosted a one-day dementia training workshop. This workshop served as a form of capacity building for tenants living in Glendower and for tenants who also work with aging populations. There were 15 tenants in attendance.

#### **Investing in Our Diversity Scholarships**

In partnership with the East region Community Economic Development team, the Centre worked to help evaluate TCHC's Investing in Our Diversity ("IIOD") scholarships. The role of the Centre was to examine four scholarship applications from an anti-Black racism lens.

#### **Midnight Basketball Roadshow**

The Networking Roadshow offers Midnight Basketball participants an opportunity to engage with other TCHC departments. The Centre had the opportunity to attend two roadshows and engaged 80 young men ages 13-19 across the three regions. Participants signed up for upcoming workshops for the new year.

### **Community Benefits Oversight Working Group**

The Community Benefits Oversight Working Group (“CBOWG”) in Regent Park is a resident group overseeing the Community Benefits Agreement process for phases four and five of the revitalization project. The Centre worked with a tenant representative from the Regent Park Neighborhood Association (“RPNA”) to screen and select new members for the CBWOG. The selection process is ongoing, seeking one successful candidate.

### **Chester Le Court Launch**

The Chester Le Court Launch was a community engagement event to celebrate the community’s new basketball court. The Centre attended and provided information to youth, adult, and senior tenants about our services and supported the Engagement and VRP team, engaging about 70 tenants.