



TCHC Tenant Advisory Committee

April 16th, 2024

6– 8 p.m.

Location: 100 Queen Street West, Committee Room 2

MEETING MINUTES

Attendance:

Organization	Participants
TAC Members	<p>Present In-Person: Sara Abdella, Robert Bezanson, John Corso, Tabitha David, Ines Garcia, Debbie Menezes, Karlene Nation, Catherine Wilkinson.</p> <p>Present Online: Jorry Cross, Tracy Izzard, Abdul Rahman, Doug Maybank, Samantha Mogent, Susel Munoz, Charmaine Roye, Tameka Richards Shabnam Shekh.</p> <p>Not Present: Petra Jeffers</p>
Non-Voting Members	<p>Present Online: Marcel Charlebois Tenant Board Director, Tenant Board Director</p> <p>Not Present: Ubah Farah, Tenant Board Director, Tenant Board Director</p>
TCHC Staff	<p>Present In-Person: Sean Baird, Chief Executive Officer; (Co-Chair) Jag Sharma, Deputy City Manager (Co-Chair) Julio Rigores, Manager, Tenant Engagement Systems Christine Aina, Business Planner, Tenant Engagement Alejandra Marulanda, Tenant Participation Coordinator Darragh Meagher, General Counsel, and Corporate Secretary Katie Douglas Legal Counsel.</p>

	<p>Ada Wong, Vice President of Strategic Planning and Communications.</p> <p>Not present: Nadia Gouveia, Chief Operating Officer Jenelle Estwick, Executive Assistant</p>
City of Toronto Staff	<p>Present In-Person: Emily Gaus, Housing Consultant, Housing Secretariat</p> <p>Present Online Zanib Habib, Programs Coordinator, Housing Secretariat</p> <p>Not present: Jenn St. Louis, Manager, Housing Secretariat</p>

Welcome, Introductions, Land, and African Ancestral Acknowledgments

- Sean Baird, TCHC’s new CEO introduced himself and welcomed all members to his first TAC meeting as Co-chair.
- Sean read the Land and African Ancestral Acknowledgements.
- TAC members introduced themselves and welcomed Sean as the new CEO to his first TAC meeting.

Review of the TCHC Tenant Advisory Committee’s Agenda, Minutes, and Action Items:

- Julio reviewed the action items and agenda which included the Human Rights presentation and T4A update from the previous meeting.
- Christine confirmed that TCHC has issued a cancellation of the T4As to the CRA.
- A few TAC members questioned the validation of the T4A cancellation letter from TCHC to the CRA. TAC members expressed concern for those who have already filed their income tax and questioned if the Hub offices were aware of this matter.
- Christine recommended that all annual review documents including the cancellation notice should be provided to their Tenant Service Coordinator during TAC member's annual reviews.

- It was stated that if TAC members still had any questions and concerns surrounding the T4A issue they are to follow up with Christine. Additionally, TAC members can also refer to Christine's detailed emails regarding any next steps.

Human Rights Policy Review Presentation:

- Sean Introduced Katie Douglas TCHC's Legal Counsel to the TAC.
- Katie presented the Human Rights Policy Review where she discussed the project overview, the Ombudsman report, and the feedback from the June 2023 tenant consultations.
- TAC members were then given the opportunity to provide their feedback and comments on the updates to TCHC's Human Rights Policy.
- A TAC member asked if the policy will be translated into multiple languages and if the language in the policy will be simplified. Currently, it is difficult to read and understand.
- Another TAC member added the Human Rights complaints process within TCHC is ineffective, and communication between TCHC and tenants has not improved.
- A TAC member questioned how tenants who are not familiar with the current policy and wish to learn more about it can participate. TCHC should provide a pathway for tenants to request further information.
- Julio and Ada confirmed that the document will be translated into TCHC's top 18 languages and a plain language version will be available.
- A TAC member requested clarification on the structure of the new Human Rights policy which included policy timelines, staff roles within the new policy, and how TCHC will handle the potential overflow of transfer requests.
- Katie confirmed that through staff and tenant feedback the structure of the policy will be developed.
- Another TAC member highlighted that TCHC does not have in-house subject matter experts and both tenant and staff do not understand the Human Rights Policy. Will TCHC hire a Human Rights Subject matter expert?
- Sean confirmed that TCHC needs in-house expertise to properly develop the Human rights policy.
- Darragh reassured the TAC member regarding Katie's expertise and added that she has identified some of the key issues at the Ombudsman.

- Katie: Assured the TAC member that she will not be the only in-house expert on the team and understands that there needs to be more than one expert on the subject matter to pass down knowledge to TCHC staff.
- A TAC member: requested a copy of the Ombudsman report for the TAC and suggested reinstating a tenant staff communications
- A TAC member voiced they had to reach out to external support from OCHE to receive an outcome from TCHC.
 - Sean expressed that tenants should not have to go to external agencies to receive support, the purpose of the Human Rights policy development is to improve the complaints process within TCHC for tenants and staff.
 - Jag Sharma DCM and TAC Co-Chair stated that the Human rights policy being developed complies with the Ontario Human Rights Commission and adheres to the Ombudsman.
 - Darragh added that within the policy; timelines for responses will be included and if tenants do not get a response immediately, they will get communication as to why. This is information that will be publicly reported to the Board.
- A TAC member: questioned how an individual complaint gets escalated. Is there a process in place for habitual human rights complaints? Is there a process to take this on as a unit?
- Katie responded: Currently when reviewing Human Rights complaints we noticed there are common themes/complaints. We do take into consideration how we can integrate and address common complaints/themes into the procedure to formally be able to incorporate this into our system. The complaints and resolution team is responsible for tracking this information we can potentially add this to our report back.

A TAC member asked for clarification regarding non-staff support. How will TCHC encourage tenants to see the benefits of not going elsewhere for support?

Sean responded that tenants will always have an opportunity to explore other pathways to resolve their complaints, TCHC is providing an option that aims to be accessible and solution-oriented.

- A TAC member asked why tenants may proceed to the Human Rights Tribunal instead of the TCHC human rights process.
- Katie clarified the TCHC process exists to accommodate tenants' needs, whereas the Human Rights Tribunal may offer financial compensation. TCHC's Human Rights policy is focused on providing timely resolutions.

- A TAC member addressed barriers impacting tenants filing a Human Rights complaint, which included long wait times of up to 6 months; no acknowledgment letter or response of outcome; staff mistreatment; and lack of technological access to file complaint.
- Katie confirmed that as part of the interim process, there is a strict timeline to issue an acknowledgment letter, two business days is the service level standard. TAC members were informed that there are many ways to file a complaint including via phone call, staff, or online.
- Sean acknowledges that there may be communication issues within the process, but that the goal is to ensure the experience for tenants is improved. He advised that TCHC's Board and Ombudsman are invested in TCHC being accountable to tenants.
- A TAC member questioned whether there is a process for TCHC to review transfer requests that were denied before an appeal process being established.
- Katie answered that tenants who are not satisfied with the decision may file a human rights complaint. In terms of timeline, there is no fixed timeline, however, depending on the case it may be dismissed if they are deemed too old and no action can be taken to resolve the issue.
- A TAC member questioned if the human rights policy is going to prioritize complaints by a pre-determined timeframe.
- Katie responded that complaints will be resolved as they are received.
- A TAC Member mentioned that tenants often fill out a transfer request but do not receive confirmation of receipt from TCHC. Tenants end up contacting TCHC several times to follow up on the assigned file number. Members suggest that tenants should receive a stamped copy of the application. Additionally, TCHC should add information posters in buildings outlining the process and providing a contact phone number and email.
- Katie confirmed that her scope of work does not include transfers, however, she will bring up these suggestions to the Transfer team.
- A TAC member asked how this policy will rectify past complaints filed by tenants. Suggesting that there may be an influx of past complaints that will overwhelm the system with the new policy. More specifically, how will TCHC address complaints filed against a tenant who struggles with mental health issues and displays behaviours that impact the entire building? Many of the complaints that will be received will likely be related to mental health and drug use.

- Christine informed that there is a dedicated staff team (Community Service Coordinators, Access and Support) that can be requested to support tenants who may display anti-social behaviour.
- TAC member suggested implementing a dedicated team to guide tenants on how to file a complaint, in each hub. Member prefers TCHC hiring staff with expertise in the subject matter area rather than training current staff.
- Katie advised that the policy embeds proactive measures to resolve the aforementioned issues.
- A TAC member expressed that they were impressed by the presentation and questioned if there is a limitation period for reporting an incident. If a complaint is filed through the Ontario Human Rights Services will TCHC offer compensation?
- Katie responded that regardless of what the complaint is having been reported; it is the length of time that may impact the outcome of the complaint. As for compensation, it depends on the specifics of the situation. The purpose of the process is to solve the issue and focus on accommodation.
- A TAC member suggested having a Human Rights expert in each hub to assist tenants, this may encourage tenants to receive support internally and work towards a healthy relationship between TCHC and landlords.
- Sean added that capable staff to work with tenants will be part of the process moving forward.
- A TAC member pointed out in the presentation that under customer service, the second bullet needs to be edited for clarity to – “How do tenants want to get and give information (email, phone, in-person, etc.)?”

Summary of Action Items and Wrap-Up

- Sean thanked the TAC for their feedback and Julio reviewed the following action items from the presentation discussion:
 - TCHC to send the ombudsman report to the TAC members.
 - Human Rights Policy presentation questions for discussion will be emailed out to the TAC members, and responses are expected. Additional feedback on the interim process is to be sent to Cristine.