



# Summary of Confronting Anti-Black Racism Engagement Session (Tuesday, September 10, 2024)

**Toronto Community Housing (TCHC) Strategic  
Planning Initiative**

**Report prepared by Toronto Community Housing**



2025-2029  
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# Confronting Anti-Black Racism (CABR) Engagement Summary

## Introduction

In September 2024, Toronto Community Housing (TCHC) hosted a strategic planning session with Black tenants from across the city. It was co-facilitated by TCHC's Strategic Planning team and The Centre for Advancing the Interests of Black People (the Centre).

This session is the first of its kind. It marks a pivotal step in making sure the voices of Black tenants are directly involved in shaping TCHC's 2025-2029 Strategic Plan.

It was essential to engage the Centre and Black tenants in this process in order to align the plan with the diverse needs of TCHC's communities. This will make sure the plan reflects our commitment to equity, inclusion, and meaningful tenant participation. The insights and perspectives shared during this session are necessary to drive long-term strategies that better serve Black tenants. Feedback will also help build stronger and more inclusive communities.

## Context: Confronting Anti-Black Racism engagement session

In 2021, TCHC approved the **Confronting Anti-Black Racism (CABR) Strategy and Action Plan (PDF)** to address systemic anti-Black racism. Our teams structured the September 2024 session to make sure the voices, needs, and priorities of Black tenants are directly reflected in TCHC's 2025–2029 Strategic Plan.

The objectives of these sessions were to:

- Share information with tenants about the strategic planning process.
- Invite, welcome, and celebrate tenant participation in the process.
- Build a shared understanding about what a strategic plan is and why it matters.

- Give tenants an opportunity to meaningfully contribute to TCHC's Strategic Plan, focusing on applying a CABR lens.
- Listen and learn from Black tenants about the priorities they believe are most important to them, their families, and their housing experience.

The conversations focused on three areas:

- what is working, and what needs to be improved?
- envisioning a future through a CABR lens.
- developing strategies for change at TCHC.

### **Approach: facilitated breakout sessions and notetaking**

TCHC staff from the Centre and Strategic Planning & Communications facilitated breakout tables. In these smaller groups, tenants shared their insights and opinions. We recorded all feedback at each table through a note-taking process. The facilitators then shared a summary of each table discussion with the rest of the attendees.

We asked participants the following questions:

- **What's working and what needs to be improved?**
  - Part A: What aspects of your experience with TCHC do you feel are currently working well? Highlight the programs, services or initiatives that have positively impacted you.
  - Part B: Highlight issues in your community and how they impact your tenant experience. Highlight the programs, services or initiatives that can be improved.
- **Envisioning the future through a CABR lens.**
  - Where do you see TCHC in the next five years as we look toward the future? From the perspective of advancing the interests of Black tenants, what is the most meaningful change you believe TCHC should prioritize over the next five years?

- **Developing strategies for change:**
  - Considering the Centre's eight-point plan, what key strategies or actions should TCHC implement to achieve this change? How can these strategies align with the Centre's mandate to create an equitable and inclusive community for Black tenants?

## **Overall summary of feedback from the CABR engagement session**

The summary is a reflection of the ideas expressed and identified tenant priorities from the CABR engagement session. We have grouped the tenant feedback from the CABR engagement session into seven themes. These themes align with the CABR Strategy's 8-Point Plan and are meant to summarize what we heard overall across all groups. Each thematic area provides a summary of tenant feedback that reflects the different voices that we heard.

### **Decent and fair housing**

Quality of services and maintenance in their homes and communities, as well as equitable access to housing and services across all TCHC regions was a key concern expressed by tenants. Tenants want to see more consistency and equity in how maintenance, customer service, community programming, security, and other essential services are provided.

Tenants expressed widespread dissatisfaction with the quality and responsiveness of maintenance services, highlighting issues like pest control and cleanliness. Tenants called for more maintenance staff and stricter accountability for contractors. This accountability would make sure vendors do quality work in their homes and communities.

Tenants want greater accountability from TCHC staff, especially in

handling complaints and maintenance issues. Tenants suggested implementing transparent systems for tracking complaints and work orders. These systems should include regular updates on progress. This would improve communication and foster greater trust between tenants and staff.

Tenants raised the recurring issue of a lack of clear, timely, and consistent communication between TCHC staff and tenants. Many tenants expressed frustration about not receiving vital information about programs, opportunities, and changes in services. Tenants emphasized the need for more effective communication channels. This would include better notification systems for upcoming programs or changes.

### **Meaningful economic investment**

Tenants emphasized the need for more economic initiatives in their communities. Tenants strongly recommended that TCHC focus on economic development programs aimed at lifting tenants out of poverty. Suggestions included financial literacy workshops, job fairs, and vocational training tailored to the needs of tenants, especially youth and single parents.

Tenants called for equitable employment opportunities at TCHC, advocating for more transparent and accessible hiring practices. Tenants urged TCHC to create “returnship” programs for older tenants and job opportunities for those with mobility issues. They want more tenants employed within administrative or community-focused roles at TCHC.

In addition, tenants highlighted the importance of destigmatizing TCHC communities to improve employment prospects. This would make sure residents do not face discrimination based on their address and neighbourhood.

### **Healthy children, youth, and families**

Tenants expressed the importance of long-term, sustainable

programming, especially for children and youth (ages 6 to 12 and 13 to 17). Tenants emphasized that programming for children and youth is essential for social and community development, and it also would work to prevent disengagement and anti-social behaviours.

Tenants are seeking multi-generational programming that includes support for parents, seniors, and Black tenants across all age groups. These initiatives would focus on creating healthy, cohesive communities.

Tenants need improved community infrastructure. This includes better-maintained community spaces, more accessible meeting rooms, and upgraded facilities that promote positive tenant interactions.

### **Access to culturally responsive health and mental health services**

Tenants seek additional support to build resilient and supportive communities. A common request was to develop targeted programs that address the mental health needs of Black youth. Tenants suggested peer support programs and trauma-informed care. They also spoke about mentorship initiatives aimed at breaking cycles of generational trauma.

Other suggestions included:

- Incorporating an Afro-centric healing model.
- Training community members to become certified mental health advocates.
- Programs that support youth and parents in creating healthier families and communities.
- Peer support networks that allow community members to help each other with trauma, anxiety, and depression.

### **Community-centered safety and wellness**

Tenants noted that security in their neighbourhoods is still a significant concern. They reported unauthorized access to buildings, broken doors,

and persistent issues with building safety. Participants noted the installation of security cameras and improved lighting as positive steps toward enhancing tenant safety.

Tenants would like to play a more active role in wellness initiatives in their community. They would also like to have their voices heard in the crisis transfer processes.

### **Uplifting social support networks**

A recurring theme was that we could empower tenants by providing leadership roles at TCHC. Tenants want to see more opportunities to lead community initiatives. There was also a call for enhanced tenant participation in decision-making processes. Tenants want to see action taken about their concerns. This transparency is critical to fostering trust between tenants and TCHC.

Tenants want more opportunities to provide feedback and participate in decision-making processes in TCHC. They proposed regular quarterly updates and feedback loops where TCHC tells tenants about progress on initiatives. This would help make sure they are not merely consulted.

### **Addressing anti-Black racism and cultural redress**

Tenants recommended creating culturally responsive programs that address the unique needs of Black tenants. This includes conflict resolution mechanisms rooted in Afro-centric healing models and trauma-informed care. Tenants suggested incorporating community-based approaches to address anti-Black racism and discrimination. There should be transparent reporting and follow-up processes to help with accountability.

Tenants recommended that anti-Black racism training is mandatory for all TCHC staff. This training should focus on mental health, trauma, and respectful treatment of tenants.

Participants emphasized the importance of expanding the Centre's team



to address the growing needs of Black tenants. They would like to see more support for complaints related to racism.

*All the feedback from the CABR discussions will help TCHC create its Strategic Plan for the next five years.*

## **Next steps**

### **Reporting back to tenants**

Tenant engagement has been prioritized for this strategic planning process and a detailed action plan will be created to respond to the feedback from all engagement sessions. This report will be shared with the tenants who participated in the CABR engagement session and with the broader tenant population through the next issue of the tenant newsletter, Tenant LOOP. When the Strategic Plan is released in early 2025, TCHC will be committed to informing tenants who participated in this session about the new Strategic Plan. We will also highlight elements from their feedback in the CABR engagement session that are incorporated into the Strategic Plan.

### **Future engagement opportunities**

Black tenants have requested TCHC to create engagement opportunities where they can provide input on the ongoing implementation of the CABR Strategy and the work that is completed by The Centre. By launching the Black Tenant Participatory Committee, The Centre will engage Black tenants regarding their work and the CABR Strategy. The Centre team is also reviewing its 8-Point Plan and analyzing new ways of increasing Black tenant engagement across all regions. In 2025, The Centre will report on the end of its initial three-year mandate (2021-2024) for the CABR Action Plan.