



Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC)

Tenant Advisory Committee

Monday, March 9, 2026

6 to 8 p.m.

Location: Virtual - Webex

MEETING MINUTES

Organization	Participants
TAC members	<p>Present online: Esther Adjei, Robert Benzanson, Jorry Cross, Tabitha David, Ghassan Fayad, Peggy L. Ernest, Petra Jeffers, Doug Maybank, Debbie Menezes, Karlene Nation, Charmaine Roye, Beisa El-Tawashy</p> <p>Not present:</p> <p>Regrets: Virginia Alexander, Nasra Ahmed, Ines Gracia, Samuell Kisitu, Shazzeneiy Mohamed Nair, Nasser Naoshad</p>
Non-voting members	<p>Present online:</p> <p>Dan Macintyre, Tenant Director</p> <p>Not present:</p> <p>Marcel Charlebois, Tenant Director</p> <p>Ubah Farah, Tenant Director</p> <p>Ziva Ferreira, Tenant Director</p>
TCHC staff	<p>Present online:</p>

	<p>Christine Aina, Manager, Data and Impact (Acting)</p> <p>Libin Ali, Program Coordinator, Tenant Engagement</p> <p>Sean Baird, President and Chief Executive Officer (Co-Chair)</p> <p>Shariza Bharat, Program Supervisor, Fire Life Safety</p> <p>Nadia Gouveia, Chief Operating Officer</p> <p>Karim Kanji, Integrated Manager of Environmental Health & Fire Life Safety</p> <p>Pablo Vivanco, Director, Tenant Engagement and Community Development</p>
<p>City of Toronto staff</p>	<p>Present online:</p> <p>Emily Gaus, Manager, Housing Stability Services</p> <p>Zanib Habib, Programs Coordinator, City Housing Corporations Relationship Unit</p> <p>Not present:</p> <p>Earl Phillips, Programs Coordinator, City Housing Corporations Relationship Unit</p> <p>Jag Sharma, Deputy City Manager (Co-Chair)</p>

Welcome, Introductions, and Land and African Ancestral Acknowledgments

- TCHC’s CEO Sean Baird started the meeting by reading the Land Acknowledgement and African Ancestral Acknowledgment.
- Pablo Vivanco reviewed Safe Meeting Space Guidelines with TAC members.

- Pablo Vivanco introduced TCHC staff followed by Emily Gaus who introduced the City of Toronto staff.
- Sean welcomed TAC members and they introduced themselves.

Review of the TCHC Tenant Advisory Committee's agenda, minutes, and action items:

- Motion to approve the February 9th minutes, approved.

New 2026 Fire Code

Karim Kanji, Integrated Manager of Environmental Health and Fire Life Safety, and Shariza Bharat, Program Supervisor, Fire Life Safety, presented updates to the 2026 Ontario Fire Code. They focused on strengthening fire prevention and making sure there is safer use of common spaces across TCHC communities.

They explained that the updates introduce clearer restrictions on seasonal decorations and reinforce the need to keep exit pathways clear, while also addressing risks like furniture in common areas and balcony safety.

The presentation emphasized the importance of consistent tenant communication and education to support compliance and improve overall safety.

TAC members were given the opportunity to share their thoughts on the presentation:

TAC member: Communication needs to be simplified. Consisting of a mailer that goes directly to tenants, plus digital communication together in one package. Not everyone checks online. Also, fire alarm testing has been happening constantly in my building. It's disruptive, especially when elevators are shut down and people are still pulling alarms. There needs to be stronger consequences or fines, especially with cameras coming in.

TCHC staff: That's something we can take back for internal discussion. Historically fines haven't worked well, but it's worth revisiting. TCHC will explore options for fines.

TAC member: I think communication should be permanent, something posted year-round in common areas, especially where decorations like Christmas trees go. Also, if a building has sprinklers, do tenants still need permission for decorations? And what about garbage rooms? We've had fires there. That should be considered part of fire safety too.

TAC member: I'd suggest framing communication positively, focusing on what's allowed, not just restrictions.

TCHC staff: That's exactly what we're doing, starting with what's allowed first. We're also looking at a dedicated board in buildings with one clear place for fire safety information.

TAC member: Furniture in hallways and common areas is a fire hazard. That needs to be addressed clearly.

TCHC staff: It will be included in the updated policy.

TAC member: Balcony netting is a serious safety and fire concern. It can block rescue access.

TCHC staff: The previous fiber netting was unsafe. We've now sourced a thin metal netting that can be cut easily, and we're working with Toronto Fire to ensure there is a safe option for tenants.

TAC member: I'm not convinced. In a real emergency, with many tenants, that becomes a serious obstruction.

TAC member: I've spoken to a lot of tenants; there are still concerns about the netting, even with the new version.

TAC member: How often should fire alarm testing happen?

TCHC staff: Monthly testing is required. There is also an annual inspection that can take several weeks as every device is tested. Elevators being shut down during testing is a standard protocol.

TAC member: It happens almost weekly at one point; that's too much.

TCHC staff: If that's happening, it should be reported. Please reach out to TCHC staff.

TAC member: Why aren't tenants encouraged to have fire extinguishers in their units? Most fires start inside units.

TCHC staff: There's no issue with having one. But using a fire extinguisher is a skill. Tenants are not expected to fight fires; the priority is to evacuate.

TAC member: Then TCHC should provide training or materials, so tenants know how to use them.

TCHC staff: That's something we can explore more education and safety resources.

LIFT program updates

Christine Aina, Manager of Engagement, Data and Impact, presented an update on the Local Initiative Funding for Tenants program (LIFT). It is a tenant-led funding model that was launched in 2025. It supports community development and strengthen local decision-making.

Christine explained that LIFT enables tenants to identify priorities and allocate funding through Tenant Circles, with a growing focus on measuring impact beyond participation, including community connection, leadership development, and inclusion.

The presentation highlighted:

- early successes and outlined a path forward focused on improving engagement,

- strengthening data and evaluation,
- building tenant capacity to lead initiatives.

TAC member: LIFT has been very impactful. At Dan Leckie, we used it for a BBQ with over 500 people and a large holiday event. But there are still things we need funding for, like gym equipment. Where do we go for that?

TCHC staff: Some of those items can qualify under LIFT, but it depends on how the Tenant Circle prioritizes funding.

TCHC staff: Also connect with your CSC; there may be other funding sources or partnerships.

TAC member: In smaller or quieter buildings, we don't see posters or notices. How do those smaller communities learn about LIFT and about how to participate, especially without tenant reps?

TCHC staff: That's where CSCs come in; they should be connecting with communities directly. Connect with your CSC to learn more and how to be involved.

TAC member: It shouldn't be tenants chasing CSCs. CSCs should be proactively engaging communities.

TAC member: That's exactly the issue. Smaller communities are left behind. They need more support, not just posters.

TCHC staff: What are we doing differently to engage those communities?

TCHC staff: We're focusing on tenant elections, ensuring that Tenant Council members are in those communities, as well as pushing Tenant Circles.

TCHC staff: We've identified communities that didn't use LIFT funding. This year, we're taking a targeted approach to engage them and understand why.

TAC member: Communities need more than information; they need support to engage.

TAC member: Should there be a minimum level of participation before LIFT funding is used? Otherwise, it becomes a small group making decisions for the whole community.

TCHC staff: There's currently no minimum requirement, but it's something we can evaluate based on feedback.

TCHC staff: We're also tracking attendance at Tenant Circles to monitor engagement trends.

TAC member: Engagement needs to be in its own conversation. There are barriers in buildings that prevent participation.

TAC member: When people have common spaces and programming, they naturally connect. Without that, engagement drops.

TCHC staff: Closed the meeting and thanked everyone for their time

Wrap-up and action items

- Explore fines for fire alarm tampering
- Follow up on engagement strategies for smaller communities
- Libin to share LIFT survey and exercise with members