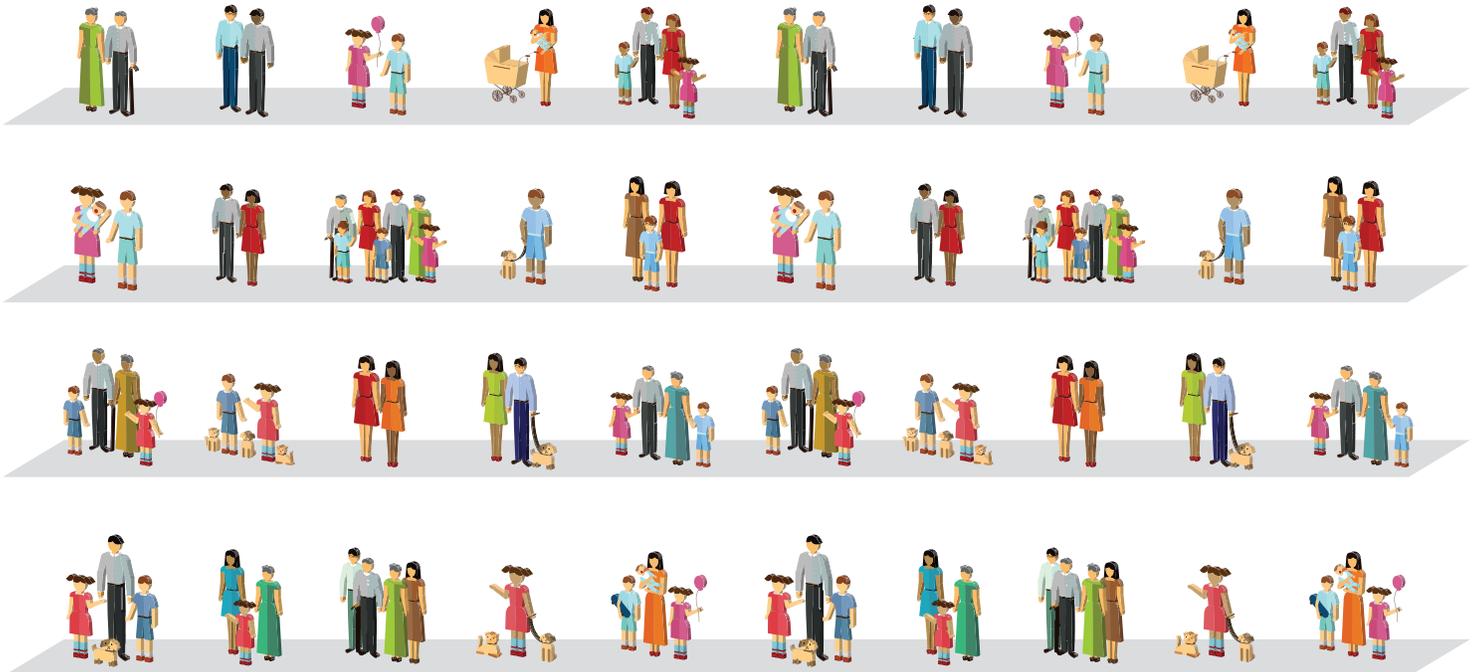


Improved Living at Toronto Community Housing

PRIORITY ACTIONS



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Phil Gillies, Secretary

July 10th, 2015

His Worship John Tory
Mayor, City of Toronto
100 Queen St. W.
City Hall, Second floor, West
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Dear Sir,

On behalf of the Mayor's Task Force on Toronto Community Housing I am pleased to present to you our Interim Report.

This report focuses on priority areas of concern for the thousands of residents of TCHC, including increasing safety and security, improving building conditions, providing jobs and opportunities for residents, and finding the financing to continue the urgently-needed capital repairs.

The Task Force makes seven recommendations that, if acted upon, should result in noticeable and sustainable improvements to TCHC by the end of 2015.

We look forward to continuing our work, reviewing all four areas of our mandate and presenting you with the final Task Force report in December of this year.

I want to thank the members of the Task Force and support staff for their time and talents through the last six months.

Sincerely,



Senator Art Eggleton,
Chair

Introduction

Everyone needs a home that is safe, secure and decent. It is in recognition of this that Toronto has a long history of providing social and affordable homes in our city.

Some 110,000 residents¹ live in homes owned by Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC). Tenants who reside in TCHC's 60,000 homes are spread out in more than 2,200 apartments, townhouses and single-family homes in 350 communities through every single ward in the city. They depend on their landlord to provide good quality housing and good services in return for the rent they pay.

The housing owned and operated by TCHC is critical to the well being of its residents but also to Toronto's social and economic infrastructure. TCHC is the second largest residential landlord in North America, second only to New York City Housing Authority. It has an annual operating budget in excess of \$600 million and a building replacement value of over \$9 billion. The TCHC housing portfolio represents 61% of the City's social housing.

TCHC has an obligation to do the best job possible and strive to be a landlord of excellence. We know that in the past and even today it has fallen short of achieving these goals.

In January 2015, Mayor John Tory appointed our Task Force to provide independent advice on a range of key issues. Most importantly, he commissioned the Task Force to provide insight and recommendations on how TCHC can and must improve services to people living at TCHC. The Task Force believes it is essential to "get it right" for everyone in the city, recognizing that there is no simple solution to this complex issue and challenge.

Our Task Force members come with a range of experience in social housing, finance, real estate development, public policy and as a TCHC tenant. The Mayor asked our advice on how to strengthen and support the delivery of housing to TCHC tenants now and in the future.

We have also undertaken our work with the understanding that government finances are limited and that there are often difficult choices to be made and competing priorities. But this is not a time for complacency. It is a time for action and for everyone to pull together for the betterment of our city.

From January to July 2015, the Task Force has met with tenants, City and provincial officials, TCHC executives, and social housing experts. We have visited more than 50 TCHC buildings and communities, interviewed frontline workers, and spoken directly with TCHC residents. A report on what more than 900 TCHC tenants and members of the public told us in five separate meetings with our Task Force members is available on the Task Force website at www.toronto.ca/tch-taskforce.

¹ In this report, we extensively use the word 'tenant' to refer to people who live in buildings owned by Toronto Community Housing, as this best describes the legal relationship which provides specific rights and responsibilities between tenants and Toronto Community Housing. We recognize that tenants are also residents of the communities they live in and we also use that term in some places.

Also, working with City and TCHC finance officials and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), we determined that through mortgage re-financing, additional funds can be made available to continue the 10-year capital repair program while efforts to secure more federal and provincial funding support continues.

Looking ahead the Task Force will provide a final report to the Mayor by year-end on the four areas of our mandate:

1. TCHC's current operations and service delivery,
2. Partnerships and innovation,
3. Capital revitalization and new development, and,
4. Governance

Recommendations

In this interim report, we are suggesting actions that can be taken immediately to begin addressing the issues we heard from tenants. These are action areas that cannot wait until the completion of our final report and where action can and must begin now to make noticeable and ongoing improvement in the lives of tenants.

In completing this phase of our work we are making seven recommendations for action:

- 1. Secure additional funding to move forward on the 10-year capital repair program**
- 2. Develop and implement an action plan on increasing safety and security**
- 3. Develop and implement an action plan on improving building conditions**
- 4. Develop and implement an action plan on providing more jobs and opportunities for residents**
- 5. Develop and implement an action plan on more effective training for TCHC staff and contractors**
- 6. Engage with residents in the creation of a Resident Charter and review the tenant engagement system**
- 7. Hire a Chief Operating Officer**

Consulting the Community and Learning the Issues

Since January, our Task Force has learned about TCHC's operational and administrative structures, its capital repair and revitalization efforts, and its relationships with tenants, community agencies, and other partners. To date, we have heard more than 1,200 voices-- people sharing what they think is working well at TCHC, what is not working, and what needs improvement. We have:

- Held 34 Task Force meetings
- Had over 900 people attend one of our five Public Community Meetings
- Met with over 300 tenants in other meetings including tenant representatives
- Met with City Councillors, the TCHC Board Chair and Board Members, and over 40 stakeholder groups
- Engaged with TCHC's unions, senior managers, Operating Unit Managers and frontline staff
- Met with housing experts from Manitoba and British Columbia
- Visited over 50 TCHC buildings and communities

Strong and passionate views were expressed from all corners about how TCHC can and must be better.

We heard how concerns about safety in TCHC buildings affect the lives of tenants. We heard about the challenges of living in homes where needed repairs are not made quickly or with good quality. We heard how some TCHC staff are dedicated and caring and help make communities work, while others are thought to be disrespectful and slow to respond to tenant's needs. We also heard how difficult it is to deliver service when funding is tight and support from other orders of government is more and more difficult to obtain.

We heard about the history of Toronto Community Housing. Many of today's challenges can be traced back to the merger of three organizations with separate corporate cultures, mandates and organizational structures. TCHC as a much larger organization has struggled with finding the right way to deliver housing.

Some systems, procedures and programs support tenants while others do not. We've heard about the impacts of broader issues, like mental health, poverty, youth engagement, unemployment and the needs of seniors. Many of these are outside of TCHC's direct control but ultimately shape tenant's lives and the perception of TCHC in the community.

We heard from many people, including mental health and addictions agencies about the challenges faced by vulnerable people living in TCHC buildings. Some people need support to help them take care of themselves, their units and to be part of the community. Many do not currently have those supports. When tenants are connected to the right support services, they are more likely to have successful tenancies. TCHC does help to connect tenants to the supports they need although these resources are limited.

We also heard about TCHC's sizeable number of buildings for seniors. Tenants living in these buildings report better satisfaction than many other TCHC residents. Most seniors living in family buildings told us they would like to live in buildings specifically for seniors although some told us they liked being integrated in buildings with families.

We heard from many tenants that they are glad that TCHC provides affordable housing for them. They told us how much worse their lives would be without it and how appreciative they are to have this support in their lives.

We heard about how TCHC has shown leadership in community revitalization through their significant development projects. The work done in Regent Park, Don Mount Court (now called Rivertowne) and beginning in Lawrence Heights and Alexandra Park, to name just a few, has changed the lives of TCHC tenants.

Along with City staff, we toured TCHC buildings and communities across the city. We visited seniors' buildings, family buildings and buildings with large numbers of vulnerable tenants. We saw buildings that were managed directly by TCHC and others managed by contract property managers. We have seen large scale buildings and communities and smaller scale ones too, including some of TCHC's single-family home portfolio.

1. Secure Additional Capital Repair Funding

The City and TCHC have put in place a 10 year program of investing \$2.6 billion to deal with the backlog of repairs resulting from aging buildings in the portfolio. The 10-year capital repair plan was approved by both the Board of TCHC and City Council in 2013 with a completion date of 2023. Some 52,000 units will be covered by the program. The funding plan is for the three orders of government to contribute a third of the required amount, or approximately \$865 million each over 10 years. To date, neither the federal or provincial governments have agreed to the City's request for such a funding arrangement. The City, however, has committed its share so that the program can proceed, and it is underway.

Given that TCHC's housing was built through federal and provincial housing programs, there is a clear case for Toronto seeking the support of these governments to contribute their fair share. To date, the City has committed its share and is providing the capital necessary to kick-start the 10-year program. However, TCHC and the City are still awaiting commitments from the federal and provincial governments.

At the same time, the Task Force has taken to exploring other funding possibilities with the federal and provincial governments.

One promising development following inquiries by the Task Force was the announcement in the 2015 federal budget that \$150 million in funding would be available to social housing providers to cover the penalty associated with re-financing high-interest mortgages. For example, the federal Crown Corporation, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) holds a number of high-interest long term non-renewable TCHC mortgages. Interest is as high

as 11%, with the weighted average of 9% on all of them. To this point, TCHC has been unable to refinance these mortgages without paying a prohibitively large penalty, but would like to do so to take advantage of current low interest rates, thereby saving interest costs which can provide more funds for the 10-year capital repair plan. TCHC expects to benefit from the federal announcement but their share of the fund and timing of the applicable transactions is still being negotiated. The Task Force is supportive of the federal government providing an early resolution of this matter.

A number of possibilities for capital funding assistance are also being explored with provincial officials. These will be addressed in the Task Force final report.

Meanwhile, some other mortgages are being refinanced and the result is that sufficient additional funds can be provided to keep the program proceeding through 2016 at the planned level of investing at least \$200 million in capital repairs.

We strongly recommend that the 10-year capital repair program continue as planned while the City continues to seek fair-share funding from the federal and provincial governments.

We also believe that social housing is valuable infrastructure in Toronto, providing decent affordable accommodation, as well as contributing to the economy and creating jobs. To complement new housing programs from the other levels of government, federal and provincial infrastructure programs should include social housing capital repairs, as it did during the stimulus funding in 2008/09. Such a change could result in another source of funding for TCHC's capital program.

We strongly recommend that the City request the province to work with the federal government to make social housing capital repair programs eligible for infrastructure funding.

Accelerated Action on areas of immediate concern

We heard from tenants and others of issues that directly affect the day-to-day lives of tenants. Some of these issues impact such basic things as tenant safety and security. We believe that several areas require immediate action.

The Task Force recommends that TCHC develop Action Plans and present them to the Task Force within 60 days of the release of this report.

We want to see Action Plans on these critical and inter-related areas for improvement in Increasing Safety and Security, Improving Building Conditions, Providing Jobs and Opportunities for Residents and More Effective Training for TCHC Staff and Contractors.

The goal of these Action Plans is for tenants to see noticeable and sustainable improvement by year-end.

The Action Plans should build on work currently underway at TCHC. They should be developed in consultation with appropriate outside agencies.

Priority should be given to high needs buildings. A ‘task team’ approach to work across silos at TCHC should be established.

Any funding needs or budget re-allocations should be noted.

We will monitor the progress in developing and implementing these Action Plans and report on them in our final report due in December.

2. Increasing Safety and Security

Some tenants report that they do not feel safe in their homes. They told us that they are afraid for themselves, their children, their parents and the future of their communities. While these problems don't exist in all buildings, and many tenants have enjoyment of their homes and communities, for those who are affected it is a very serious issue.

There are two main reasons for tenants feeling intimidated and fearful in their own homes. Fire safety is a concern, sometimes the result of the significant amount of hoarding at some TCHC homes. TCHC paid over \$2.5 million to Toronto Fire Services last year for false fire alarms, so there is a financial issue as well. The other is the impact on residents of illegal activity taking place in their immediate communities—sometimes in the stairwells and hallways where their children play. Drug dealing and other illegal and anti-social behaviour cause much of this.

We do see that this is a complex issue influenced by the reality that TCHC is home to some people who are living with mental health and addictions issues. Often they require ongoing supports in order to be successful in their tenancies; sometimes those supports are not as available as they need to be.

Still, we feel it is totally unacceptable for any TCHC tenant to feel unsafe in their own home. TCHC needs to take action to improve the safety and security of tenants. Regardless of whether they are TCHC tenants, or visitors, drug dealers and others engaging in illegal activity on TCHC property must get the message that they will not be permitted to continue to disrupt the lives of residents. The few should not be allowed to spoil life for the many.

What's already underway in TCHC regarding safety and security

TCHC is investing \$3 million to install or upgrade 571 high-resolution security cameras in communities across the city and has made a general commitment to continue such investments.

The City's Furthering Our Communities: Uniting Services (FOCUS) Rexdale pilot is an example of an approach to coordinate services in high needs areas that have had a positive impact. The pilot uses a model of community "tables," which includes representation from the City, TCHC, community agencies and Toronto Police Service, to come up with an individualized plan that helps people who are in trouble with the law or might become involved in crime.

TCHC staff inspect units every year to check fire alarms and clutter, among other things. Over 500 households have been identified as having a major level of clutter; 46 are receiving high priority follow-up for external agency support.

Toronto Fire Services (TFS) has a program, which allows landlords to get reimbursement for a portion of their false fire alarm charges if they invest the reimbursed money in improved fire safety systems. TCHC is working with TFS on getting reimbursement, where appropriate, and directing resources to improved fire safety.

The City's Specialized Program for Interdivisional Enhanced Response (SPIDER) is a program that brings agencies together to develop solutions for vulnerable people including those who hoard. Of the 31 situations reviewed by the SPIDER table to date, about 50% came from TCHC.

There are also many lessons we can learn from innovative approaches in other provinces related to evictions legislation and tenant support programs. The Task Force is exploring possible changes to provincial legislation, which may provide some help to TCHC to address safety and security issues. However, in the absence of legislative change TCHC needs to focus on the steps that it can take now.

Action Plan: Safety and Security

In development of an Action Plan for safety and security, we recommend that TCHC consider the following:

- Ways that existing policies on drug dealing at TCHC can be more effective so that tenants are not intimidated by this illegal activity
- Ways existing safety and security policies can be more effectively implemented and communicated to staff, tenants, and the visiting public
- Ways that the Community Safety Unit (CSU) can be organized, resourced, and aligned with Toronto Police Service to best meet the goal of keeping tenants free from the negative impacts of illegal activities in and around their homes
- An intelligence gathering role that might be played by CSU to curtail illegal activity
- How the City and its agencies can further assist in addressing hoarding issues

3. Improving Building Conditions

Many tenants reported that their building conditions are unacceptable. We heard how cleaners couldn't keep up with the work required at buildings where lobbies see high volumes of tenant and visitor traffic each day. Weekends and after hours can be particularly difficult since TCHC's scheduling for cleaning staff has been limited mainly to daytime hours. Tenants who do not care for their pets properly also can create higher cleaning needs for staff. Many tenants with mobility issues who require wheelchairs or scooters have difficulty accessing their units because elevators are too busy or frequently out-of-service for repairs.

Dispatch for unit repairs is inconsistent and historical response times have been slow. Delivery of repair services have been inconsistent for many reasons, including not enough control over what contractors are doing in units. TCHC frontline staff complete small repairs or semi-skilled repairs in buildings and communities. Some tenants report that they are not informed about scheduled repairs, despite TCHC's own policies that require staff to let tenants know when work will be done.

Pest infestations, such as bed bugs, mice and cockroaches, are an ongoing problem in some buildings. Bed bugs are difficult to eliminate, and they make tenants' lives stressful. Treatments are necessary, but pose a particular challenge for seniors and for vulnerable tenants. Preparing a unit for pest treatment takes a lot of time and can be too difficult for some residents. If tenants are unable to prepare their unit, the treatment may not work and the problem can reoccur and spread elsewhere.

TCHC has difficulty communicating, tracking and evaluating its repair services because its IT systems are old and no longer meet the needs of the business.

About 1,200 rent-geared-to-income tenants in TCHC have electric heat, and pay their bills directly to Toronto Hydro. These bills can be as high as \$300 per month. For tenants with low incomes, and little control over actual usage because of inadequate insulation, this is a huge burden.

We feel that TCHC tenants deserve to live in communities where they can feel pride of place. The pride of place that results from a well-maintained building is created through a combination of factors such as cleanliness, responsiveness to maintenance requests and addressing pest issues. Well-maintained and clean buildings contribute to the health of a community and make a positive statement about a building or a community.

We understand that the consistency of responses is necessary across the portfolio. TCHC manages approximately 48,000 units using its own property management resources, and has over 12,000 units that are managed by contracted private-sector property management companies. Contract management firms are expected to deliver services no less than the service levels at TCHC run buildings.

What's already underway at TCHC for improving building conditions

TCHC is currently recruiting 25 additional cleaners who will be placed in those buildings with the highest needs. TCHC is also working with employee unions to implement better cleaning standards and staff training.

Tenants primarily use the Client Care Centre, a central dispatch, to request maintenance work. We heard from some tenants that when they call the Client Care Centre, their calls are not answered within a reasonable time. However, the Client Care Centre is working towards improving service and has a goal of answering calls within 90 seconds.

TCHC recognized gaps in its own management and repair services and has started two pilots in 2015 that will focus on making sure that tenants' units are repaired properly and tenants are satisfied with the repair. One pilot, called "Closing the Loop" gives tenants the chance to report back to Client Care agents on the repairs in their unit and how the contractor treated them. The second pilot, "Resident's Voice on Maintenance," allows tenants to provide anonymous feedback to TCHC on the quality of contractor repairs through a dedicated phone line with voice mail.

TCHC has begun plumbing and basic electrical training for some front-line staff. Training in basic carpentry is being rolled out this year.

TCHC has developed a 5-year plan to improve its information technology (IT) systems with the goal of improving services, streamlining processes and providing better ways of measuring and reporting on business activities.

TCHC's Pest Management service is now run by a central group that coordinates treatments across the portfolio with the goal of providing more consistent service, reducing delivery costs, and improving treatment outcomes. TCHC is also using a new method for bed bug treatment to buildings as a whole to ensure that bed bugs don't move from unit to unit.

The City provides funding to help vulnerable tenants prepare units for pest treatment and to replace lost furniture. This is an important service for people who cannot prepare their units or replace belongings ruined in an infestation.

TCHC is replacing 35 elevators across the city in 2014/15. Funding is coming from the 10-year capital repair program. The Task Force will explore solutions to problems with elevators further in the second phase of our work. Given the increasing number of tenants with mobility issues and the need for greater accessibility of buildings and communities, other agencies and government departments may need to be involved in potential solutions.

Action Plan: Improving Building Conditions

In development of an Action Plan for building conditions, we recommend that TCHC consider the following:

- How setting a basic and professional cleaning standard can be consistently followed and monitored across the portfolio
- What it can do to ensure better management, role clarity, communication and training for both existing and new maintenance staff
- How it can implement evening and weekend cleaning services across the portfolio, starting with high needs buildings and communities
- Consider the possibility of having live-in superintendents as is common practice where the need or numbers warrant it
- How tenant satisfaction with repairs and contract work can be measured—possibly by rolling out the "Closing the Loop" program portfolio-wide
- How it could recast its contracts and relationships with third party property managers to improve quality of service
- What it can do to improve its pest treatment program and how the City and its agencies could expand services to help vulnerable residents prepare units for pest treatment and to replace furniture discarded due to infestation
- What approach it could develop and implement by the next winter to relieve the high heating costs experienced by RGI tenants who have electric heat and pay directly to Toronto Hydro
- How it could expedite energy audits and retrofits for buildings and communities with high electric heating costs
- How it could increase or speed up repairs and replacement of elevators as part of the 10-year capital plan

4. Providing Jobs and Opportunities for Residents

Tenants are looking for access to jobs and opportunities, particularly those that provide a bridge towards meaningful, sustainable work. Parents of youth are worried that their children may be drawn into gangs. Some tenants want to be able to compete for jobs across TCHC and want to see barriers removed so this can happen. Some tenants want TCHC to support their access to apprenticeships and skills training, and to assist with the transition to more long-term jobs and educational opportunities once short-term jobs and programs have finished. Youth want to be engaged and are looking for TCHC to take a lead in facilitating options that result in economic and educational opportunities.

We believe that TCHC, wherever possible, should provide opportunities for jobs and recreation programs for their tenants, including youth. We believe that youth need to feel hopeful and see a future for themselves. TCHC is a major employer and has sizeable contracts with external companies for capital repairs and other work. TCHC however, needs help to find the right partners and access to resources to help develop more job opportunities for tenants who live in its buildings and communities.

Although some employment and recreation programs exist, there are not enough to meet the need. More than 35,000 youth (aged 6 to 25) live in TCHC communities, almost one-third of all residents. Youth need recreation opportunities that give them the chance to make positive

connections with peers from across the city, and that provide leadership experience running the programs. More resources need to be put in place to better support youth who live in TCHC housing.

We heard about promising efforts in process by TCHC, the City and community partners. These will provide opportunities to TCHC tenants across the city including those undergoing revitalization. These initiatives, many of which are focused on youth, include direct employment, training, education, leadership and business development.

What's already underway at TCHC for resident jobs and opportunities

TCHC runs a number of programs for tenants, including youth, that offer employment and recreation opportunities. However, these programs only reach a small percentage of those who live in TCHC communities. Examples of what is underway include:

- TCHC's YouthWorx program, which is a summer employment program for light repair work, sign painting, gardening and clean-up projects in TCHC communities. Over 500 youth interviewed for 110 positions in 2015, which indicates a high demand
- The Rookie League Program (RLP), sponsored by the Jays Care Foundation, is a summer baseball day-camp employing 180 youth who also receive life skills training and providing activities for 1,250 children
- There is a new partnership with the Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment (MLSE) Foundation to transform a vacant space in a downtown building into a Sport for Development Centre. This Centre will have programming seven days a week, including MLSE programs, sports-based after school programs, breakfast programs and educational training such as cooking lessons
- Through revitalization initiatives, tenants have been provided with employment opportunities. In Regent Park, 600 jobs for tenants have been created to date. In Lawrence Heights, it is anticipated that TCHC's development partners will be creating \$3.5 million worth of jobs and training and education opportunities over the estimated seven-year construction period
- Hammer Heads is a skill and employment-based training program for youth offered by the Central Ontario Building Trades
- The CHOICE pre-apprenticeship carpentry program is a 12-week program for youth developed in partnership with TCHC, the Carpenter's Local 27 union, the YMCA and the province.

Action Plan: Resident Jobs and Opportunities

In development of an Action Plan for resident opportunities, we recommend that TCHC consider the following:

- How it could substantially increase access to youth recreation and employment programs in a consistent and coordinated way. This could include, for example, doubling the numbers of certain programs, expanding them throughout the year and identifying ways to build bridges to further employment opportunities

- What it would need to increase the number of recreational programs that bring youth together from different buildings and communities
- How it would ensure that a minimum of 10% of the total jobs created under the 10-year capital plan, including those created by contractors could be set aside for TCHC tenants, similarly as has been used in revitalization initiatives like Regent Park
- How it would hire tenants for jobs at all levels of TCHC
- How it could build on existing employment initiatives in TCHC and in the community, including additional resources to prepare tenants (including youth) for the world of work, help tenants to access apprenticeships and skills training, and assist with the transition to more long-term jobs and education once short-term jobs and training programs have finished
- How it could integrate and better coordinate TCHC, City and community resources

5. More Effective TCHC Staff and Contractor Training

The environment in which tenants, staff and contractors interact can be difficult. Many tenants gave examples of rudeness and even harassment on the part of staff and contractors. Some tenants reported that staff or contractors sometimes treat individuals and/or their homes with disrespect. When tenants report these situations to TCHC, it often does not seem that management takes action with specific staff or contractors. Staff complain about being subject to disrespectful conduct by tenants from time to time.

Although TCHC has a training program for staff and an orientation program for contractors, there is no required training specifically on respect, de-escalation of conflict and customer service.

What's already underway at TCHC for staff and contractor training

TCHC has a basic staff-training program that primarily covers the legislative responsibilities it must comply with as an employer (eg. Health and Safety, Accessible Customer Service). Staff are also trained in things such as how to identify vulnerable tenants. We believe there is more that needs to be done in this area.

Action Plan: More Effective TCHC Staff and Contractor Training

In development of an Action Plan on Training, we recommend that TCHC consider the following:

- How it could create a customer service orientation through the creation of a comprehensive training strategy for all levels of the company
- What steps it would take to improve customer service, including support for an environment where both staff and tenants treat each other with respect and courtesy
- Specialized training on working with vulnerable residents
- How it would improve its contractor orientation program to ensure that contractors provide quality, respectful service to tenants

6. Resident Charter and Tenant Engagement

The Task Force has listened carefully to the experience of tenants in TCHC. We have also spoken to staff at TCHC about their work. What we have discovered is that roles and responsibilities are not always clear.

We believe that good communication between TCHC and tenants helps everyone. We strongly support the creation of a Resident Charter which would set out the rights and responsibilities of both tenants and TCHC. The Charter would go beyond the legal obligations of the parties. It would promote mutual respect and accountability by setting clear, realistic expectations for everyone. To be successful, it needs to be created with the full input and engagement of tenants.

The Task Force also believes there should be a review of the current tenant engagement system. We want to see alternatives to the current system considered, for example supporting tenant associations or committees or increasing meetings in communities. There should also be opportunities for tenants to be involved that are outside of the formal tenant representative system.

The Task Force recommends that TCHC engage with tenants in creating a Resident Charter by the end of 2015.

The Task Force also recommends that TCHC review its current tenant engagement system.

7. Hire a Chief Operating Officer

The Task Force is concerned that the Chief Operating Officer (COO) position has been vacant for close to two years. As the job description notes: this person has responsibility for “ensuring that units are well maintained, providing a comfortable and secure living environment for all residents”.

TCHC has a big job ahead to regain the trust and confidence of their residents. While they have made progress under new leadership they have much more to do. To accomplish this task, they need a fully-staffed and capable senior management team. The recruitment of a new COO who is qualified and has a proven track record in the operation of social housing is a necessary step in this direction.

The Task Force recommends that TCHC put a priority on the hiring of a Chief Operating Officer.

Conclusion

We have listened to more than 1,200 people over the past six months who shared their experience living in, working for or partnering with Toronto Community Housing. We believe that action must be taken now so that tenants can see changes in their living conditions. We want to see the following,

- Drug dealing removed from TCHC properties
- Community Safety Unit officers talking to tenants and building trust
- Action now for high needs buildings and communities
- Cleaner buildings
- Repairs done right
- Fewer pest issues
- Staff and contractors being respectful and courteous to tenants
- Clear understanding between tenants and TCHC about rights and responsibilities
- More resources to fix aging elevators
- More job opportunities for tenants including youth
- Tenants being listened to and a regular system set up to do this
- Financial relief for tenants who have electric heat and pay directly
- A comprehensive and effective training strategy for staff

We will use the knowledge and experience we've gathered over the first phase of our work to help inform the final report. In the next phase of our work, we will focus on the remaining areas of our terms of reference. We will answer questions such as, is the status quo the best option, that is, a separate City-owned corporation governed by a City Council appointed Board? We will address opportunities for partnerships to provide greater support to vulnerable tenants with mental health issues and addictions. We will consider changes, such as transferring responsibility to other housing providers, back to the City, or a blended approach to the governance of TCHC.

We appreciate that TCHC tenants, staff and other community members took time to share their experiences during our first six months. Hearing from those who live and work in TCHC communities gave us the context to work on finding solutions. Without their openness we could not have completed the first phase of our work. We thank everyone for their contribution.

Our work continues.

