

Toronto Community Housing



Tenant Complaints Policy: Virtual Consultations

*Summary of Tenant
Feedback - March 2021*



Background

The effective management of tenant complaints and compliments supports a culture of improvement at Toronto Community Housing (TCHC). The Business Operations team is reviewing the Tenant Complaints Policy to include tenant feedback and reflect TCHC's tenant-focused approach.

In March 2021, TCHC hosted four virtual tenant consultations on the Tenant Complaints Policy. The consultations gave tenants the opportunity to share their feedback on the overall management of complaints and their resolution. In total, 60 tenants attended the consultations. Tenant feedback was recorded by note-takers and is the foundation of this report. The written feedback sent to the policy feedback email account was also included in this report.

Overview of tenant feedback

Tenants from contract-managed and direct-managed communities shared the importance of improving tenant experience at every stage of the Complaints Process – from reporting to resolution. Reflecting on their experiences with the Complaints Process, tenants shared feedback which can be organized into three categories: ***People***, ***Processes*** and ***Quality***.

People

Tenants shared feedback about the roles that tenants and staff can play to positively and negatively impact complaints management and resolution.

Topic	Tenant feedback
Staffing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible resources for tenants about the Complaints Process staffing model • Increased advertising of Solutions team to tenants
Education and training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff training to understand tenants' lived experiences (i.e., trauma-informed approach) • Resources for tenants on their responsibilities as tenants in the Complaints Process
Resolution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use an unbiased approach to service delivery and complaint resolution • Hire staff mediators to address community safety complaints
Respect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff and vendors should treat tenant homes and belongings with respect
Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff should be accountable to tenants and their complaints • Tenants should be accountable to TCHC and their communities to follow up on any notices (fire code violations, noise disturbances, etc.)
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with neighbours or Tenant Engagement System model to advance complaints
Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenants may not file a complaint about a neighbour or staff due to fears about impact to tenancy and/or personal safety

Processes

Tenants shared feedback about the processes that inform their experience with the Complaints Process.

Topic	Tenant feedback
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tenants expect regular communication during the handling of complaints• Communication standards should include a timeframe for completion and status updates
Prioritization	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prioritize complaints with clear communication of criteria to tenants
Evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tenants keep evidence of their complaints (i.e., photographs, videos, emails, text messages, tenant reference number)• More surveillance cameras to monitor community-related complaints
Resolution	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tenants expect timely resolution and post resolution follow-up
Audits	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Vendor audits should be informed by tenant feedback

“TCHC should take the tenant seriously and help the tenant understand what they can do to address the situation. Let them know that there is someone they can reach out to who is willing to help with the problem.” - TCHC tenant

Quality

Tenants shared feedback about the quality of the service they have received and the impact it has had on the enjoyment of their homes and communities.

Topic	Tenant feedback
Service standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• TCHC staff should follow uniform service standards for the Tenant Complaints Process
Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accessibility principles, as outlined by the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, must be integrated into every stage of the Tenant Complaints Process
Confidentiality	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff should protect a tenant's identity when addressing a complaint about community safety
Continuity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improve continuity as TCHC uses a "start-stop" approach
Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• TCHC should establish a Complaints Committee to manage complex complaints with tenants and staff

"Complaints resolution looks simple to me – it looks like getting the complaint resolved. It's getting the work done and not having the same issues in the future." - TCHC tenant

Summary of the discussion



Improve transparency

Tenants expressed the desire for increased transparency to:

- Improve communication around the complaints process (i.e., know who to call and who to go to);
- Make it easier for tenants to submit and track complaints;
- Identify a single point of contact addressing the complaint;
- Outline the steps involved in complaints investigations;
- Outline the escalation mechanism for complaints.

Increase accountability

Tenants expressed the desire for increased accountability to:

- Maintain confidentiality and integrity in the handling of complaints;
- Establish customer service standards for complaints management;
- Provide education to staff so complaints management is in alignment with:
 - Service standards;
 - TCHC Culture Model; and
 - Confronting Anti-Black Racism (“CABR”) Strategy.
- Provide education to tenants on their responsibilities as TCHC tenants in the complaints process.

Improved responsiveness

Tenants expressed the need for increased responsiveness to:

- Prioritize tenant complaints using an established triage criteria;
- Provide updates to tenants about their complaints within the service level timelines;
- Respond to tenant inquiries related to updates on their submitted complaints;
- Manage complaints to resolution within the established service level timelines.

Next steps



With the tenant consultations complete, TCHC is working to review the feedback provided by tenants with staff from across the organization. Feedback from tenants and staff will inform opportunities for improvement within the Tenant Complaints Process and support the revision of the Tenant Complaints Policy. TCHC is working to revise the policy and rollout a new communications campaign about the Complaints Process by the end-of-year 2021.