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## Mayor seeks deferral in social-housing sale

By PATRICK WHITE

From Tuesday's Globe and Mail

*Ford wants TCHC board to formulate thorough strategy for use of expected proceeds and where it would place displaced tenants*

The mayor's office is pausing a controversial plan designed to address a massive repair backlog by selling 740 social-housing properties.

Rob Ford's office informed the city clerk late on Monday that the mayor wants to defer the proposal to a later date, avoiding a Tuesday showdown with dozens of social-housing advocates who had registered to speak against the liquidation during a meeting of the mayor's executive committee.

In a statement, the mayor said the plan forwarded from Toronto Community Housing's board lacks detail. He wants to wait another month for the board to formulate a thorough strategy for how it would use the \$222-million expected from the sale and where it would place the more than 2,000 displaced tenants.

"What I would like to see next month is TCHC's plan for using these funds to make critical repairs and improve the lives of residents," he said. "What are their priorities? Who is going to benefit? How fast can things improve? That's what residents are asking when I go door to door. That's what councillors want to know. I think TCHC can get that information together quickly so we can help people as soon as possible."

The deferral coincides with mounting opposition to the selloff. City councillors have been inundated with concerns from four former mayors

(Barbara Hall, John Sewell, Art Eggleton and David Crombie), two sitting MPPs (Lorenzo Berardinetti and Glen Murray) and various think tanks all questioning the sale.

"On this issue the mayor is looking at 75 deputants, a report riddled with inaccuracies and a lack of any strategy for public housing beyond selling, and he is wisely hitting the pause button," Councillor Adam Vaughan said.

The Toronto housing board approved the plan at its October meeting. The agency says selling off the standalone homes is the only way it can pay for a \$650-million repair backlog. Under the current plan, the proceeds would be invested in a state-of-good-repair fund that would generate up to \$17-million a year for repairs.

"This is a drop in the bucket," said Councillor Ana Bailao, chair of the affordable housing committee. "I want to look at some other options. I want to gather the stakeholders and work on a report to explore other alternatives. Selling these houses is not going to address the larger issue at hand."

At a recent seminar put on by the Cities Centre at the University of Toronto, several social-housing experts put forth ideas to create co-ops, build public-private partnerships and break up TCHC into more manageable chunks.

The housing agency is currently North America's second largest with more than 164,000 tenants in 2,200 buildings and a waiting list 70,000 names long. "How can it be a good idea to be evicting people - over 2,000 people - when there is already such a critical shortage of social housing," said Jon Alexander, one of the tenants who would be ousted under the plan.

Even if the proposal does pass executive committee and city council, it would still require provincial consent. Under Ontario legislation, municipalities cannot reduce public-housing stock without the consent of the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, now Kathleen Wynne.

"I'm watching it very carefully," Ms. Wynne said of the selloff plan at TCHC. "I take my role very seriously to ensure there is an adequate level of affordable housing in Toronto and the rest of the Ontario."

Ms. Wynne is already considering a city application to sell 10 TCHC homes, something she's responded to with a set of questions for the city, suggesting any larger liquidation of social-housing assets will not take place swiftly.

The deferral motion would punt the plan to a Feb. 13 executive meeting.

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