

# Fiorito: On your mark, get set, stand still

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By Joe Fiorito

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Back in June, the directors of the Toronto Community Housing Corporation instructed the staff of TCHC to come up with an action plan to implement the recommendations of the LeSage report.

The action plan was supposed to reinforce, to clarify and to strengthen TCHC's existing Eviction Prevention Policy, in order to prevent situations such as the one that led, however directly or indirectly, to the death of 82-year old Al Gosling.

The action plan was presented to the board last Friday. And I was full of hope until I heard Keiko Nakamura, the big boss of TCHC, say, "Re-engineering our

Fletcher that TCHC has a budget shortfall of \$300 million.

In other words, tough luck.

Another tenant said, "We should build networks so that tenants can spot problems." He was asked how that might happen. He said, "Put some power in the hands of tenant reps. How about helping them advocate?"

Thing is, I've been told too many times that TCHC discourages tenant reps from acting as advocates.

Long-term tenant Pat McKendry said, "I find the minutes of the June meeting insulting." That's the meeting last month at which the LeSage report was presented. She said, "There are no deputations attached."

Many of those underscored or fleshed out the recommendations made by Patrick LeSage, and would have served as useful background for the action plan.

Once again, tough luck.

A legal aid lawyer, Nina Hall, said the preamble to the action plan was "aspirational," meaning long on talk and

processes will take time."

Oh, dear.

Patrick LeSage wrote his report as if his life depended on it; if my life was at stake, the last thing I'd want to hear is how much time it was going to take to re-engineer the processes.

She said, "Staff have shown me they will respond." If so, they haven't shown anyone else. She added, "Staff want the public to know they care about tenants; they've been humbled."

They've been humbled.

Al was laid low.

Ms. Nakamura said, "We're admitting our

short on walk.

And then she said, "There's zero road map. There is nothing here that incorporates what the corporation has learned." She said, "You are on the road to squandering the opportunity."

She said, equally sharply, "You are delegated to manage subsidies; it's your core business." In other words, Al need not have been evicted.

Another lawyer, Linda Mitchell, said, "I was looking forward to seeing what you would do with each recommendation. This document? . . . you won't be held accountable. It's like nailing jelly to a wall."

David Mitchell, the chair of TCHC, said, somewhat defensively, "The CEO

mistakes. We will make changes."

Fine.

We'll be watching.

Prior to the vote to adopt the action plan, there were deputations made by a handful of tenants, and also by the legal aid workers who do the heavy lifting when it comes to disputes between tenant and landlord.

A reminder:

Because it's public housing, you and I are the landlord.

One tenant said, reasonably, that she wanted more advocacy. She was told, gently but firmly, by city Councillor Paula

prepared this document, under our direction, to be a strategic document."

That's not how I remember it.

But I bet you can guess how this ends: the board moved that the document not be called an action plan; instead, they moved to call it a "strategic road map."

A person in the audience shouted, "Shame on you for not following the LeSage recommendations."