

PH19.6 - Attachment 2

ATTACHMENT 2

Survey Results: Proposed Colour-Coded Rating System

RentSafeTO: Apartment Building Standards Program

BACKGROUND AND LIMITATIONS

As part of the development of the proposed apartment building rating system for the City of Toronto's [RentSafeTO program](#), an online survey was developed to provide interested members of the public with the opportunity to provide feedback on a proposed three-colour rating system. The survey was available online for 13 days from February 18, 2020 to March 2, 2020. A total of 1,930 individuals responded to the survey, with 1,529 (79.2%) reaching the end of the survey and 401 people partially completing the survey (20.8%).

The online survey, hosted by the City, did not have the scientific controls that a third-party public opinion survey would. The results of the survey should not be considered representative of the general population, but rather used to provide additional insight into public opinion related to the proposed rating system.

The quantitative summary provides an overview of the feedback received through the online survey. It is important to note that all questions were optional, which means that the number of respondents for each question may not be the total number of survey respondents.

The qualitative summary provides an overview of the main feedback topics provided through the open-text fields in the survey and includes quotes from survey respondents.

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

Demographic Questions

Age [Q: What is your age?]

Table 1: Age of Respondents

Age range	# of respondents	% of respondents
18-24	70	4.6%
25-34	422	28.0%
35-44	357	23.7%
45-54	225	14.9%
55-64	234	15.5%
65-74	134	8.9%
75-84	58	3.9%
85 or older	6	0.4%
Total	1506	100%

Housing Type [Q: Which of the following best describes you?]

Table 2: Housing Type

Statement	# of respondents	% of respondents
I am a homeowner.	160	10.7%
I rent in a condominium, townhouse, or other private residence (includes a basement or main-floor unit).	232	15.5%
I rent in an apartment building (with 3 or more storeys and 10 or more units).	944	63.1%
I rent in an apartment building (with less than 3 storeys and less than 10 units).	87	5.8%
Other	72	4.8%
Total	1495	100%

Registered Landlord Status [Q: Are you a landlord registered under Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 354, Apartment Buildings (that is, do you own or operate an apartment building under the RentSafeTO program)?]

Table 3: Respondents Identifying as a Landlord

Response	# of respondents	% of respondents
No	1387	93.3%
Yes	100	6.7%
Total	1487	100%

Income [Q: Which of the following categories best describes your total household income for the year 2019? That is, the total income of all persons in your household combined, before taxes.]

Table 4: Total Household Income of Respondent

Income	# of respondents	% of respondents
\$100,000 to under \$120,000	93	6%
\$120,000 to under \$140,000	52	3%
\$140,000 or more	104	7%
\$20,000 to under \$40,000	226	15%
\$40,000 to under \$60,000	259	17%
\$60,000 to under \$80,000	244	16%
\$80,000 to under \$100,000	156	10%
Less than \$20,000	111	7%
Prefer not to answer	248	17%
Total	1493	100%

Geographic Distribution of Respondents

The geographical distribution of respondents living in RentSafeTO apartment buildings is shown in Figure 1. M4Y had the highest number of respondents (51 people); it is primarily located in Ward 13, bounded by Bloor, Sherbourne, Carlton, and Bay Streets.

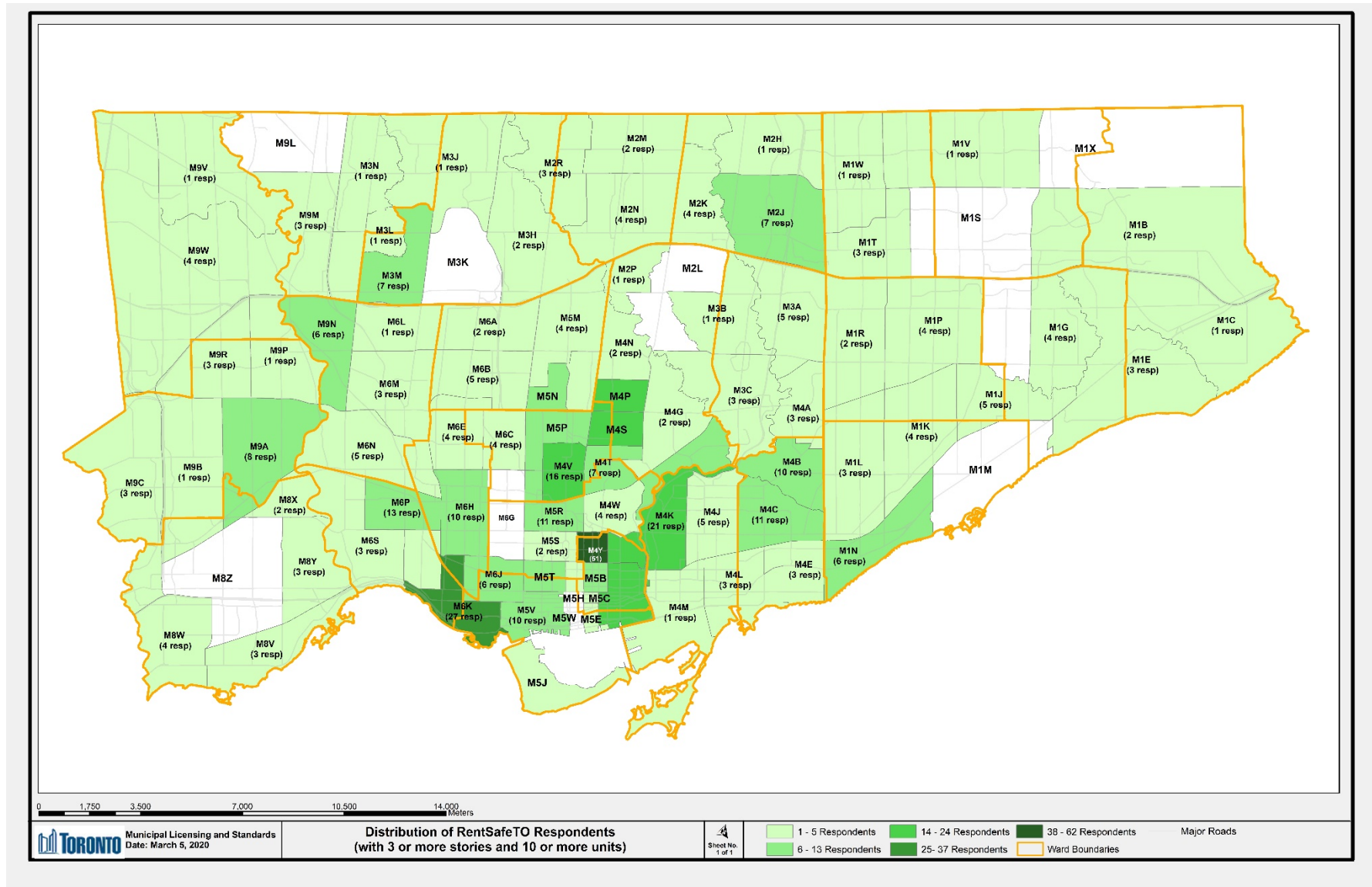


Figure 1: Geographical distribution of respondents that indicated that they live in a RentSafeTO apartment building (that is, 3 or more storeys and 10 or more units) by forward sortation area [n=511]

Survey Questions

Rating System

Table 5: Agreement with the statement "I think the rating system is a good idea", all respondents

Response	# of respondents	% of respondents
Strongly Disagree	135	8%
Disagree	65	4%
Neutral	86	21%
Agree	401	25%
Strongly Agree	887	56%
Don't know	18	1%
Total	1592	100%

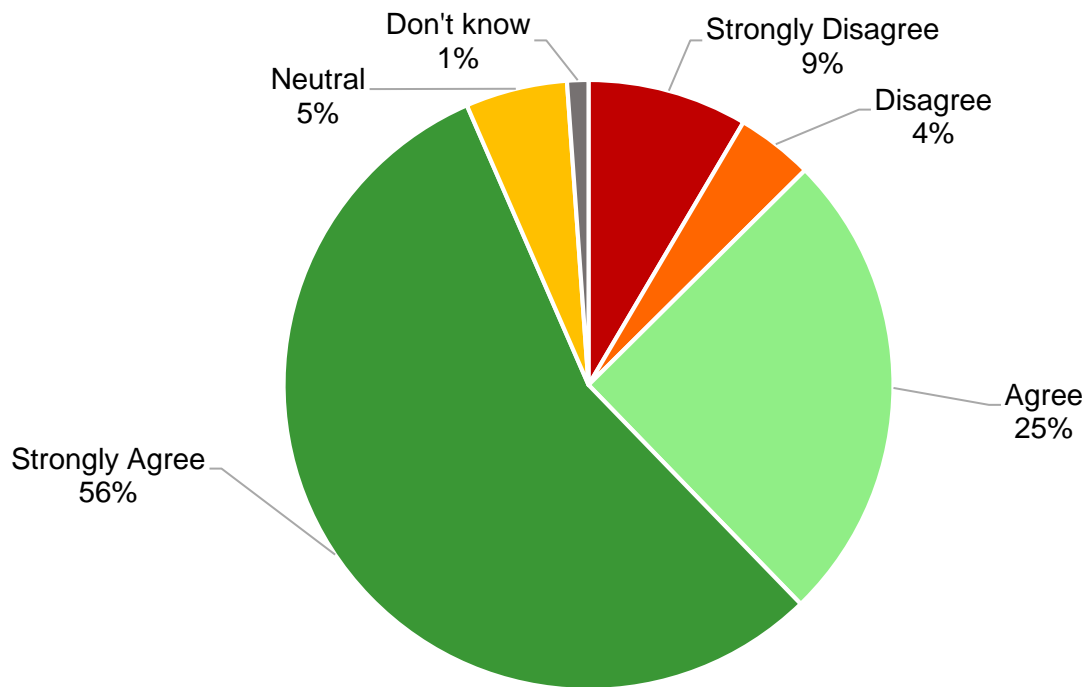


Figure 2: Level of agreement with the statement "I think the rating system is a good idea", all respondents

Table 6: Agreement with the statement "I think the rating system is a good idea", renters (e.g. in an apartment building, condominium or other private residence)

Response	# of respondents	% of respondents
Strongly Disagree	64	5%
Disagree	33	3%
Neutral	57	5%
Agree	321	25%
Strongly Agree	774	61%
Don't know	13	1%
Total	1262	100%

Table 7: Agreement with the statement "I think the rating system is a good idea", renters in apartment buildings (with 3 or more storeys and 10 or more units)

Response	# of respondents	% of respondents
Strongly Disagree	52	6%
Disagree	22	2%
Neutral	40	4%
Agree	241	26%
Strongly Agree	582	62%
Don't know	7	1%
Total	944	100%

Table 8: Agreement with the statement "I think the rating system is a good idea", registered landlords status

Response	# of respondents	% of respondents
Strongly Disagree	36	36%
Disagree	18	18%
Neutral	8	8%
Agree	17	17%
Strongly Agree	20	20%
Don't know	36	36%
Total	99	100%

Rating Sign Design

Table 9: Agreement with statements regarding draft rating sign clarity and readability, all respondents

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't know
The building's score is easy to read.	2.6%	2.7%	6.4%	36.8%	50.9%	0.6%
I can tell where to go to get more information about the RentSafeTO program.	3.0%	8.6%	13.2%	43.6%	29.9%	1.8%

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't know
It is clear that this is a sign issued by the City of Toronto.	2.1%	5.9%	7.2%	42.3%	42.0%	0.5%
Overall, the proposed design is readable.	1.8%	2.7%	7.1%	50.9%	37.3%	0.3%
Overall, the proposed design is easy to understand.	3.2%	7.1%	9.2%	46.1%	33.7%	0.8%

Table 10: Agreement with the statement that "the rating system will be useful in helping me decide where to live, all respondents

Response	# of respondents	% of respondents
Strongly Disagree	145	9%
Disagree	132	8%
Neutral	160	10%
Agree	491	31%
Strongly Agree	635	40%
Don't know	30	2%
Total	1593	100%

Rating System Colours

Table 11: Agreement on statements related to rating system colours, all respondents.

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't know
The use of the colours green, yellow and red is logical and makes sense.	4.1%	2.9%	4.9%	36.4%	51.6%	0.2%
Apartment buildings that fail the City's evaluation and require a full audit should be issued a sign that is red in colour.	5.2%	2.2%	4.0%	25.4%	62.2%	1.0%
The use of the colours green, yellow and red will be effective in encouraging an apartment building owner to improve the condition of their building.	8.2%	7.5%	12.9%	31.1%	36.1%	4.2%

Table 12: Agreement on red rating signs for buildings that receive an audit, renters in apartment buildings (i.e. more than 3 storeys and 10 units)

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't know
Apartment buildings that fail the City's evaluation	3.1%	1.1%	3.1%	23.8.4%	68.2%	0.6%

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't know
and require a full audit should be issued a sign that is red in colour.						

Rating Sign Placement

Table 13: Agreement with statements related to the placement of the proposed rating sign, all respondents.

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't know
The sign should be placed near the front entrance in a prominent place.	6.4%	2.8%	4.2%	23.8%	62.1%	0.6%
The sign should be visible from the street or sidewalk so that anyone can see the apartment building's rating.	9.1%	8.3%	11.8%	19.3%	49.9%	1.5%

QUALITATIVE RESULTS

What do you like *most* about the proposed colour-coded rating system for apartments?

Table 14: Summary of written feedback received on what respondents liked most about the proposed rating system

TOPIC	SUMMARY	QUOTES
Colours	<p>In general, respondents stated that the colours green, yellow, and red were logical, consistent with other City programs (such as DineSafe), and would help convey the information to people whose first language may not be English.</p> <p>Some respondents wrote that they supported including both the sign colour and City rating score, as it provided a good level of detail for tenants.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's simple and I don't have to look anything up all the basic information I need comes from the colour • It makes sense for buildings that fail their inspection to have a red sign. • Intuitive use of green, yellow and red, as well as the large font size for the rating score. • Easy to understand and already familiar with the look and feel from the DineSafe program. • I like that the coloured part takes the most part of the sheet, it gives you the information about the building's score immediately without the need to come closer and reading the fine print. • I like the colour-coded system combined with a percentage-point score so that people will know the precise extent of compliance or non-compliance. • Colors are easy to 'read' for everyone, and that eliminates the potential language barrier
Potential Outcomes	<p>Respondents stated that the rating system may increase the quality of Toronto's apartment housing stock by encouraging landlords to maintain their buildings and invest in the necessary capital improvements. Some wrote that there is a gap in information available about apartment buildings and that this will help potential tenants better understand the condition of the building.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will increase the quality of available apartments • I like that it will hopefully motivate landlords to keep buildings in good order, as well as make it easier for people to decide where is good to live. • I like the accountability of the landlord to keep the building well maintained in order to receive a good rating. • It's so hard to find apartments in Toronto as it is. 'User generate reviews' are not reliable on sites like craigslist, and this will help people navigate buildings and understand what they are getting into (or not). • It is very transparent and it will create an incentive for landlords to improve their buildings to attract and retain good tenants.
Readability	<p>Written feedback from the survey indicated support for the readability of the rating sign. The simplicity of the rating system was frequently cited as a good feature in the written feedback. Respondents stated that the signs were easy to understand, provide an appropriate amount of information, and let readers clearly know how to get more information about the RentSafeTO program.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear rating system. I like the follow up and accountability and the possibility of a full audit for non-compliant buildings. • Clear, universal rating system. • Thank goodness the city is developing this program - it is badly needed It is easy to read, grabs your attention and gives you the appropriate information • It's easy to understand no matter what language you speak. I feel like people of many cultures will understand what the colours mean. • The simplicity of the design, and the ability to search for more information. • Signs are easy to understand without too much jargon or unnecessary detail. • Ideal for persons who do not speak English well. Very distinctive and dramatic.

TOPIC	SUMMARY	QUOTES
Usefulness	Respondents, particularly tenants, wrote that the rating system will be a useful tool for them. Comments included that such a rating system for Toronto is overdue, that it will be an important consideration for prospective tenants when looking to move, and there is a lack of reliable information available to tenants about individual apartment buildings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I like almost everything about this honestly. It's a really amazing moment to finally see the city of Toronto trying to help people's living situations. I really think this will force building owners to actually improve their properties instead of letting people constantly live in horrible conditions that they deny. • This is something I would have used and would have been very helpful when apartment searching 2 years ago. I did not want to move to a bug and pest infested dirty building so the only thing I had to go off of were online reviews. • It's similar to DineSafe and maintains a clear and consistent branding people of Toronto can recognize, helping people make decisions if the building is being cared for before they make a large deposit. • I like that there's a rating system at all. If it's going to be anything like DineSafe, your rating system will be my new best friend. • As a long-term renter in the City of Toronto (10+ years), this helps provide unbiased (i.e., not from the sales team) information on the upkeep of the building.

What do you like *least* about the proposed colour-coded rating system for apartments?

Table 15: Summary of written feedback received on what respondents liked least about the proposed rating system

TOPIC	SUMMARY	QUOTES
Enforceability	Enforceability was a key concern for some respondents, citing a need for both proactive and complaint-based enforcement, fines that are high enough to deter non-compliance, and mechanisms to prevent signs from being defaced or removed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm worried that enforcement won't happen and landlords won't care enough to fix problems. • If removed or defaced must be rehung ASAP ... and fines to anyone proven to have removed sign! • There needs to be clearer accountability, follow-up and enforcement from the city on landlords — especially in the proposed “red” category. • I worry that the RentSafe program will not be properly implemented and maintained. Funding from the city will have to ensure that there are enough staff to do the audits etc.
Evaluation Concerns	Some respondents expressed concerns with the City's current approach to evaluating buildings. Concerns included reliability and whether or not the buildings are assessed consistently across Toronto. Others wrote that the evaluation score should be predominantly based on issues in units, as that is where tenants live. Those who expressed this were generally only assessing common areas when determining the evaluation score.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This rating system should be mainly if not only about the actual apartments, if they are safe, maintained, heated, etc. • I am concerned about the reliability of the ratings. Since the scores for each building is subjective based on the inspector, how do I know that they are accurate? • It does not seem to account for issues in non-common areas - such as landlords failing to complete necessary work on apartments (such as repairs or pest control). • It should not be based only on the condition of common areas, but should take into account the condition of individual units (e.g. issues with heating/cooling, water, appliances, pests, etc.).

TOPIC	SUMMARY	QUOTES
Frequency of Evaluations	Written responses included support for more frequent evaluations. Feedback received included concerns that a re-evaluation every three years for apartment buildings with a green sign is not frequent enough to be reliable for prospective tenants. Others wrote that an increase in frequency of evaluations should be done along with including issues in units when determining the evaluation score so that the rating sign is frequently updated and as accurate as possible for current and future tenants.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • According to the posters, only common areas are assessed, up to 3 years apart? As a lifelong renter, I don't believe that's sufficient rigor to increase my confidence in a building and a landlord. There must be other measures to include and assess. • The rating is every 1-3 years which is far too long and doesn't take in to account unit issues. • Buildings should be inspected and rated far more often. • I think the building need to be checked more often than 3 years especially if they change management because a building can get run down pretty fast. • Inspections every 3 years are next to useless, they should be conducted every 3 months. Inspections should include all units and review of maintenance issues and how fast are they resolved. Signs based on such limited information can be detrimental, as they are likely not to represent reality.
Housing Market	Written feedback included broader concerns about the housing market in Toronto, with respondents stating that the tight rental market may mean that prospective tenants have less choice and will need to choose a lower-rated apartment building based on rent price and limited availability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This system will ultimately be useless to a certain extent because people in Toronto do not get a choice where they rent. The rent prices are astronomical, and vacancy rates are minimal. Nobody's moving, and people are enduring everything just so they can afford to stay in this city. • This city is overpopulated and unaffordable. People who desperately need someplace to live will always consider price over building quality... there will always be people willing to move in no matter the condition • Housing is hard enough to come by in this city that only folks with a degree of financial privilege will be able to choose based on these ratings, and those less well-off will just have to take what they can get.
Improving Readability	Respondents provided suggestions to further improve the readability of the signs, including reducing the amount of text and increasing the font size. Some stated that the draft signs were cluttered. Others made suggestions as to how to make the language clearer for tenants.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The sign looks a little cluttered • What about colour blind or visually impaired people? • The pages still looked a little busy for the amount of information that is included. • It doesn't specify how long after talking to your landlord should you contact 311. If the problem persist after a few months or years?? • The graphic design - it is cluttered. Too much messaging. People are not going to read it.
Online Access (Website)	Respondents stated that an interactive, fully-accessible, and searchable online database (website) should be created and maintained with up-to-date information so that current and prospective tenants can access everything remotely without having to go into the building to read the sign.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data should be available on the city's website, preferably on an open source map. When apartment hunting, the most disadvantaged can't easily get physically close to buildings they are considering. • Expose the rating information publicly. Publish it on the City of Toronto website so that potential tenant doesn't have to physically go to the building and learn it from some building's internal boards. • There should be a database with the City of Toronto where people can find the rating for a certain apartment building and it should be updated on a timely basis.

TOPIC	SUMMARY	QUOTES
Rent Increases	Some respondents expressed concerns about the potential for above guideline rent increases as a result of implementing the proposed rating system, particularly for tenants in yellow buildings if landlords are incentivized to make capital improvements to increase their score. Others stated that they believed that a building with a rating sign that is green may increase the cost of rent for new tenants.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For building getting green they could use it to increase rent which is already a problem. Plus with the rent crisis right now does it really matter what the building rated? • A lower rating or red colour may cause the building to do more capital expenditures which could lead to more ABI rent increases for tenants. • If I live in a building that gets a 'yellow' rating, I can now look forwards to an above guideline increase since the landlord will apply to increase rent to get the yellow => green. • This program will only cost more for the landlords and cost the tenants in higher rents through above guideline increases.
Stigmatization	Respondents expressed concern about the potential for the rating signs to result in stigmatization, citing concerns about tenants feeling embarrassed or ashamed of the buildings that they live in. Some wrote that the choice of where people live is different than a restaurant and, for many people in Toronto, moving is not an option.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not sure about having the sign placed so passersby can see it. I think that having it at the entrance of the building is sufficient. If my building has a red notice, I'd prefer my whole neighbourhood not knowing. • I think it will negatively impact and stigmatize residents, in particular those who do not have a choice of where to live. A home and a restaurant are not one in the same and should not be treated as such. • Stigma and negative emotional/psychological impacts of living in buildings with bad ratings that may be highly visible to public. The signs could encourage landlords and owners to do a better job, but visible rating will be something tenants actually have to come home to in the meantime. • It shames the tenants who are subjected to living in a building that has a red or yellow sign. • Concerned about the stigma if you lived in a 'red building'. Visitors may assume your home is infested with bugs or other things, much like a failed restaurant rating.

Is there anything else that the City should consider in developing the apartment building rating system?

Table 16: Summary of additional feedback received related to the proposed rating system

TOPIC	SUMMARY	QUOTES
Appeal Process	Written comments included suggestions to allow people the option to appeal the City-issued evaluation score and to provide building owners/operators with the opportunity to increase their score once repairs are made.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If someone disagrees with the score they should be able to appeal it • Perhaps as well - there should be a method of appealing a city inspection. Or if there issues that had been identified and then deal with by the landlord - that the rating system be adjusted when repairs are addressed. • Provide timely legally binding process where tenants / landlords can contest/appeal building's final scores.

TOPIC	SUMMARY	QUOTES
Awareness	Some respondents stated that they would like the City to undertake a public education (awareness) campaign to inform Torontonians about the RentSafeTO program and how to have issues addressed in their units.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The city should raise awareness about the website address that list problems that have been reported about a building (issues escalated to 311 or RentSafeTO). • Need to pair this with a voracious public awareness campaign.
Evictions and the High Cost of Rent	Respondents, particularly tenants, expressed concern about the high cost of rent in Toronto and an increase in evictions. Suggestions included expanding rent control and increasing supports for tenants faced with rent increases and eviction notices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It doesn't address any of the real issues with housing in the city - lack of supply, landlords unfamiliar or unwilling to follow the law, renovictions, lack of rent control... • It seems like a pointless rating system for a city that barely has affordable housing. Maybe you should invest money in that or crack down on reno-evictions. • I hope that the city takes into consideration the ridiculously high rents in Toronto that are forcing people out. • Grades mean nothing if the owners can continue to charge high rental rates. • Stronger advocacy at the provincial level for rent control.
Fines and Enforcement	Some respondents wrote that enforcement should be a key priority and suggested that staff consider ways to ensure that the rating system and underlying deficiencies are addressed through enforcement efforts. Some commented that penalties for non-compliance should be higher.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stricter enforcement such as fines and signage should be put in place where rental buildings are not following the rentsafe requirements. • Higher fines, more effective enforcement. • Law enforcement and fines are the only things that will prompt landlords to fix buildings in disrepair. • Proper enforcement of existing building standards bylaws would do more to protect tenants than the proposed rating system