

RE: RH3.1

Delivering information that keeps people housed

Customer Experience Transformation and Innovation Program

September 24, 2020



Project Background and Task

This presentation is a walkthrough of the approach we took to improve the website and proposed next steps

BACKGROUND

The Advisory Committee comments were made about how difficult it was to **find the right information** on tenant issues on Toronto.ca

In **March 2020**, there was an **urgent need to get information to tenants during COVID-19** – the CXi Team and the Housing Secretariat began working together to improve tenant communications

TASK

In November 2019, the **Sub-Committee report** asked **City staff** to directly work with a newly created Advisory Committee **to improve communications on tenant rights**

In March 2020, CXi Team and the Housing Secretariat began researching by **first speaking to people with lived experience to better understand WHAT** information and resources people wanted on Toronto.ca

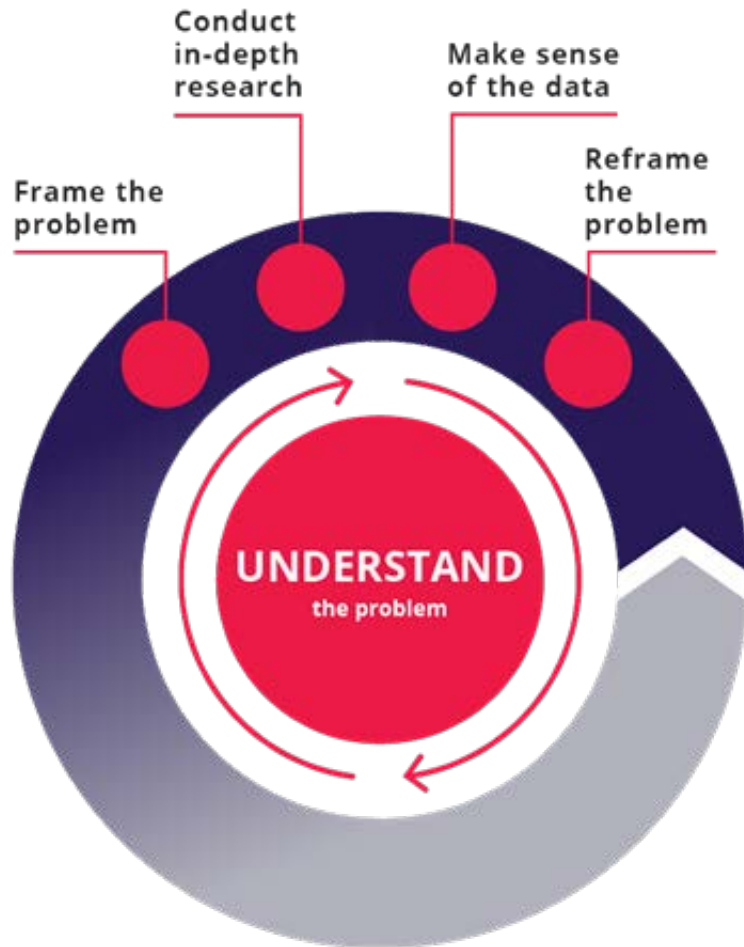
Delivering information that keeps people housed

Refreshed Resource Channels for Tenants

How We Work - Understanding the Problem

What we learned:

Channels to Know, Understand and Pursue Rights



City

311
Councillors
RentSafe
Rent Bank

Province

Landlord Tenant
Board

Social Service Organizations and Advocacy Groups

Legal Clinics
Tenants' Associations
Not-for-Profit Groups
Housing Help Centres

Informal Networks



Friends
Family
Neighbours
Housemates

Toronto.ca Webpages

toronto.ca/home/covid-19/

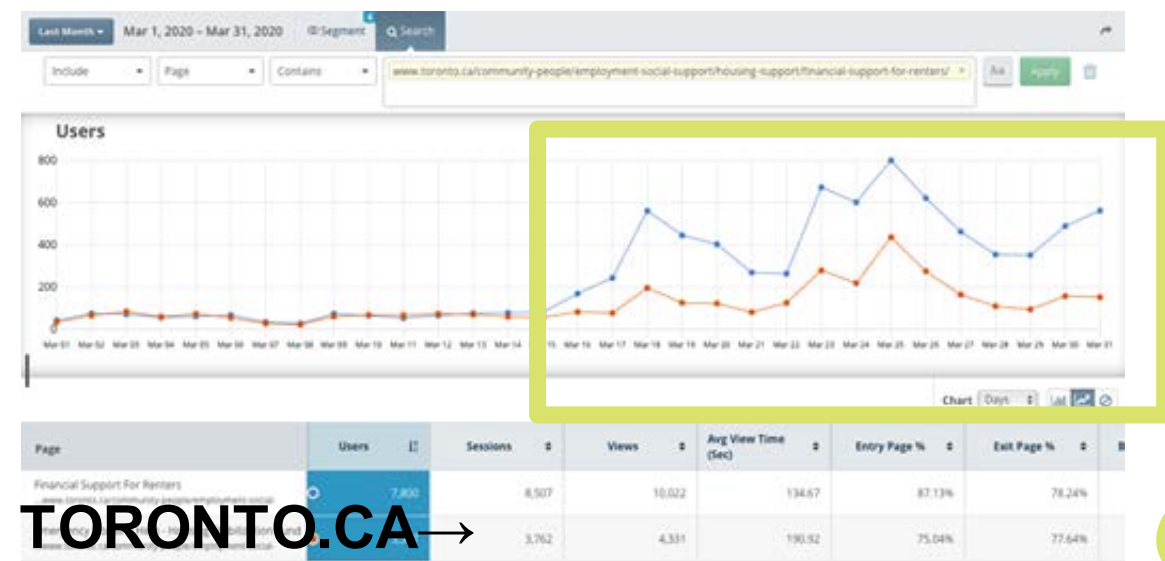
COVID19 pages on Toronto.ca had **10.4 million pageviews** from **March-May 2020**

- **10,321** regarding **general financial support information** for tenants and property owners
- **2,989** pageviews for for **July 17-24**
 - **1,271** clicks on **Tenant Rights and Responsibilities**
 - **641** pageviews for this for July 17-24

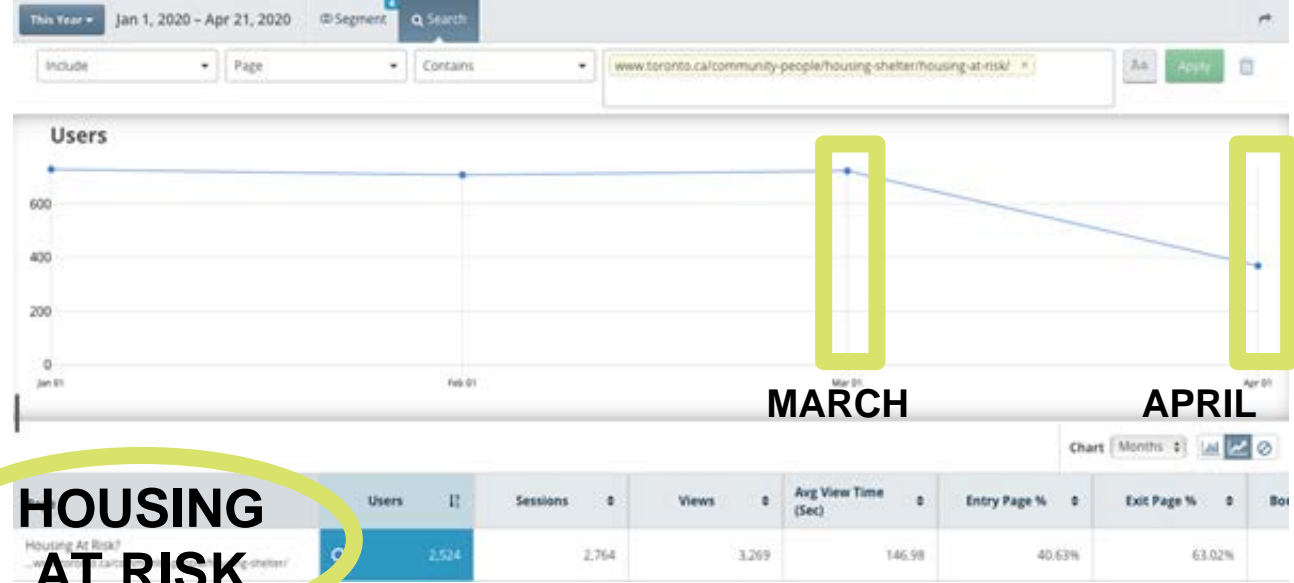
toronto.ca/community-people/housing-shelter/housing-at-risk/

Housing At Risk pages on Toronto.ca **did not see much change pre- vs. during-COVID** in terms of number of users, even though this page displays **similar information as the Financial Support Information** for Tenants section of the COVID19 pages

This suggests that users go to a **centralized, need-based site where they know which search terms to look for.**



TORONTO.CA →
COVID-19



HOUSING AT RISK

How We've Discovered

Jurisdictional Enquiry and Literature Review



Review of Toronto.ca Web Analytics



In-depth Interviews with 15 Community Organizations



In-depth Remote Interviews with People with Lived Experience



Connections to City Staff



Evictions and housing instability are on the rise

More people look up housing supports under a main page than navigate to Community and Shelter

Needs are around data collection and up-to-date information

Needs are around understanding rights of both tenants and landlords

Needs of SMEs are around ensuring that service providers get information and website is integrated into rest of Toronto.ca

April 2020

May 2020

May - June 2020

May 2020

May - June 2020

Used a paper prototype to test the websites features with residents at a Neighbourhood Summit for feedback on their preferences

Reviewed Toronto.ca analytics

Tested if we could increase online participation by using localized content and topics that residents were familiar with

Through the City's our Tenant Advisory Committee and people who are connected to them, we interviewed those who have been evicted, have a housing issue or have been threatened with eviction

Aligned housing-related digital content holders and policy makers at the City of Toronto. First ever alignment around this subject matter.

TAKEAWAY

ABOUT THE TEST



What 'Voice' Do We Have to Keep in Mind?

Based on the research, design and testing with **people with lived experience** and **Subject Matter Experts** completed after engaging with people with lived experience, we came up with the following **design recommendations**:

Provide the right kind of help

Help the user understand tenant/ landlord rules and responsibilities

Answer specific questions with certainty

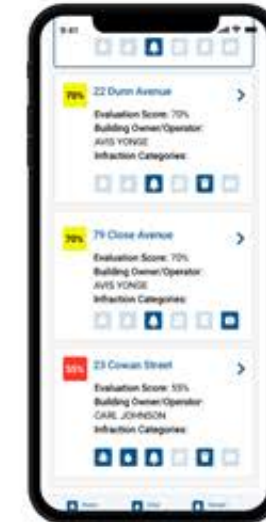
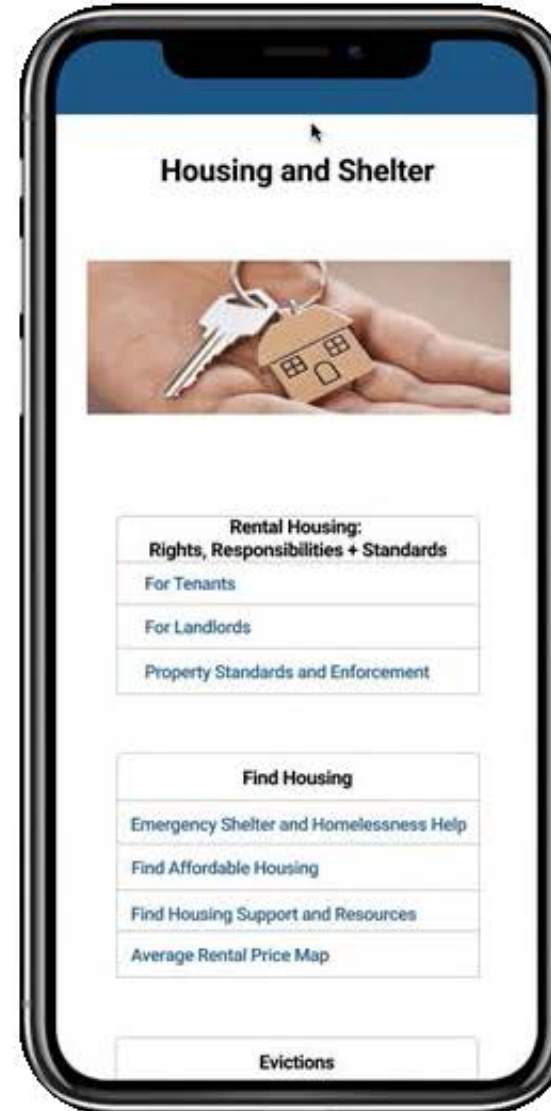
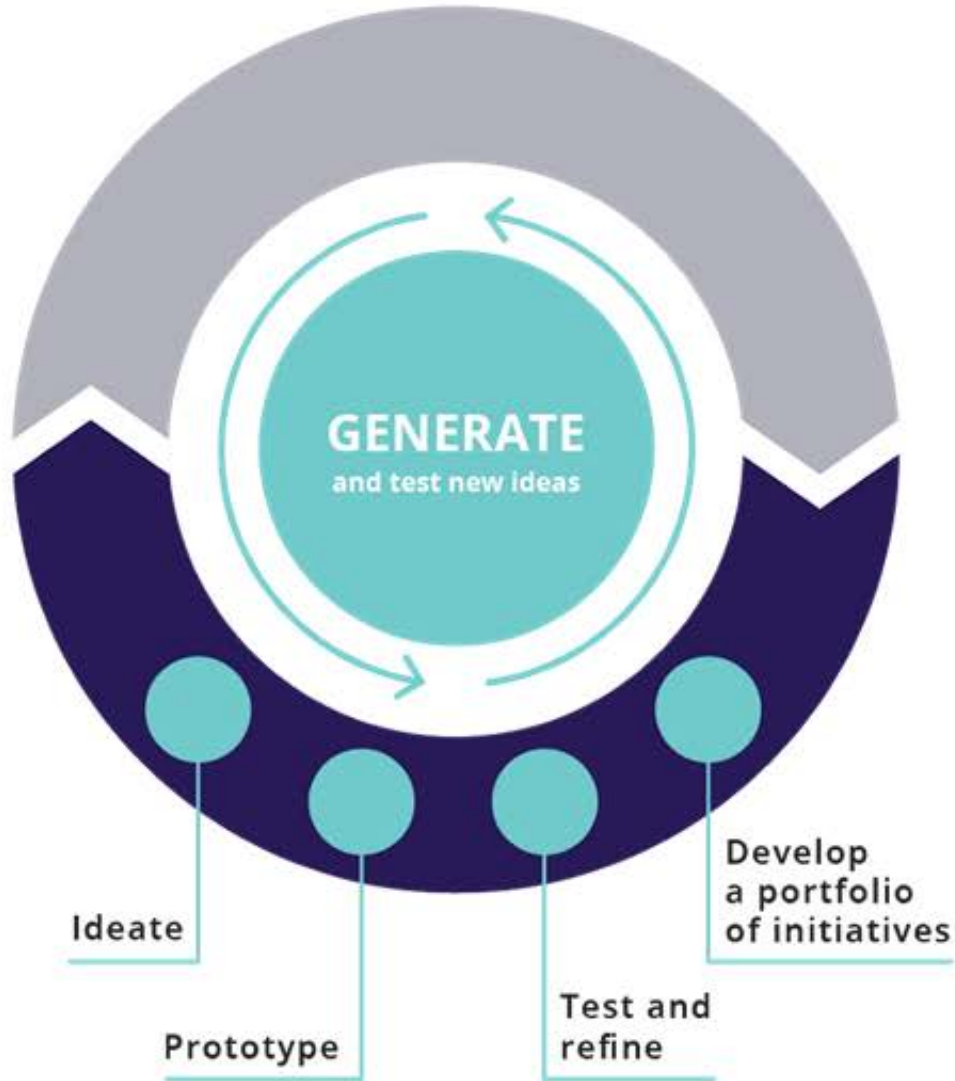
Have a tone that provides reassurance to potential users

Help the user understand the information presented

Provide comprehensive information – no dead ends or circular links

Provide immediate help

How We Work - Generate and Test Ideas with People

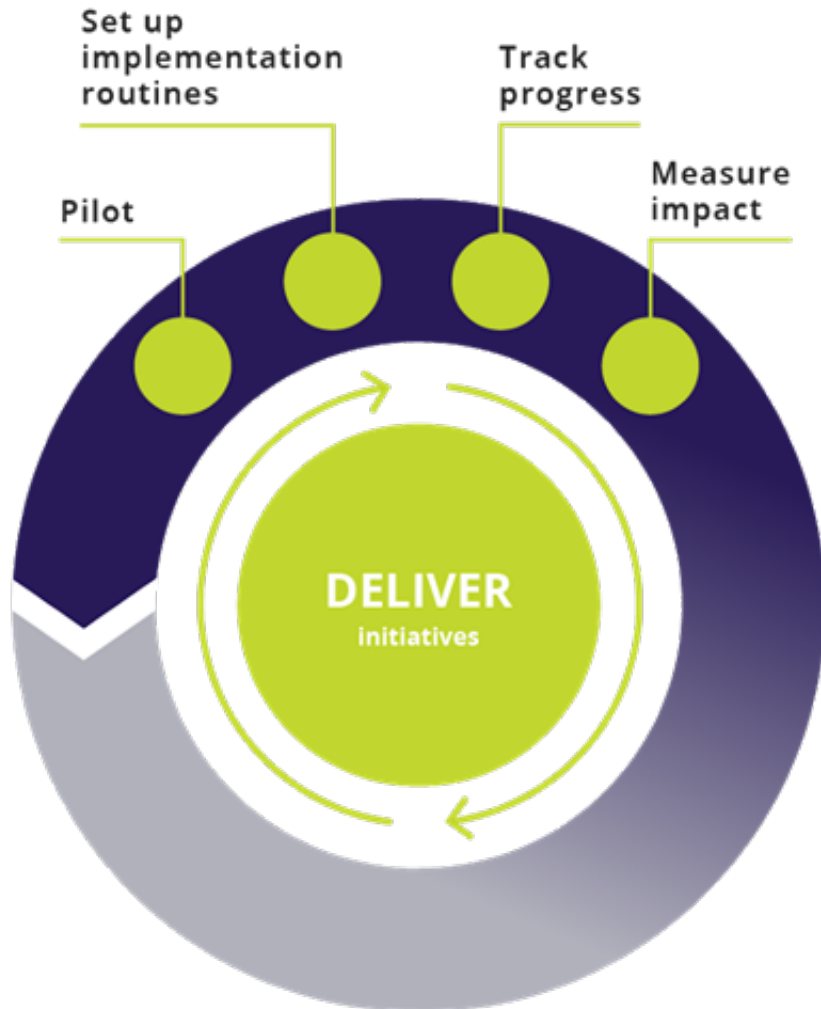


Toronto.ca Pages Edited

Redesign and Editing of the content meant updating the content, as well as redesigning the tone of voice and making sure that specific terms were in as plain language as possible so that the resource is useable for general audiences.

Page Links	Changes		
	Content	Location	Layout
[Housing and Shelter]	Yes		
Finding Housing	Yes	Yes	
Housing at Risk	Yes	Yes	Yes
Long Term Care Homes		Yes	
Seniors and Disabled/ City Services for People with Disabilities		Yes	
Rental Housing Standards	Yes	Yes	
Financial & Employment Support		Yes	
Financial Support for Renters		Yes	
Rent-Geared-to-Income		Yes	
*New Page/ Tab - "Understanding Evictions" - similar content to the "Housing at Risk"	Yes	Yes	Yes
*New Page/ Tab - "Find Legal Help" - similar content to the "Housing at Risk"	Yes	Yes	Yes

How We Work - Deliver Initiatives



Rental Housing & Tenant Information

This section intends to provide up-to-date and accurate guidance for tenants and landlords on rental housing in the City of Toronto. It aims to address questions that may arise during tenancy, give resources around the rights and responsibilities that tenants and landlords are to expect, and help with navigating the rental process.

NEW

Understand & Fight Evictions

Learn about the eviction process, what makes an eviction legal, types of evictions, how to fight an eviction and find legal help.

NEW

Rental Housing Standards

Learn about housing standards and enforcement options.

Rights & Responsibilities for Landlords & Tenants

Learn about rights and responsibilities for renting under the Residential Tenancies Act.

Finding Housing

Learn about housing programs to meet your specific needs and resources that can help you find housing.

Find Legal Help

Learn about your options and eligibility for legal aid.

Get Help Paying for Housing

Learn about financial support programs that can help you offset housing costs.

Organizations That Can Help

Step-by-step instructions for people facing evictions



Understand & Fight Evictions

Landlords are required to give official notices of eviction. Until a landlord issues an official Notice of Eviction, the eviction process does not begin. If a landlord verbally asks a tenant to leave or writes them an email or note asking them to leave, this does not begin the formal eviction process.

Important Exception: If a tenant shares a kitchen or a bathroom with their landlord or a member of the landlord's immediate family, they are not protected by the Residential Tenancies Act. In this situation, the landlord does not need to follow the legal eviction process. They may ask a tenant to leave at any time and the tenant has little recourse. In a situation like this, they should reach out to a legal clinic for assistance.

If you receive an official eviction notice, you do not have to move out right away. This is simply the first step in the eviction process.

In This Section

Rental Hour Information

Rental Hour Information

Understand Eviction

Rights & Responsibilities of Landlords

Finding Help

Find Legal Help

Get Help

Organize

Sublet or Take Over a Rental Unit

Note this side delivery on its...

Related Information

Find Legal Help

Tenant Defense

Find Emergency

Types of Evictions

In Ontario, evictions are legal only if they involve:

Reason for eviction: You owe rent

Notice: [N4 – Notice to end a tenancy early for non-payment of rent](#)

Options: If you agree that you owe rent and can pay it, it is best to pay the rent to your landlord by the deadline in the notice. This will void the notice, meaning that your landlord cannot apply for your eviction at the Landlord and Tenant Board. If you cannot pay the rent by the deadline or do not agree with the amount claimed by your landlord, you do not have to move out and your landlord must file an application for eviction at the Landlord and Tenant Board.

Your landlord's application for eviction will prompt a hearing where you can defend your tenancy. The only authority that can issue an eviction order is the Landlord and Tenant Board and the only authority that can enforce the eviction order by changing the locks on your door is the Sheriff. They both must give you written notice in advance.

Reason for eviction: You often pay rent late

Notice: [N8 – Notice to terminate a tenancy at the end of the term](#)

Options: For late payments, the tenant should demonstrate that they have funds to afford the rent, and are committed to paying on time in future.

Reason for eviction: You or your guests did something illegal on the property

Notice: [N6 – Notice to terminate a tenancy early: illegal act or misrepresentation of income](#)

Options: Correct the behaviour and find a way to ensure it will not happen in the future.

Reason for eviction: You or your guests caused damage or serious problems for your landlord or other tenants

Notice: [N7 – Notice to End your Tenancy For Causing Serious Problems in the Rental Unit or Residential Complex](#)

Options: Correct the behaviour and find a way to ensure it will not happen in the future.

Reason for eviction: Overcrowding

Notice: [N5 – Notice to End your Tenancy For Interfering with Others, Damage or Overcrowding](#)

Options: Correct the behaviour and find a way to ensure it will not happen in the future.

Reason for eviction: Substantial interference with enjoyment

Steps in the Eviction Process

Stage 0: Before a notice

- Documentation
- Communication with landlord
- Non-payment rental agreements

Stage 1: When you get a notice

When your landlord gives you an eviction notice for any reason, this does not necessarily mean you will have to move out. If you think you have a good reason, you might decide to fight the notice.

Only Notices from the Landlord Tenant Board are legal. If you receive a notice that isn't legal, it's not binding.

[Legal notices can be found online](#).

If you receive a notice and you do not want to leave or if you do not agree with the reasons in the notice, you do not have to move out. This is simply the first step in the eviction process.

Both tenants and landlords can give notices to end a lease agreement or end tenancy.

This does not mean the landlord has filed anything and the Landlord and Tenant Board is not involved at this stage.

Read the notice carefully to see if there is a way for you to cancel the notice before your landlord applies to the Landlord and Tenant Board. For example, if the notice is for non-payment of rent, you can cancel it by paying the rent within the time limit.

If you cannot cancel the notice, your landlord may apply to the Landlord and Tenant Board to have you evicted. You will receive another LTB form titled "Application to evict a tenant" (L1) or "Application to End a Tenancy" (L2).

You will have to fight the eviction in order to remain in your home. Get legal advice right away and learn about fighting an eviction.

Stage 2: When you get a Landlord Tenant Board application

If you cannot cancel the eviction notice or otherwise resolve the issue with your landlord, your landlord may file an application to evict you with the Landlord and Tenant Board. If your landlord does this and the LTB accepts the application, a hearing will usually be scheduled to decide the application. The LTB will send you notice of the hearing which will include the location, date and time of the hearing. Under exceptional circumstances (usually medical), you may be able to reschedule the hearing date.

Stage 3: Preparing for a hearing

To prepare for the hearing:

- write down everything that happened and when;
- make a list of the evidence they need to present;

Clear sections dedicated to resources and what to expect.

Before

COVID-19
Get the latest updates and learn about service changes, reopening guidelines and economic support at toronto.ca/covid19.

Search Q A+ A- I want to... ▾

TORONTO
Services & Payments Community & People Business & Economy Explore & Enjoy City Government

City of Toronto / Community & People / Housing & Shelter / Housing at Risk?

Housing at Risk?

The City of Toronto provides support and information to residents in rental units who are at risk of losing their home and being evicted.

Most people living in rental housing in Ontario must abide by the [Residential Tenancies Act](#) (RTA), which is the Provincial law that governs landlord and tenant relations. It outlines both your rights and your obligations as a tenant. It does not apply to student residences or other institutional settings.

Expand All + Collapse All -

- Summary of Your Rights as a Tenant +
- Summary of Your Responsibilities as a Tenant +
- Financial Resources +
- Organizations That Can Help +

If you have to leave your home, learn about how to [find housing](#) or access an emergency shelter.

Jobs at the City Media Room Contact Us Translate

Connect:

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After

Rights & Responsibilities for Landlords & Tenants

The [Residential Tenancies Act](#) (RTA) is an Ontario law that gives landlords and tenants specific rights and responsibilities. It provides rules for increasing the rent, evicting a tenant, maintenance, etc. Under the RTA, the [Landlord Tenant Board](#) (LTB) was created to solve disputes between tenants and their landlords.

The RTA covers people living in rental housing. It does not apply to people living in:

- emergency shelters
- hospitals or nursing homes (long-term care facilities)
- prison
- student residents or dormitories
- temporary or seasonal use units
- units that share a kitchen or bathroom with their landlord or a member of their immediate family
- people not on a lease

Expand All + Collapse All -

- Tenant Selection +
- Lease +
- Rent +
- Deposits +
- Rent Increases +
- Entry to the Rental Unit +
- Repairs & Maintenance +
- Common Areas & Outdoors +
- Indoor Temperature +
- Vital Services +
- Pets +
- Discrimination +
- Eviction +

Broken down by commonly searched terms and issues by tenants across Toronto

Before

Before

The page layout is cluttered. The main content area is dominated by a large heading "Finding Housing" and several paragraphs of text. The sidebar on the right contains "Contact Information" and "Related Information" sections. The overall design is less structured and less user-friendly.

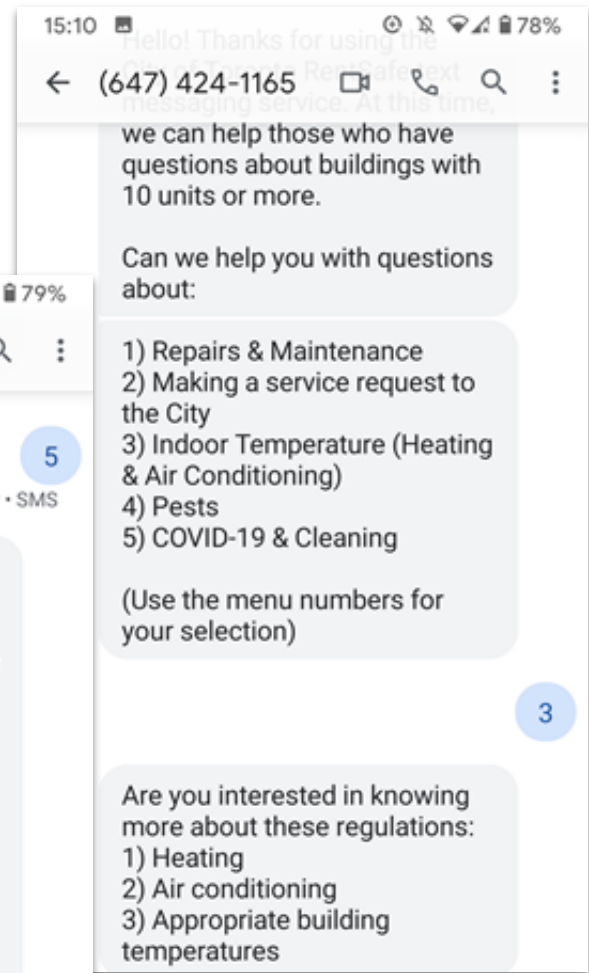
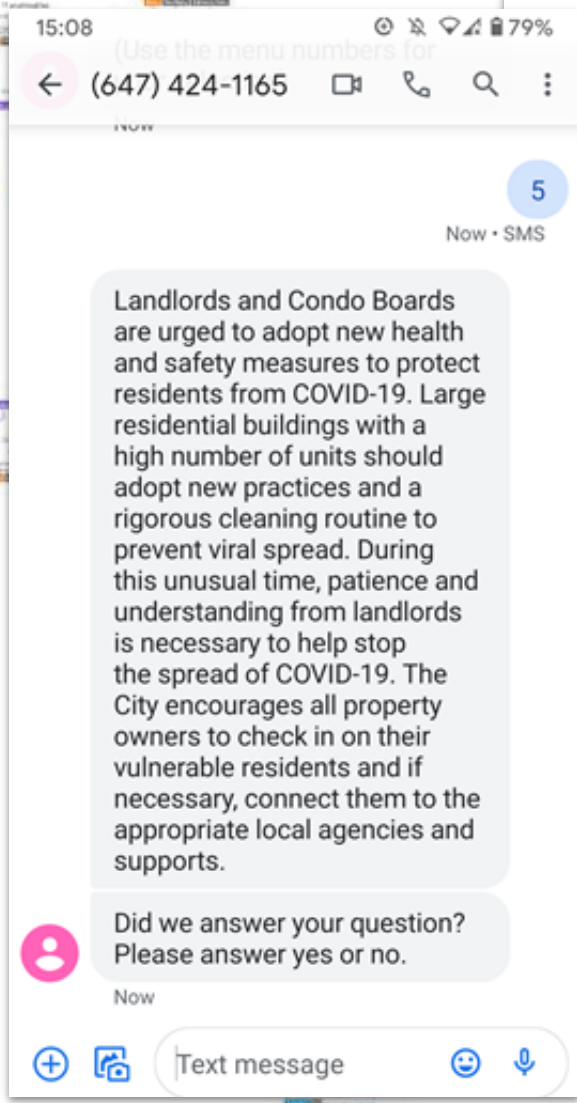
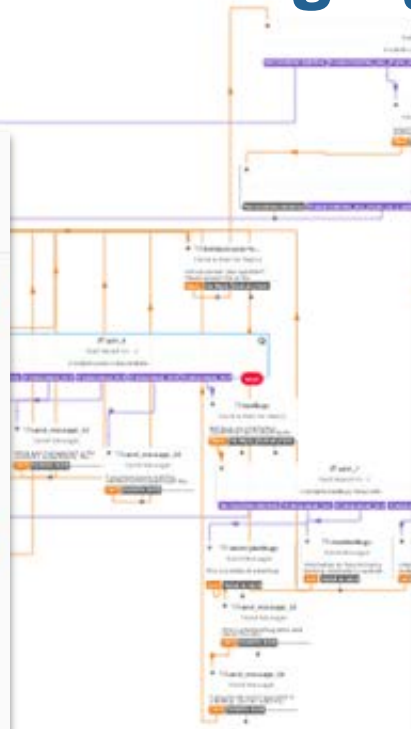
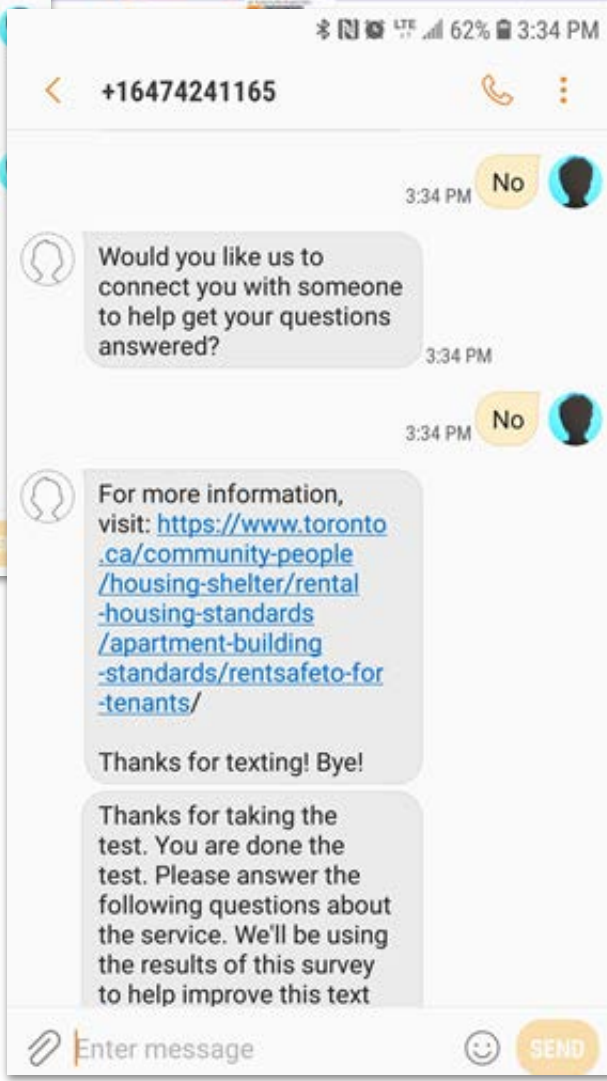
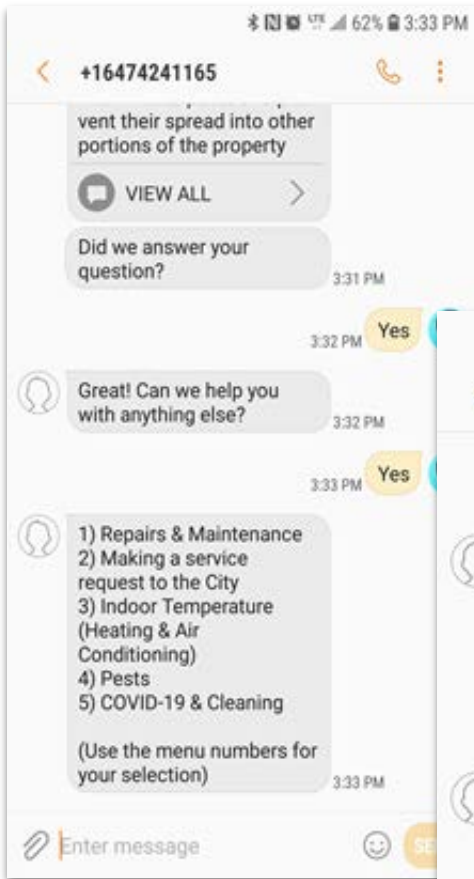
After

After

The page layout is clean and structured. The main content area is dominated by a large heading "Finding Housing" and several paragraphs of text. The sidebar on the right contains "Related Information" and "Affordable Housing Partners" sections. The overall design is more user-friendly and easier to navigate.

Information displayed clearly for people to find the exact information they are looking for

What Are We Testing SMS Text Messaging Service



What Are We Testing Eviction Prevention Toolkit (Print)

Journey of someone who took action



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eos estibus in tlen voluptur autest volupta tion pore quam ut parents ea doloruntur as e voluptum rarius daectaque deliore eum ra

Tips for making re

- ✓ Speak to your landlord to formulate a plan and schedule
- ✓ Speak to family members
- ✓ Find and set up help
- ✓ Find rent assistance (phone number on



Identify where you are in the eviction process

If you start having issues with your landlord or rental property try to resolve it before an eviction process starts.

An eviction is a formal procedure that is managed by the Landlord and Tenant Board (LTB) of Ontario. Every landlord must follow a series of steps to legally evict a tenant. We will refer to these steps as the stages of an eviction process.

Note: Even if your landlord issues an eviction order at the end of the eviction process, you might still be able to stop an eviction from being enforced. However, at that stage your legal options are very limited and you may have to pay extra fees.



Tenant in Housing	Eviction Notice	Notice of Hearing	Eviction Hearing	Eviction Order
Issues with your rental property	Landlord gives you a formal Notice of Eviction	Landlord submits an Eviction Application	You and the landlord attend the hearing	The landlord receives an eviction order

Valid reasons for eviction

- ✓ Aims of rent
- ✓ Persistent late payment
- ✓ Damage
- ✓ Substantial interference
- ✓ Impairing safety
- ✓ Overcrowding
- ✓ Landlord's own use
- ✓ Purchaser's own use
- ✓ Demolition or conversion
- ✓ Illegal Act
- ✓ Misrepresentation of Income (if tenant pays Rent Geared to Income)

All other reasons are not valid!

Know your rights



Landlords **are required** to give official notices of eviction under the Residential Tenancies Act

Until a landlord issues you an official Notice of Eviction, the eviction process **does not** begin.

If a landlord verbally asks you to leave or writes you an email or note asking you to leave, this **does not** begin the formal eviction process.



Official Notice of Eviction

If you receive an official eviction notice, you **do not** have to move out right away. This is simply the **first step** in the eviction process.

EXCEPTIONS

If you share a kitchen or a bathroom with your landlord or a member of the landlord's immediate family, **you are not** protected by the Residential Tenancies Act. In this situation, the landlord does not need to follow the legal eviction process. They may ask you to leave at any time. In a situation like this, you should immediately reach out to a legal clinic for assistance.

Next Steps

Digital and Non Digital Products and Outreach

1. **Continue to test and make changes based on feedback** from the webpage and make **data driven decisions** based on live data.

ex. Page views, common searched items, number of downloads




2. Based on the content developed for the website we are now moving to **testing** and **developing recommendations** for **new products** based on tenants' feedback.

ex. **SMS Messaging + ToolKit**

3. Attachment 4 in the Committee report provides an **outreach and communications framework** to promote this work and develop and issue additional materials such as this ToolKit/Handbook

Give Us Your Feedback

Overall, are you satisfied with the information on this page? (Required)

Satisfied Neutral Dissatisfied

Help us improve this page: (Optional)

- A link, button or video is not working.
- Information is outdated or wrong.
- The page has a spelling error.
- There is too much content.
- The images are not useful.
- The page is not accessible.
- Issue is not listed.