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## **BY EMAIL**

September 27, 2023

Dear Members of the Planning and Housing Committee, and Mayor Olivia Chow,

Two years ago, in the midst of the COVID pandemic, the City of Toronto switched from a paper-based waitlist system for accessing subsidized housing to an online system. This poses a barrier to those who have limited access to technology and/or reduced ability to use technology – many of whom are among those most in need of subsidized housing. By June 2023, an Auditor General’s report found that only 50,000 of the 84,000 households on Toronto’s subsidized housing waitlist had created an account in the online system, MyAccesstoHousingTO.

This week we learned that “If you have an existing RGI application and have not yet registered your application in MyAccesstoHousingTO, you must do so by September 30, 2023 to avoid having your RGI application cancelled.” This move has not been widely or well-publicized. Indeed, in a social media post by the City on Tuesday afternoon, Sept. 26, the link which was supposed to connect people to the portal was broken, resulting in a “page not found” message. This link was not fixed until mid-day on Wednesday, September 27.

Those needing assistance are requested to come to a support session at the Toronto Reference Library, to book an in-person appointment at the Access to Housing Resource Centre or to call the Application Support Centre at 416-338-8888.

Are these supports sufficient for people who have language or mental health barriers, lack digital literacy, or access to technology? And are they sufficient to assist the tens of thousands of Toronto households still in need of registration? Or will tens of thousands of households suddenly find themselves cut from the waitlist for subsidized housing, regardless of how long they have been waiting or how acute their need? Cut from the waiting list, will these people now be forced to try to find a space in our already overflowing shelter system, or end up encamped in city parks?

Toronto can and MUST do better. This City declared homelessness to be an emergency this past May, and its own website proclaims its commitment “to creating an accessible and inclusive City where all individuals can use City services, programs and facilities in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities.” Yet in the midst of a homelessness emergency, this exclusionary and poorly-communicated action will only cause further harm to the most vulnerable people in need of housing, exacerbating the crisis of homelessness in our city.

Together with the Shelter and Housing Justice Network and other advocates, I urge the following:

1. **Removal of the September 30th deadline until the City has clear infrastructure in place to effectively transition the many existing RGI applicants to the online system, including the 34,000 applicants on the waitlist who have not yet registered.**
2. **That the MyAccessstoHousingTO online system is consistent with the working principles of Toronto's Digital Infrastructure Strategic Framework, the Ontario Human Rights Code, the Right to Housing, and must follow Toronto's Housing Charter.**
3. **A full review and overhaul of MyAccessstoHousingTO to bring it into alignment with these policies.**
4. **The development and implementation of a clear, fair and well-communicated appeals process for anyone who is removed from the RGI waitlist.**

Until these demands are met, enforcement of this upcoming deadline and removing applicants from the RGI housing waitlist is a clear human rights violation and will directly harm unhoused, marginalized and poor people who have been waiting for years to access social housing in this city.

Yours faithfully,  
Elin Goulden,  
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