

To the Planning and Housing Committee,

We are the RGI working group of the Toronto Homeless Union. The Toronto Homeless Union is an organization dedicated to empowering homeless and underhoused people to come together and change the systems that create homelessness and oppress us.

Our working group wants to voice our utter disgust about the decision that the City has taken to cancel all rent-g geared-to-income applications not registered through the *MyAccessToHousingTO* by September 30<sup>th</sup>. As a homeless union, we believe that homeless and underhoused people can speak for themselves and should be at the forefront of change. When policies are made that affect housing-insecure and homeless people, they must be consulted and listened to. With this policy, it is painfully clear that this did not happen. We want to tell you a little about how this policy change will personally affect members of our group.

In our working group, we have people who currently live in RGI housing as well as people who are still on the RGI list. Juliet and Brian are in RGI units. Without their RGI housing, they would be on the street. Access to these units has been immeasurably significant to them. With these units, they have the security and stability to move forward with their lives, not having to be constantly preoccupied with the day-to-day struggles of being on the streets.

Eve and Asil are both on the RGI list. Asil put her name on the RGI housing waitlist three years ago. During that time, she has had to move from shelter to shelter and couch-surfed for extended periods of time. She thought she had done her job by getting her name on the list. Being on that list has brought little comfort to her. This whole time, she has not heard from her workers, nor has been provided any follow-up or updates regarding her application – a total lack of case management and ongoing support. Hearing today that they might CANCEL her application is the first she's heard about it since being put on the waitlist.

This is the reality for people living on the streets of our city: struggling to go on, struggling to maintain hope – and even then having that minuscule bit of hope ruined by policies like this. This policy tells Asil, "Sorry, your three years' of waiting count for nothing now because you didn't have access to a computer. Because you were too busy trying to keep yourself alive, while also dealing with abysmally ineffective case management and getting passed onto one case manager to the next. This time you've spent waiting for housing doesn't count now because you were homeless."

Eve has been on the housing list since 2012. When she first got on the housing list she was a survivor of domestic violence, and was initially informed that her application and waiting process would be expedited. What her housing workers failed to mention were the conditions that would automatically disqualify her and see her family taken off the waitlist without proper notice. So when her partner was incarcerated, her whole family lost their spot. Again, a clear example of the absence of case management and complete lack of care by the City and its convoluted, harmful policies.

This policy will effectively create more harm and suffering for us. It forces the responsibility of updating our files onto so many of us who are already in incredibly precarious positions. The onus must be on the City to ensure that no one loses their spot on the RGI waiting list, instead of shovelling the responsibility onto us and our already-vulnerable friends. If the information provided by us during our original applications was sufficient to keep us on the list for years, why should it suddenly become insufficient now? This problem should be an administrative one, handled by administrators. Yet you say that the responsibility is ours to bear without providing the resources and means to empower us to bear it.

We demand that the City honor the applications of all those currently on the RGI waitlist. They should either automatically transfer people onto *MyAccessToHousingTO*, or continue to honor applications that are not transferred as they have already been doing for years. And if, for some reason not apparent to us, the City persists in demanding people transfer their files over, then it must extend the deadline another two years at minimum and be proactive about reaching out to all people currently on the RGI housing list. It needs to publicize this policy widely, including in all places across the GTA that provide services to homeless and underhoused people. It must require case managers to reach out to all people on their lists and provide the needed supports.

The City needs to take responsibility for honoring the commitments it has made to the tens of thousands of people on the RGI housing list. To do otherwise is to be dishonest, harmful, and uncaring.

Above and beyond these demands, let the City hear this: the City's solution to the immense demand for RGI units cannot be to reduce the number of individuals and families on the waitlist through policy tricks like this. The City's solution must be to *create more housing*. Our working group is made up of people directly affected by the City's RGI housing policies. Listen to us.

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