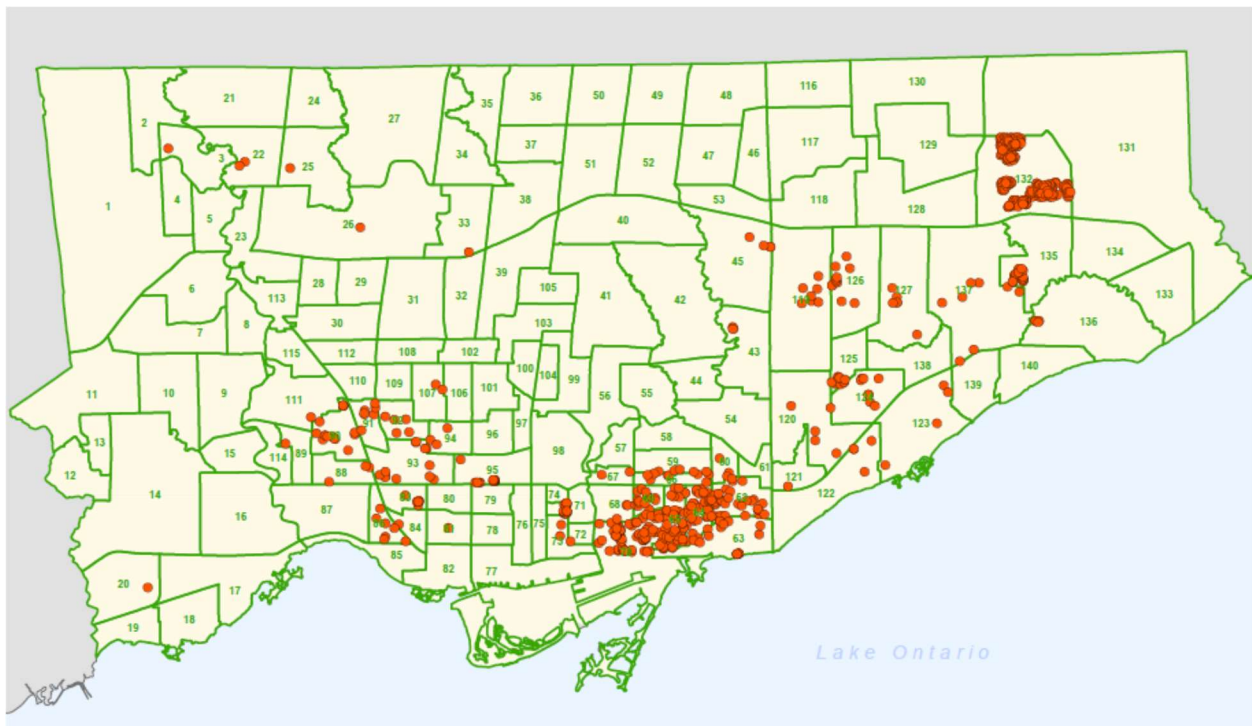


# Tenants First

Meetings with tenants of TCHC scattered houses (single family homes)

April 2018



Record of discussion at Tenants First information meetings

City Hall, March 27, 2018

Scarborough Civic Centre, March 29, 2018



Toronto Community Housing



## **OVERVIEW OF TENANTS FIRST INFORMATION MEETINGS**

The comments in this Record of Discussion were collected during two meetings held by the Tenants First Project Management Office with tenants of Toronto Community Housing "scattered houses" in March 2018. These meetings were targeted to the tenants of the "single family homes" portfolio.

The purpose of these information meetings was to:

- Inform tenants about the decision to issue an Request for Proposals (RfP)
- Involve tenants in setting expectations for a new landlord
- Enable tenants to meet each other

84 people attended these information meetings.

Frequently Asked Questions were recorded during a presentation by Tenants First staff. The Record of Discussion also collects comments recorded during small group discussions. Attendees were asked to consider how a new landlord could provide better service in four areas:

- Repairs and maintenance
- Communicating with tenants
- Involving tenants in decision-making
- Connecting tenants to each other

Ideas and comments generated through these discussions have been grouped into themes. Tenants' ideas will be used to help guide the Tenants First team to draft a Request for Proposals which will invite non-profit housing providers to submit proposals to manage the single family homes portfolio. These comments will also guide the development of a network to connect tenants living in scattered houses.

A copy of the presentation given at the information meetings, and the postcard advertising the information meetings, are attached to this document.

## Frequently Asked Questions

Attendees at the information sessions asked a range of questions about the decision to transfer the scattered houses, how the transfer will affect tenants, and the process to select new housing providers. We have provided answers to these questions below. Please feel free to contact us if you have further questions.

### A. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS: HOW THE TRANSFER WILL AFFECT TENANTS

#### 1. Why are the scattered houses being transferred to non-profit housing providers?

The purpose of transferring the scattered houses to non-profit housing providers is to improve service to tenants and to retain the houses as affordable rental housing for the future. Through the transfer, we also aim to strengthen the non-profit housing sector in Toronto. The report approved by City Council in January 2018 was titled *Implementing Tenants First – Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC) Scattered Portfolio Plan and an Interim Selection Process for Tenant Directors on the Toronto Community Housing Corporation Board* and is available online here:

<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2018/ex/bgrd/backgroundfile-110702.pdf>

#### 2. What changes will tenants of scattered houses see in their homes?

After the transfer, tenants will have a new landlord who will deliver better service to tenants. The new landlord will have improved responses to requests for repairs and maintenance. The new landlord will also communicate better with tenants.

#### 3. Will there be more meetings for tenants to get together and talk about these changes?

Yes. We will keep meeting with tenants through the transfer process.

#### 4. Does this transfer aim to get tenants to move out?

No. Tenants will remain in their homes through the transfer. Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI) subsidies will continue.

#### 5. Could my new landlord reassess my rent? Will my rent increase suddenly?

The purpose of transferring the scattered houses to non-profit housing providers is to retain the homes as rental housing which is affordable. Your rent will not increase without warning.

**Tenants who pay Rent-Geared-to-Income:** After the transfer, the non-profit housing provider will have the rights and responsibilities of a landlord. The new landlord may reassess your rent, in accordance with the legislation for calculating Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI), called the *Housing Services Act*. Rent-Geared-to-Income subsidies will continue.

**Tenants who pay market rent:** After the transfer, the non-profit housing provider will have the rights and responsibilities of a landlord. The new landlord may reassess your rent, in accordance with principles included in an operating agreement between the City and the new landlord.

## **6. Could my new landlord evict me?**

Tenants will remain in their homes through the transfer, and the homes will be retained as affordable rental housing. After the transfer, the non-profit housing provider will have the rights and responsibilities of a landlord. Your new landlord must follow the *Residential Tenancies Act*, which sets out the rules for landlord and tenant relationships in Ontario.

## **7. How will the City ensure that my new landlord is accountable? For example, how will the City ensure that my new landlord completes repairs?**

The City will sign an operating agreement with the new housing provider which will outline what services they have to provide as your landlord, in return for a subsidy from the City. The City will review regular reports to ensure that the services are delivered as agreed.

We anticipate that the operating agreement will include principles about:

- Carrying out repairs and maintenance
- Resolving complaints and conflicts
- Involving tenants in decision-making
- Communicating with tenants
- Assessing market rent
- Transferring people who are overhoused or underhoused

This operating agreement has not yet been developed.

## **8. Will tenants be able to carry out the repairs on their own houses?**

If you are interested in carrying out repairs on your own house, you may be able to negotiate this with your new landlord.

## **B. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS: THE PROCESS TO TRANSFER THE SCATTERED HOUSES**

### **1. What is a non-profit housing provider, and why would a non-profit housing provider want to operate the scattered houses?**

There are over 240 non-profit housing providers in Toronto. Many were created for the sole purpose of providing affordable housing. Others are part of larger social-purpose organizations that offer a wide range of programs, like employment programs or settlement services for immigrants. Non-profit housing organisations aim to create and keep affordable housing, and to create inclusive communities.

### **2. What is the process for the transfer?**

City Council has approved a Request for Proposals to be issued. A 'Request for Proposals' is a document which sets out the standards for a new provider to meet. We will then issue the Request for Proposals and invite providers to submit proposals. A panel reviews the proposals received, and recommends new housing provider(s) to City Council. City Council approves a provider, and the transfer will begin.

### **3. Can tenants participate in evaluating the proposals?**

Not directly. Under the City's Procurement Processes Policy, only City staff members can sit on the evaluation team to review and rate proposals submitted in response to a Request for Proposals. However, our engagement with tenants to date will inform the development of the Request for Proposals. We will continue to look for opportunities to involve tenants in guiding the process to evaluate proposals.

### **4. Can the non-profit housing providers make a presentation to the tenants?**

During the process to transfer the properties there will be opportunities for tenants to hear from the provider about their plans and ideas, and for the provider to hear from tenants.

### **5. What will happen to the transfer with a new Council?**

The municipal election will be held on October 22, 2018. We will recommend new housing provider(s) to the Executive Committee and new City Council in 2019. The new Council will decide whether to approve the new providers, and begin the transfer.

**6. What is the timeline for transferring the scattered homes?**

If approved by City Council, it is expected that we will begin to transfer the houses in 2019.

**7. Are the scattered houses being sold for a profit?**

No. City Council has directed that the scattered houses will be transferred through a Request for Proposals process to the non-profit housing sector, including co-operatives and community land trusts. The value of the transfers has not yet been decided.

**8. After the transfer, who will own the buildings and who will own the land? Will the City still own the houses?**

The details of the terms of the transfer are still being determined.

**9. How will the City guarantee that the scattered houses won't be sold to the private market in the future? What happens if the new housing provider wants to sell houses or build new houses?**

The new housing providers will sign legal agreements with the City. These legal agreements will require the housing provider to seek the City's permission to sell or further transfer the scattered houses. The legal agreements will be registered on title of the properties.

**10. How can I oppose the transfer of the scattered houses from Toronto Community Housing to non-profit housing providers?**

City Council has decided to issue a Request for Proposals. We will recommend new housing provider(s) to Executive Committee and City Council in 2019. At this time, tenants and other members of the public can either make a deputation to the Executive Committee, or submit a letter to the Executive Committee to let them know what you think about this plan.

**11. Does the Minister of Housing have to sign off on this transfer?**

No. Under the *Housing Services Act*, the City of Toronto as Service Manager can authorize a transfer.

## **C. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS: OTHER ISSUES**

### **1. Between now and the transfer, who will carry out repairs?**

Until the transfer, Toronto Community Housing will continue to be your landlord. TCHC will collect rent, carry out repairs, and respond to other requests relating to your tenancy. Please continue to contact the 24-hour Client Care Centre on 416-981-5500 to request repairs or if you have other service needs.

### **2. What will happen if my house needs repairs which can't be completed unless I move out?**

As part of their proposal, non-profit housing providers must include a plan to bring all houses up to a state of good repair. This plan must include providing alternative accommodation for tenants who may need to vacate their home temporarily for repairs.

### **3. How much money will the new landlord spend to repair each house?**

As part of their proposal, non-profit housing providers must include a plan to bring all houses up to a state of good repair. This plan must outline how long these repairs will take and describe how the repairs will be funded.

### **4. How much money from the National Housing Strategy will be put towards repairs?**

The guidelines for new sources of revenue like the National Housing Strategy have not yet been released.

### **5. How can I transfer to a Toronto Community Housing unit, rather than continue to live in my scattered house? How can my mom move to a Toronto Community Housing seniors building? What if I'm already on the internal transfer list?**

Before the transfer of the scattered units to a new landlord, you can contact Toronto Community Housing and ask for a transfer to an alternative unit. You will be placed on the Toronto Community Housing waiting list for an internal transfer. After the transfer of the scattered units to a new landlord, your new landlord will have a new policy for transferring people to alternative units.

### **6. How can we get a house that is accessible?**

Toronto Community Housing has an Accessibility Program which gives tenants living with disabilities a chance to work with staff and others to make accessible improvements to their units. Before the transfer, you can contact Toronto

Community Housing and ask for a Tenant Request for Accommodation form. You can find more information by calling 416-981-5500 or visiting [www.torontohousing.ca/accessibility-program](http://www.torontohousing.ca/accessibility-program).

After the transfer of the scattered units to a new landlord, your new landlord will have a new policy for accommodating people living with disabilities.

### **7. What happens if I'm overhoused or underhoused?**

The City of Toronto has Occupancy Standards that set rules about how many bedrooms each Rent-Geared-to-Income household is eligible for. These Standards only apply to Rent-Geared-to-Income units. Under these standards, you are "overhoused" if you are living in a unit that has too many bedrooms for your household. You are "underhoused" if you are living in a unit that has too few bedrooms for your household. Your new landlord will have a policy, agreed with the City, to facilitate transfers for people who are currently overhoused or underhoused.

### **8. Can people who pay market rent be "overhoused"? I have an office in my house.**

The Occupancy Standards apply only to Rent-Geared-to-Income households. People who pay market rent cannot be "overhoused".

### **9. Can I buy the house I currently rent?**

No. This is not an option under the current plan. We acknowledge that some tenants have spent money on repairs, but City Council has directed that these houses will remain as affordable rental housing and will not be sold to individual purchasers. If you are interested in purchasing a home, you can approach the following affordable home ownership programs:

- Habitat for Humanity at 416-755-7353 or [habitatgta.ca](http://habitatgta.ca)
- Options for Homes at 416-867-1501 or [optionsforhomes.ca](http://optionsforhomes.ca)
- Toronto Community Housing and the Daniels Corporation at 416-955-0559 or [danielswyatt.com](http://danielswyatt.com)
- Trillium Housing at 416-363-3144 or [trilliumhousing.ca](http://trilliumhousing.ca)
- Aboriginal purchasers should also contact the Miziwe Biik Development Corporation at 416-640-4688 or [mbdc.ca/housing\\_loans.html](http://mbdc.ca/housing_loans.html)
- Artists and arts professionals should also contact Toronto Artscape at 416-392-1038 or [torontoartscape.org/our-projects](http://torontoartscape.org/our-projects)

### **10. Can I stay on the centralized waiting list for social housing?**

Yes, you can stay on the centralized waiting list for social housing.



## **Record of Discussion**

### **MEETING ONE – CITY HALL**

This meeting was held from 6.30 – 8pm on March 27, 2018. The venue was Committee Room 2 at City Hall. The meeting was attended by 42 people.

#### **How could a new landlord provide better service?**

##### **Repairs and maintenance**

- The super has been great, but the selection of contractors is poor.
- There is a culture of disrespect.
- Poor workmanship – tradespeople are unqualified and repairs are left incomplete.
- Repairs - do them!
- In market rent units, does something have to be broken to be replaced, maintained, or renovated?
- Provide a timeline for repairs – let us know when we can expect things to be done.
- Some concerns: Will existing work orders be transferred from TCHC to the new provider? Who does/will do the repairs? Will it be a contract process, or local people?
- Please ensure that the contractors sent to do repairs are qualified and know what they are doing!
- Inventory of current condition of units.
- Create a plan to make standards for care and maintenance, priority of repairs, and opportunities for tenant input.
- The City needs to work with tenants to address issues like lead pipes.
- Federal and provincial government need to step-up to address repairs.
- The City of Toronto could be the landlord, and the new provider could be the property manager.
- Major repairs should be done by the landlord.
- Tenants should be part of the budgeting process.

#### **How could a new landlord provide better service?**

##### **Involving tenants in making decisions**

- Consult with tenants.
- Do not complete work without tenants present.
- Schedule visits with tenants – set appointment with service provider.

- Tenant representation on the Board of Directors for the non-profit organisation.
- Local tenant association to take some responsibility for ensuring standards and to make certain decisions – for example, landscaping.
- Quarterly surveys and follow-up.

### **How could a new landlord provide better service?**

#### **Communicating with tenants**

- Quarterly meetings with tenants, plus newsletters.

### **How could a new landlord provide better service?**

#### **Connecting tenants to each other**

- Create a co-op-style model.
- Hold an annual meeting. and quarterly meetings to discuss issues.
- Mail.
- Maintain continuity of staff.
- Designate tenants to represent the whole building for duplexes or triplexes.
- Make the choice available for tenants.

## **MEETING TWO – SCARBOROUGH CIVIC CENTRE**

This meeting was held from 6.30 – 8pm on March 29, 2018. The venue was the Rotunda at Scarborough Civic Centre. The meeting was also attended by 42 people.

### **How could a new landlord provide better service?**

#### **Communicating with tenants**

- Develop a system where the provider can have regular feedback from tenants regarding how the following issues are affecting them:
  - High rent
  - Maintenance issues
  - Providing more opportunity to engage youth
  - Connecting with tenants with mental health needs.
- Be honest with tenants regarding the realities of repairs.
- Keep a hotline option for communicating problems related to repairs.
- Provide information for rent-to-own and affordable home ownership.
- Provide notice of increases to market rent.
- Have regular meetings with tenants.
- Social media, telephone, mail, texts etc.

### **How could a new landlord provide better service?**

#### **Connecting tenants to each other**

- Community events such as clean-up days; sports days; community BBQ.
- Quarterly meetings.
- Fundraising for non-profit organisations.
- Breakfast clubs and afterschool programmes.
- Trips to see the Raptors and the Leafs!
- Seniors programs.
- Landscaping and service projects.

### **How could a new landlord provide better service?**

#### **Involving tenants in making decisions**

- Quarterly meetings.
- Monthly newsletters.
- Internet and social media.
- Annual inspections by non-profit provider.
- Negotiating renovation plans with non-profit and tenant.

## **How could a new landlord provide better service?**

### **Repairs and maintenance**

- Work done properly with no recurring issues.
- Arrange to have work done through an outside contractor, and billed to non-profit.
- Ensure quality of product and services for tenants provided by new provider (eg. appliances, contractors, work and repairs).
- Repairs done in a timely manner from time of reporting.
- Inspect work and reach out to tenants after work/repair is completed, to make sure it is satisfactory.
- Ensure repairs and maintenance are done to code.
- Allow tenants leeway to do renovations with easier approval methods.
- Annual inspection by independent party (Fire Marshal, Home Inspection).
- Estimate given to tenants of cost of repairs for each individual unit.
- Have a transparent and accountable system for doing repairs, checking to make sure that the contractor did a good job, and providing quality service.
- We need a rail next to the stairs in our house – we didn't ask TCHC because we didn't know we could. The bathroom door hasn't been fixed in six months. The insulation has gone, and as a result we have high hydro bills.
- Inconsistencies in service across the portfolio.
- Repairs need to be inspected.
- Provide compensation for repairs made by tenants and equipment purchased by tenants.
- Provide accessible bathrooms, accessible lifts, and other accessible equipment in scattered homes. This includes ramps, accessible doors, and accessible parking.
- Four out of four families contributing to this conversation have special needs.
- Provide room for special needs equipment.
- Appliances should be upgraded.

### **Other comments:**

- No forced evictions – unlike the past.
- No lotteries for transfer.
- Utilities should be included in the rent.

## **Acknowledgements**

The Tenants First Project Management Office would like to thank all attendees for sharing your time and thoughts with us as part of the continuing engagement work for Tenants First. Your thoughts, suggestions and advice are a critical part of the efforts to bring transformative change to Toronto Community Housing. We would also like to thank the members of the Tenants First Tenant Advisory Panel for their ongoing guidance and assistance.

To find out more about Tenants First, please visit [www.toronto.ca/tenantsfirst](http://www.toronto.ca/tenantsfirst). You can also email [tenantsfirst@toronto.ca](mailto:tenantsfirst@toronto.ca) or call (416) 338 5716.

# Meetings for Tenants of Scattered Houses

March 2018

Tenants First



## Welcome!

The purpose of this meeting is to:

- Inform tenants about the decision to issue an RfP
- Involve tenants in setting expectations for a new landlord
- Enable tenants to meet each other

Tenants First



## Tonight's meeting

<b>6.30 – 7.00</b>	Presentation and questions
<b>7.00 – 7.10</b>	Break
<b>7.10 – 7.45</b>	Discussions
<b>7.45 – 8.00</b>	Next steps and close

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## Tenants First – Process to date

2016 - Mayor's Taskforce on Toronto Community Housing

2016 - Tenants First 'A Way Forward'

2017 - Tenants First Implementation Plan

**January, 2018**

- **Information meetings with tenants**
- **Tenants First report on scattered housing and tenant directors on the TCHC Board**

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## Plan for scattered houses

- What is scattered housing?
  - **Single Family House:** A TCHC owned house that is not a Rooming House or Agency House. Houses can be one single large unit or multiple apartments within a house
  - 660 houses across the city
  
- Why has the City approved a transfer?
  - Better service for tenants
  - Better maintenance
  - Strengthen the non-profit housing sector

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## What decisions have been made?

### The report approved by Council says:

City Council directs Toronto Community Housing Corporation to jointly issue a Request for Proposals in 2018 to transfer the remaining scattered housing portfolio to non-profit housing providers, co-ops and community land trusts

- Organisations must be qualified to engage with tenants, improve the condition of the properties, and retain the properties as affordable housing in perpetuity.

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## What decisions have not yet been made?

### Council has not yet approved:

- Any new housing provider
- New agreements with a housing provider
- The timeline and process for transfer

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## You've asked us...

- Are the houses being sold off?
- What happens if I'm over-housed?
- What happens if I'm on the transfer list?
- Who will set the rent for market rent houses?

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# Questions?

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## Scattered Houses - What we've heard from tenants

- Scattered houses need faster and better systems for repairs and maintenance.
- Communication between tenants of scattered housing and TCHC is weak.
- Engaging with tenants is important.
- Tenants would like to organise into networks in their area, to influence the transfer process and engage with the new landlord.

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## Proposed process

Steps to issuing a Request for Proposals (RFP):

1. Prepare a document which sets out the standards for a new provider to meet
2. Issue the RFP and invite providers to submit proposals
3. A panel Reviews the proposals received
4. City Council Approves a provider

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## Proposed requirements

The RFP will ask providers to include information about:

1. Qualifications
2. Strategic Direction
3. Engagement and Communication Plan
4. Operational and Asset Management Plan
5. Funding Model and Financial Viability

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## Proposed timeline

### **2017:** Request for Expressions of Interest

- 15 expressions of interest received
- Tenants invited to review

### **2018:** Issue Request For Proposals

### **2019:** Approve final proposal(s)

Begin transferring houses to new provider(s)

### **2020:** Complete transfers

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All Tenants First reports are publicly available on the City of Toronto website.

[www.toronto.ca/tenantsfirst](http://www.toronto.ca/tenantsfirst)

For more information about Tenants First:

[tenantsfirst@toronto.ca](mailto:tenantsfirst@toronto.ca)

416-338-5716

## Thank you!

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# Better service and a new landlord

What will transferring scattered houses from Toronto Community Housing to non-profit organizations mean for tenants?

- A new landlord who will deliver better service to tenants
- Tenants will remain in their homes
- Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI) subsidies will continue

Attend a meeting to discuss the City Council-approved plan for scattered houses. Meet other tenants from scattered housing across the city, and tell us how a new landlord could deliver better services to you.

## Attend a meeting

**Tuesday, March 27**

City Hall, 100 Queen St. W.  
Committee Room 2 – 6:30-8 p.m.

**Thursday, March 29**

Scarborough Civic Centre  
150 Borough Dr., Rotunda – 6:30-8 p.m.



[toronto.ca/tenantsfirst](https://toronto.ca/tenantsfirst)

Toronto Community Housing



Register in advance by emailing

[tenantsfirst@toronto.ca](mailto:tenantsfirst@toronto.ca) or call

**416-392-4627**. TTC tokens will be provided.

Please contact us with seven days' notice to request any accommodations, including:

- sign language interpreter (ASL)
- child care
- interpretation services

For more information visit

[toronto.ca/tenantsfirst](https://toronto.ca/tenantsfirst) or contact

Biddy Livesey at [biddy.livesey@toronto.ca](mailto:biddy.livesey@toronto.ca)

or 416-338-5716

Tenants First Project Management Office

City Hall, 100 Queen St. W., East Tower,

14th Floor, Toronto, ON, M5H 2N2