








THE AFFORDABLE HOUSING PLEDGE FOR THE 2022 TORONTO ELECTION

Rents are unaffordable for nearly half of Toronto renters.¹ The unaffordability rate is roughly 10% higher for South Asian, Black and Chinese households than non-racialized households.² The eviction filing rate in Humber River-Black Creek is six times as high as Scarborough North: overall neighbourhoods with a greater proportion of Black renters have double the eviction filing rate of other neighbourhoods.³

If Toronto wants to grow equitably, we need to acknowledge **housing is a fundamental human right**. That means *everyone* has the right to a home that is:

-  **Affordable** – the cost of housing still leaves households money for food and other essentials
-  **Habitable** – a safe, secure and healthy environment
-  **Accessible** – to people of all ages and all abilities to live with dignity
-  **Secure** – protecting residents from arbitrary eviction
-  **Served** by public infrastructure and close to employment, education and services

We are seeking your pledge for this next term of Council.

Take these seven practical steps towards making Toronto
a fairer and more equitable city for ALL.



Housing that is *affordable*

1. Deepen the benefits of Toronto's housing investments

Inclusionary zoning. Development charge and property tax waivers. Contributions of City-owned land at reduced or no cost. These are just some of the tools the City uses to create more affordable housing. The problem is that even with these benefits, affordable rents this year are \$1,090 for a one-bedroom apartment and \$1,661 for a two-bedroom apartment.⁴ In other words a minimum wage earner with two children would pay 71% of her income for a two-bedroom apartment, and 46% to crowd into a one-bedroom unit.



I pledge:

To combine rent supplements with existing City housing initiatives to create homes that are truly affordable for Toronto's lowest income earners.

2. Preserve the affordable housing we already have

Toronto is losing affordable apartments faster than it can create them. The cheapest, fastest way for Toronto to catch up is to help non-profit and co-op organizations purchase small apartment buildings and keep them affordable forever. City Council has opened the door with the Multi-Unit Residential Acquisitions Program. Now, it's time to build on that success.



I pledge:

To progressively expand Toronto's Multi-Unit Residential Acquisitions Program to keep more rental properties affordable forever.



Housing that is *habitable*

3. Learn about a building's condition from the people who live there

Who really knows what it's like to live in a building? The people who live there! Yet today, the City's RentSafeTO building inspectors check only a building's common areas, and don't see the inside of units where tenants actually live. There is no system for giving tenants notice that inspectors are coming, no channel for tenants to identify concerns about their own units, and no system for posting inspection results.



I pledge:

To establish protocols to ensure tenants have an active voice in the evaluation of their homes, with enough Bylaw Enforcement Officers to do the job.

Housing that is *accessible*

4. Direct public investment to homes that are accessible to all

Toronto's seniors population is expected to double by 2041. Many people with disabilities are already living in institutions simply because they can't find an accessible home. We need to create enough Universal Design homes to match Toronto's needs.



I pledge:

To champion Universal Design in all new apartment buildings so that anyone of any age or ability can move into and stay in their homes.

To ensure the City's centralized waiting lists effectively match disabled applicants with the appropriate housing.



Housing that is *secure*

5. Prevent homelessness

Shelters are costly to taxpayers and hard on the people who stay there. The better path is to prevent homelessness by helping people stay housed. Indigenous people, newcomers, racialized households, LGBTQ+ individuals and women face many challenges in accessing adequate housing including mainstream shelters' inability to provide information, guidance or referrals to address immigration needs and discrimination in shelters.⁵

We have the tools: the Eviction Prevention in Community (EPIC) program, the Rent Bank and the Toronto Tenant Support Fund. Yet last year over 20,000 individuals used Toronto's shelter system.⁶ Time to scale up and address the needs of marginalized communities accessing shelter supports in the city.



I pledge:

To expand the City's eviction prevention programs, rent supports and housing stabilization supports to enable tenants to remain in their homes and challenge bad faith evictions.

Housing close to *services and infrastructure*

6. Make the most of our public infrastructure

Toronto's skyline may be filled with cranes. Yet Census Canada reports the population in many neighbourhoods is shrinking. That means Toronto is failing to make good use of the public infrastructure we already have – transit, health clinics, schools and other population specific programs and services – and that low-income people in particular depend on. It also means Toronto is missing out on the informal housing arrangements, such as shared housing and second suites, that lower income people can afford.

Certain communities such as Indigenous, Black and racialized households face disproportionate barriers to access housing and may have to choose between housing affordability and proximity to services, even choosing to live precariously in order to be close to services available in Toronto's city centre.



I pledge:

To facilitate the creation of shared housing, second suites, walk-up apartments, townhouses and other “gentle density” throughout Toronto.

Putting the pledges *into action*

7. Fulfill Toronto’s commitment to the right to housing

The COVID-19 pandemic has made visible what the City’s own studies have shown for years: that Indigenous, Black and racialized communities, women, people with disabilities, 2SLGBTQ+ individuals, youth leaving care, and people on social assistance are bearing the brunt of Toronto’s affordable housing crisis.

This is why we need a Housing Commissioner. In 2019 City Council adopted the Toronto Housing Charter and drew on its principles to inform its housing plan. The next step – originally scheduled for 2021-2022 – is to establish the Office of the Housing Commissioner to advance the right to housing across the city and monitor who has been served and who has been left behind. The functioning of this office must be governed by the critical principles of inclusion, equity and diversity.



I pledge:

To finally create and fully fund the Office of the Housing Commissioner in 2023.

SOURCES:

[1] Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario, Where will we live? Ontario's Affordable Rental Housing Crisis, 2018, p. 1. https://www.acto.ca/production/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/WhereWillWeLive_May2018_ACTO_Report.pdf

[2] Wellesley Institute, Widening inequities: Long-term housing affordability in the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area 1991 – 2016, December 2021, p. 8. <https://www.wellesleyinstitute.com/publications/housing-affordability/>

[3] Wellesley Institute, Where eviction applications are filed: Ward distribution of eviction applications in Toronto, March 2021, p. 1 – 2. <https://www.wellesleyinstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Brief-1-Ward-Distribution-of-Evictions-FINAL.pdf>

[4] City of Toronto, Updating the Definitions of Affordable Housing, accessed June 26, 2022. <https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/planning-development/planning-studies-initiatives/definitions-of-affordable-housing/>

[5] Access Alliance MHCS. (2021). Beyond positive intentions: Seeking well-being & equity for LGBTQ+ newcomer women and other trans and gender non-conforming newcomers. <https://accessalliance.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Beyond-Positive-Intentions.pdf>

[6] According to the City of Toronto's Street Needs Assessment, 2021, more than 20,000 different people used the shelter system at some point in 2020 (p.16). <https://www.toronto.ca/legaldocs/mmis/2021/ec/bgrd/backgroundfile-171729.pdf>

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Learn more about the right to housing in Toronto:

Website: right2housingto.ca

Twitter: [@R2HTO](https://twitter.com/R2HTO)

