

CIRCLE LANDTRUST'S TENANT NEWSLETTER

Scatter Notes



Summer '23

We acknowledge that Circle's homes are located within the treaty lands and territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. Toronto is the traditional territory of many nations including the Anishnaabek, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. As an organization, Circle is committed to critically looking at what it means to own and operate housing on this land, and how we can support reconciliation and Indigenous sovereignty. Please visit our website at circlelandtrust.ca to view our full land acknowledgement.



Hello Circle Tenants and Families,

I am so excited to be reaching out with our first Tenant newsletter! I can't express the privilege I feel to be leading this organization which is working to become a truly Tenant-focused landlord. When my parents immigrated to Toronto from the Philippines in 1975, they settled in an apartment in Scarborough, and later bought a small semi-detached house near Greenwood and Gerrard. My parents said they paid around \$80,000. They were fortunate to buy at a time when homes were still affordable for people with modest incomes. During my lifetime, that affordability has slipped out of reach for so many: people have been pushed out of their neighbourhoods, and once-affordable areas are now inaccessible for newcomers.

Circle was formed around a collective vision of protecting and investing in these special homes – like yours - that are embedded in Toronto's many vibrant

neighbourhoods. Our vision is to provide exceptional service as a landlord by bringing all the homes into a state of good repair, and by working with our Tenants and communities to create a culture that is inclusive, engaged, and where Tenants can feel secure in knowing that their homes are now protected and permanently affordable.

We've now completed our first "Transfer Year". What an undertaking, and what a learning experience! Our Tenants have been so incredible in helping us: sharing your stories, background info, pain points, advice, wish lists, and more. Access to Tenant knowledge has been instrumental as we build Circle, and continues to be a primary source for decision-making.

I've had the opportunity to talk with many of you and I can't thank you enough for reaching out. Whether it's been hearing

feedback at our Tenant Advisory Group meetings, connecting over email, or taking emergency calls on weekends - every interaction has been informative and meaningful, and provided important context that has helped me guide our plans at Circle.

With the bulk of the Transfer details now complete, I am excited to share that Circle is ramping up our repair plans

for the homes! A lot of work has already begun, but you'll be hearing more in the coming months about our short- and long-term repair plans. Of course, repairing over 560 houses takes a huge amount of coordination and planning - but we also know that Tenants have been waiting a long time. So, I am really happy to report that things are well underway. I am so grateful for the patience and cooperation that Tenants have shown the Circle team over this past year.

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Please stay in touch with us: follow updates on our website and Tenant Portal, and talk to your Community Tenant Service Worker, our Tenant Engagement Coordinator, or reach out to me directly. We want to keep you as informed as possible, and to keep getting to know you!

Alia Abaya
CEO



NOTES FROM OUR ASSET MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE DEPARTMENT



Tree Care

Circle is working with a couple of great companies to provide tree care for the homes. If any branches are touching your home, or if you notice any dead branches, please put in a Work Order with our maintenance department for tree care so that it can be dealt with during the warm season.

Energy Retrofit Inspections

Circle is working with Ecofitt/CLEAResult to assess which of our properties qualify for retrofit programs that improve energy efficiency, so look out for a call from them. If you have any questions about this program, contact Kathy at kathy.kurtz@circlelandtrust.ca

Submitting Work Orders

Like TCHC did, Circle uses a Work Order system to track all the maintenance requests that Tenants send in. Some things have changed, some things have stayed the same.

You can submit WOs to Circle by:



Using the Tenant Portal

Circle's Online Tenant Portal is the **fastest** way to submit your maintenance requests to our staff, and get updates and announcements from us.

Visit our website at CircleLandTrust.ca to register, or tell your Community Tenant Services Worker you're interested & we will send you an invitation to sign up!



Emailing

maintenance@circlelandtrust.ca



Calling

437-781-8432 ext 4

This line answered 24 hrs a day, 7 days a week, all year.

Note

If you submitted a WO to TCHC before the transfer, you must also re-submit it to Circle.

We received some open WOs from TCHC at the time of Transfer, but we are asking Tenants to re-submit them to ensure that nothing is missed. If you are unsure whether or not you need to submit a new WO, please contact our Maintenance Department.



Swaib Ssemakula
Maintenance Technician
Kathy Kurtz
Tenant Experience Coordinator

When my family moved from a Scarborough TCHC building to our Scattered House in East York, it was a getaway from the harsh environment of an underserved community riddled with gun violence, drugs, and a lack of options for many to seek support with education, extracurriculars, programs, and living a healthy lifestyle. But, living in our house, I've often felt this inescapable sense of unease – akin to walking on eggshells. I've felt like we were supposed to keep our heads down and just be grateful – despite the many issues with the house. I felt a fear that if we spoke up, complained, or made changes to the house, it could be taken away from my family at any time.

Is there an opportunity for Tenants to have a meaningful role in shaping the policies that govern our homes?

From the initial announcement several years ago that my home would be transferred to an as-yet-undecided landlord, right up until the decision was made of who it would be, a lingering insecurity about what my home is, and was meant to be, for my family clouded over me. I chose to actively participate in the Transfer process, collaborating with St Stephen's Community House, and the City of Toronto to organize townhalls to amplify tenant voices, ensure we were informed of any changes that could directly impact us, and guarantee that our input regarding the future of our homes was heard and respected by city officials.

It's almost been a year since Circle took over, and it's definitely been a year of considerable changes. It's clear that there were many challenges and learning curves, but overall the transition was handled efficiently. To have success in building a new relationship, developing open communication - so that tenants are informed about changes or developments that could affect them - is vital. The level of transparency displayed, and the openness to collaboration so far has been assuring in regard to future plans that Circle has shared in the Tenant Advisory Group meetings I have attended. From exchanges over the months with Circle, they have said that they want Tenants to be part of the decision-making process. The real point being reflected, though, is whether there is an opportunity for Tenants to have a meaningful role in shaping the policies that govern our homes. There's nothing more frustrating than being consulted, but feeling unheard. So far, there

TENANT
SPOTLIGHT
BY
**Mohammed
Mohyedin**



have been signs that Circle understands this. Ivy, Circle's Tenant Engagement Coordinator, has led the charge, but seeing executive members like Alia, the CEO, make herself available to Tenants is really encouraging. It gives me a sense of relief – that the anxiety and insecurity I have sometimes felt in my home may be giving way to a new relationship, that is reflective of a new dynamic leadership coming out of the social housing community in Toronto.

As I look to the future, there is a cloud of uncertainty over Toronto's affordable housing stock. As a young Canadian, the dream of owning my own home one day looks challenging. I think it's everyone's dream to do so, through upward mobility and hard work, access to programs, extracurricular, and good health. A question posed is: can Circle play a larger role than a landlord in supporting some of us with this realization? Moreover, one of the Circle's plans is to bring the houses to a state of good repair. Is there an opportunity to go further, and incorporate leading practices in innovation, and sustainability, and also bring in artistic nuances that make these homes inspiring places to live – the homes of the future? With the question of affordable housing on everyone's mind, renting in Toronto can only get you so far. Does Circle have future plans to support

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our communities through programs that promote homeownership? Looking at other Community Land Trusts has been inspiring, but can Circle lay out an innovative plan that showcases to the rest of Toronto, that we all can one day own our own homes despite economic, political, and social variables that affect our realities?

With all that said – Tenants: your voice and feedback are valuable to the success of Circle's future. Circle: your leadership and plan will define the sustainability and equity of your organization for decades to come, hopefully allowing your team to be trailblazers in a historic transfer in Toronto,

the greatest city in the world. However, both sides need to work together with open-mindedness, calm, and bravery to define our futures.

Waking up to the chilly winds this past winter reminded me of how grateful I am to live in my home. The cold breeze brushing against my cheeks under the early night sky only served to emphasize the contrast of my warm, inviting home. After long days spent earning an honest living and keeping myself physically fit, there's nothing more comforting than returning to this sanctuary I call home. Waking up now in the dawn, with the sounds of the birds again, and life growing around us, I look forward to seeing a community of leaders emerging to spread the light of the change to last through any uncertainty again.



NOTES FROM
OUR TENANT
SERVICES
DEPARTMENT



**Join Circle's
Tenant Advisory
Group!**

One of the best ways to give Circle staff and management your feedback and ideas is to come to a TAG meeting, which are open to all Circle Tenants. For more information, contact Ivy at community@circlelandtrust.ca, or 437-781-8432 ext 3



**You're Invited:
Pizza in the Park with Circle
Monday July 24 5:30pm**

Help celebrate 1 year of Circle with us! Meet our staff, other Tenants, and enjoy some fresh pizza from Fairmount Park's wood-burning oven, courtesy of Circle! Wheelchair accessible, and kid-friendly. More details and RSVP at circlelandtrust.ca, or call Ivy.

**Monday July 24 (Rain date: July 25), 5:30-7:30pm
at Fairmount Park (1725 Gerrard St East, at Coxwell)**

Sign up for Pre-Authorized Rent Payments

Many Circle Tenants pay rent by pre-authorized payment (PAP) – which means that on the 1st of every month, rent is automatically deducted from your bank. Paying by PAP ensures that rent is on time every month. We encourage Tenants to sign up using the attached form.

**Circle is looking for Tenant input
on our Mission & Vision!**

Get in touch with us if you'd like to be involved.

**Know your
Community Tenant
Services Worker**

Circle's four CTSWs Betty Omoria, Christine States, Maariyah Iqbal, and Olaide Durodola, are your main point of contact for questions and concerns about rent, RGI, and anything else related to your tenancy. To find out which CTSW is assigned to you, contact our Tenant Services Department.





Maintenance Requests

- Submit using Tenant Portal
- maintenance@circlelandtrust.ca
- 437-781-8432 ext 4
This line is answered 24 hrs a day, 7 days a week, all year

Questions about Tenancy (rent, income, etc)

- tenantservices@circlelandtrust.ca
- 437-781-8432 ext 2

Share your feedback, or join Tenant Advisory Group

- community@circlelandtrust.ca
- 437-781-8432 ext 3

Our Office Location – We’ve Moved!

365 Bloor Street East, Suite 1902
Toronto ON, M4W 3L4
Mon-Fri 8:30am-4:30pm
www.circlelandtrust.ca



Meet Circle’s Departments

Our **Asset Management & Maintenance Dept** handles all maintenance requests, repairs and renovations.

Our **Finance Dept** manages all financial matters to ensure that Circle is stable and sustainable.

Our **Tenant Services Dept** oversees all tenancy matters including rent, RGI, and more.

Our **Tenant Engagement Dept** works to ensure that Tenants have an expanded voice at Circle.



Resources & Discounts

The **Rogers Connected for Success** program offers discounted access to high-speed internet and cable TV. RGI households, and other low-income individuals are eligible. Learn more: <https://connectedforsuccess.ca/ontario/>

TTC & Wheel Trans: The Fair Pass program provides 20-35% discounts on TTC and Wheel Trans fares to low-income adults. For more information, search “Fair Pass Transit Program Toronto” online, which will take you to the City’s website with more information.

Got ideas for our newsletter, or want to share your story? Contact Ivy at community@circlelandtrust.ca or 437-781-8432 ext 3.

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