

TODOR*

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Photos by Seema Marwaha

I am 78 years old. I was born in Hungary during World War II. I have children and grandchildren living in Europe but no family in Canada. I've worked my entire life and never been sick or admitted to hospital. I lived in a little apartment in the Annex of Toronto for the past 30 years. The rent increased over the years, but I paid \$700 per month without fail and I was a good tenant.

In the last 3 years my landlord and I had many disagreements about the amount of clutter I had in the apartment. I have hundreds of books. It caused a lot of tension. I complained about the heating being broken, but it wasn't fixed. My landlord wanted me out.

I got a notice in September — during the coronavirus pandemic — that I had to leave my apartment in 2 weeks. I asked for 3 months to get my affairs in order. My intention was always to save my money and buy a small house in the Maritimes. I lived a very simple life. I've saved every penny.

One evening, I left to go buy something and returned to 2 big locks on the entrance to my place. I couldn't get in. All I had on me was the clothes I was wearing. I didn't know what to do, so I slept outside my front door. They called the police to remove me. I then slept in the park for several days. I tried visiting local government offices and city hall in person, but they were all closed.

Eventually, I moved to a homeless shelter. There is absolutely no way to isolate there, even though people are doing their best. I have been homeless for almost 4 months. Even though I have a pension and a bank account, I quickly realized no one would rent to an old, eccentric homeless man with no identification. I am also deeply embarrassed that I am in this situation.

I was recently admitted to hospital with COVID-19. I might die. I'm not afraid to die. But what has happened to me and the countless others who are homeless in this country is a tragedy. People should not be risking their lives to treat me. That fills me with guilt.

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*This is a pseudonym to protect the patient's anonymity.