



Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario
Centre ontarien de défense des droits des locataires

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Deputation to City of Toronto's Licensing and Standards Committee

Meeting of Thursday, May 19, 2016
Committee Room #1, City Hall

Item LS11.4 – Proposed Framework for Multi-Residential Rental Property Licence

We are here to support the recommendation of the Executive Director that she conduct a public consultation on a licensing framework for multi-residential rental properties. We ask that you support further direction as to the contents of the report as recommended by the Tenant Issues Committee. We believe that this expanded report would get us closer to achieving the objective that you set when you sent this to staff two years ago – a system that would “strengthen the capacity of the City to increase compliance with City by-laws”.

There are 476,000 tenant homes in the City of Toronto. Although 44% of those households are experiencing affordability issues, the vast majority pay their monthly rent in full and on time. In return, they expect their landlords to provide safe, well-maintained buildings in a good state of repair as is required by the City's Property Standards By-law and the *Residential Tenancies Act*. Unfortunately, there are too many landlords that fail to keep their side of the bargain.

In January 2011, the United Way released a report entitled ***Vertical Poverty*** which contained a survey of over 2,800 high-rise renters in Toronto's inner suburbs. Despite the fact that the property standards by-law had been in force for decades and the MRAB Audit program was well underway when this research was undertaken, those tenants were experiencing serious problems with the quality of their housing:

- more than one-third of the tenants interviewed said elevators break down monthly or more often;
- three-quarters of the tenants had at least one major repair problem in their unit in the 12 months prior to being interviewed;
- over one-third of the tenants had three or more major repair issues.

The MRAB Audit Annual Report gives us some hope that landlord compliance has improved in the five years have passed since the report was released. But that is not the experience of the legal clinics and tenant organizations that are helping tenants to attain first-world living conditions in their homes. The legislation and staff resources that are directed to enforcement of the City's laws that require landlords to provide safe and adequate homes to tenants are not sufficient to do the job.

So, a system of building licensing is proposed in the report before you to add to the tools that the City has to improve living conditions for tenants. This proposal is quite undeveloped in many areas and needs to be beefed up through input by people who will be affected by this system. That is why we support the recommendation that a consultation process be undertaken over the summer and into the fall and that a comprehensive report be made to this Committee in the fall. Many tenants have indicated their support for such a system and their willingness to engage in this consultation process and ACTO would certainly participate and seek to engage others.

We think it is important that the consultation consider how a licensing system could provide new financial resources to the difficult job of securing compliance with housing standards in rental buildings. The proactive and preventative measures discussed in the report that would improve compliance with the property standards bylaw and other legal requirements that protect tenants' health and safety must complement the existing direct service to tenants of in-suite inspections through the 311 service and the MRAB Audits. In this way, the widespread violations of the property standards bylaw that continue to blight our communities and the lives of low-income tenants can be addressed.

We support any measures that the City takes to improve the difficult environment that tenants face in finding and keeping a home. With further consideration of the needs of the tenant community through the proposed consultation, we trust that a framework can be developed that will meet your direction to staff on June 26, 2014 – "to strengthen the capacity of the City capacity to increase compliance with City by-laws".