

PH10.4 - Attachment 1

Attachment 1: Consultation Summary

Staff conducted research and consultation over the course of 2018 and 2019 in order to assess the progress of the program and opportunities for improvement. Details of the consultation approach and outcomes are detailed below.

Consultations

MLS undertook a comprehensive engagement approach targeted at a diverse range of stakeholders to better understand the issues related to apartment building maintenance and operations in Toronto. This included 6 public consultations and 7 stakeholder meetings, which engaged approximately 300 individuals.

MLS hosted two targeted meetings for tenants' organizations and landlords' organizations, and one for the public. Staff also participated in five community-based events (e.g. neighbourhood festivals) across the city in Black Creek, Thorncliffe Park, Scarborough Centre, St. James Town, and Downtown, in order to provide additional information about the RentSafeTO program, the review, and to collect feedback on the program and lived experiences. Staff also reviewed 82 written submissions from residents and organizations.

In order to inform stakeholders and the public about the review and consultations, MLS conducted direct outreach to landlord and tenant associations, BIAs, Resident Associations, anti-poverty organizations, Indigenous organizations and community members, student associations, and residential and non-residential landlords, and builders. Information was also provided on the City's public consultation website, a dedicated review website, and 311 knowledge base. Consultation details were posted through online event listings such as BlogTO and Now Magazine, as well as social media outlets such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Staff worked with Strategic Communications to develop a news release and MLS Monitor newsletter for City Council.

Internally, staff consulted with over 15 City Divisions (including Social Development, Finance, and Administration; Shelter, Support, and Housing Administration; Toronto Public Health; Office of Emergency Management; Fire Services; and more).

Feedback

Staff heard a range of feedback from tenants, tenant advocacy groups, and the general public. The following issues were raised:

- Many highlighted that there is limited awareness of the RentSafeTO program, and the City needs to undertake more marketing and outreach to inform tenants of the program and actions that they can take if they have concerns with their buildings or landlord.
- Pest infestation is among the most common challenges, and tenants reported cases of bed bugs, cockroaches, rats/mice and more.

- Other common issues are experienced in both individual units and common areas of a building, including unsanitary garbage storage and disposal systems, issues with electrical systems, mould, lack of clean ventilation systems, and unsafe balconies and windows.
- Tenants experience challenges with both heating and cooling systems in buildings, with indoor temperatures not set at appropriate, comfortable levels throughout the year. For example, a lack of options to have relief from heat during the warm months, as well as experiencing insufficient heat in the cooler months.
- Tenants highlighted that the City should make better use of the By-law's remedial action tools to fix issues where a landlord is not taking action.
- Many felt that the program should have more inspections, and have publicly available standards, procedures, and protocols for enforcement processes that are clear and easy for tenants to understand.
- Some suggested that the City should be more prescriptive with existing requirements in the By-law in order to improve the effectiveness of them (e.g. specific definitions in the capital repair plan)

Staff also received a range of feedback on the program from landlords, including the following:

- Landlords and representative associations generally felt that the requirements in the By-law are feasible. In some instances, it was noted that requirements in the By-law were already operationalized by property management companies prior to the By-law coming into effect (e.g. waste management plans).
- There were some challenges in the early days of the program, specifically with respect to enforcement (e.g. inconsistent evaluations). However, they felt that concerns were generally resolved when raised to MLS.
- Landlords acknowledged that the City's rental stock is aging, and that investment and long-term financial planning are necessary for building maintenance (e.g. electrical systems and plumbing systems). However, it was also noted that these expenses are significantly more costly for older buildings.
- Landlords also noted that pests are among the most common challenges in Toronto's apartment buildings, and that eliminating and preventing their spread can be especially difficult.
- On heat in apartment buildings, landlords stated that requiring air conditioning or cooling rooms would be cost prohibitive, and that it is not feasible to retrofit some buildings with an indoor cooling room as there is no physical space inside some buildings.