



Councillor Josh Matlow

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November 12, 2019

Re: PH10.4 - Amendments to Chapter 354, Apartment Buildings, and Progress Update on RentSafeTO

Dear Chair & Committee Members,

The **RentSafe** initiative approved by Council in 2017 is one of the most comprehensive, progressive, and rigorous municipal tenant protection initiatives in North America. The new multi-residential apartment by-law was the result of years of hard work with local tenant advocates and city-wide organizations, including the Federation of Metro Toronto Tenants' Associations, ACORN, Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario, as well as community legal clinics. Staff should be commended for developing this extensive program.

Since 2017 there have been additional pressures, including major spikes in false "renovictions" and Landlord Own Use evictions, due to Toronto's spiralling housing market. The province is unwilling or unable to investigate these impactful infractions of the Residential Tenancies Act. The City needs to take additional steps to protect tenants facing these threats to their home:

- City of Toronto Municipal Standards Officers should have the ability to investigate Residential Tenancies Act infractions as part of RentSafe.
- The Toronto Police Service should investigate false renovictions and Landlord Own Use evictions as fraud under sec 380 (1) of the Criminal Code.

Staff should be applauded for the work they did in developing RentSafe and for some of the new measures contained in the by-law update before Committee today. However, the City has yet to deliver on many crucial measures that Council promised to the 50% of our residents that rent their homes. The following initiatives to protect tenants have not been implemented:

- Apartment rating system similar to the City's "Dinesafe" program requiring landlords to post a colour-coded sign that displays the City's rating in a prominent, publicly identifiable location, along with posting the same information to the City's website.
- Standard operating procedure to provide tenants and Municipal Standards Officers with codified, transparent timelines for how long landlords have to remedy specific property standards violations. eg. guardrail needs to be fixed in 30 days, graffiti removed in 10 days, etc.
- Limit time extensions at Property Standards Committee as the Committee has far too frequently granted extensions for landlords to complete necessary repairs or to remedy other property standards violations. Council directed that extensions be limited to extraordinary circumstances.
- Administrative Monetary Penalties allowing Municipal Standards Officers to levy increased set fines

Thank you for your consideration of the recommendations below to support Toronto's renters. This Committee has an opportunity to follow through on Council's promise to protect tenants.

Recommendations:

1. City Council direct the City Manager to request the provincial government to provide City of Toronto Municipal Standards Officers the ability to investigate Residential Tenancies Act infractions as part of RentSafe
2. City Council request the Toronto Police Service to investigate false "renovictions", Landlord's Own Use evictions, and other similar fraudulent activities conducted by landlords under sec 380 (1) of the Criminal Code of Canada
3. City Council reaffirm its direction to the Executive Director, Municipal Licensing and Standards to develop standard operating procedure service standards for 2020, subject to annual review, for Municipal Standards Officers which provide targeted timelines by violation category to bring landlords into compliance with City by-laws from the date an order is issued, and make the standards available to the public on the RentSafe website by Q1 2020.
4. City Council direct the Executive Director, Municipal Licensing and Standards to create a rating system similar to the City's "Dinesafe" program that requires landlords to post a colour-coded sign that displays the City's rating in a prominent, publicly identifiable location, along with posting the same information on the RentSafe website, and report to the Planning and Housing Committee in Q1 2020.
5. City Council reaffirm its direction to the Executive Director, Municipal Licensing and Standards to establish guidelines for when the Property Standards Committee can grant time extensions on work orders and to limit those criteria to only those situations that are deemed as extraordinary circumstances and report to the Planning and Housing Committee in Q1 2020.
6. City Council reaffirm its direction to the Executive Director, Municipal Licensing and Standards to report on the following to the Planning and Housing Committee in Q1 2020:
 - a. the proposed Administrative Penalty By-law, and increased set fines which would apply to violations under the Rental Apartment Building By-law; and
 - b. the proposed policies and operating procedures, organizational changes and financing requirements to enhance the capacity of Municipal Licensing and Standards to undertake remedial action.
7. City Council reaffirm its direction to the Executive Director, Municipal Licensing and Standards to allocate \$60,000 of the program budget for tenant engagement to be used for direct door-to-door engagement regarding tenant rights and responsibilities, and advice on how tenants can participate in Toronto's by-law for apartment buildings, subject to the criteria Council established in LS17.1 - recommendation 42.

Sincerely,



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Toronto – St. Paul's

