

Submission to Nov. 13, 2019 Planning and Housing Committee Meeting

Agenda Item PH10.4

My name is Maryanna Lewyckyj and I am the President of the Park Vista Tenants' Association. The association represents tenants living in four buildings on Park Vista (Ward 19) with a combined total of more than 360 units.

First of all, I applaud the City of Toronto for proceeding with the RentSafeTO program in the face of strong opposition by landlords who contended that new regulations weren't necessary and that existing enforcement measures were adequate to deal with the few "bad apples" in the rental industry.

As a tenant activist, I saw a clear need for more rules and enforcement tools to help tenants. While the new regulations are no "magic wand" (as noted when the program was presented to city councillors), they do provide new measures to help inform and protect tenants.

However, even if a program has excellent policy principles, the program impact will be limited if people aren't aware of it. I was surprised and disappointed to find that only 9% of tenants surveyed in a poll commissioned by the city were aware of the program. When nine out of 10 people who should be benefitting from an initiative don't know about it, it should be cause for concern and a re-think of the RentSafeTO communications and outreach strategy.

I support the enhancements that are being proposed to increase awareness and would encourage the city to consider the following measures that might help boost tenant understanding of RentSafeTO:

- A RentSafeTO handout with detailed steps on how to complain effectively (i.e. document issues in writing, take photos, keep good notes, save copies of emails, etc.)
- Sample template letters to resolve different issues (see Appendix A for example)
- Guidance material which explains municipal vs. provincial jurisdiction with regard to rental rules (to note that issues such as rent control, above-guideline increases and the Landlord and Tenant Board fall under provincial authority)
- Online videos about key topics (inadequate heat, pest control, tenant notification boards)

I'm glad to see that the city will be lobbying the province to move forward with the *Elevator Availability Act, 2018*, or introduce similar legislation to address concerns around safety, reliability and availability of elevators.

We also recommend that if ALL elevators in a building are out, the landlord should communicate with tenants and have a contingency plan. We also suggest that a Municipal and Licensing Standards official should sit on the Technical Standards and Safety Authority (TSSA) Elevating Devices Advisory Council. I recognize that elevating devices fall under provincial jurisdiction, but given the number of high-rise buildings in Toronto, putting a City of Toronto official on the advisory council might help bring high-rise issues to a provincial table.

I also believe there is a need for dedicated funding to help tenants who are elderly or have mobility issues to help prepare a unit for pest treatment.

Our association applauds the regulations the City of Toronto introduced on July 1, 2017 to help better inform and protect tenants. We also believe there is an opportunity to raise the bar higher to ensure better support to tenants when emergencies arise.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input.

Maryanna Lewyckyj, President
Park Vista Tenants' Association
parkvista.tenantassociation@gmail.com

Appendix A:

Sample Inadequate Heat Notice

I am attaching a log of temperature readings from my unit for various times between **[insert dates here]** which show the temperature falling below 21 degrees Celsius.

As you know, under Chapter 497 of the Toronto Municipal Code landlords are required to provide heat and maintain a minimum temperature of 21 degrees Celsius between September 15 and June 1.

Also, Ontario's Residential Tenancies Act says that landlords must:

- keep their rental housing in a "good state of repair and fit for habitation"
- follow all applicable housing standards

This means that landlords must make sure that heating systems -- furnaces, boilers, thermostats, ducts and radiators -- are working properly.

It also means that landlords must correct other problems that make a place too cold, such as:

- windows that don't close properly
- drafts from doorways and other openings
- poor insulation

I would appreciate you taking appropriate steps to rectify the heating issue as soon as possible, but no later than **[insert date here]**. If the problem remains outstanding, I will be referring this matter to the City of Toronto as a property standards violation.

Jane Tenant

XXX Main St., Unit **XXX**

Toronto, ON

Phone: **(XXX) XXX-XXXX**

Email: **XXXXXXXXX**

Date	Time	Interior Temp	Remarks re Rad.
	8:30 AM	17.0	Rad warm. Not hot.
	11:30 PM	18.0	
	8:00 AM	17.0	Barely warm at outlet
	11 PM	18.0	Barely warm at outlet
	7:30 AM	17.0	
	10:55 PM	18.0	Barely warm at outlet
	7:30 AM	17.0	