



ACORN members hailed the passing of RentSafe since it meant ensuring greater landlord accountability. It was only after years of persistent struggle that Toronto ACORN won RentSafe. However, based on the city's own report and ACORN's engagement with the low and moderate tenant community, the program has not been implemented to its full potential.

ACORN members have some key questions about RentSafe for Municipal Licensing and Standards based on their November 2019 Report.

Between November 4<sup>th</sup> 2019 & November 11<sup>th</sup> ACORN surveyed 107 low income tenants on their experience. Based on the survey findings and ACORN's work, here is a list of questions that need to be addressed:

- **Lack of awareness:** Why do 70% of respondents to the city's poll not know about RentSafe? Why has MLS resisted direct tenant engagement? Will MLS commit to a boots on the ground approach to informing tenants about the RentSafe program & their rights?
- **DineSafe Sticker:** 50% of ACORN respondents did not have a tenant notification board. How does MLS think requiring building evaluation scores to be posted on a non-existent tenant notification board will work out? Will MLS commit to public facing signs and a DineSafe-like rating system for buildings?
- **Inspection/Enforcement protocol is not transparent:** The program saw more than 6000 complaints, but how many tickets were issued? Why were only 300 orders issued on these 6000 complaints? Will RentSafe & MLS make their inspection and enforcement protocol transparent and available to the public?
- **Inspection criteria are not exhaustive:** Many bad buildings passed, the RentSafe evaluation such as 500 Dawes Rd, 1775 Weston Rd, 2667 Kipling Ave, 650 Parliament Rd. Only 11 buildings were audited in 2018. Are 3400 buildings well maintained, or is RentSafe not properly inspecting buildings?
- **No penalties for inaction:** Why is there no administrative monetary penalty system despite 2 years of opportunity to create one? There seem to be no penalties for landlords that don't keep up with repairs.
- **Inadequate capacity and budgets:** How many inspectors have been hired? How many currently work on RentSafeTO? Why did it take two years for a single report to come out? Does RentSafe have the staff it needs to enforce property standards and implement the program?

In order to address these issues, ACORN members propose the following improvements to RentSafe:

- ✓ **Rating System** - A building rating system, like DineSafe, with signs on the front of the building clearly displaying the building grade and advertising 311 for any tenant issues
- ✓ **Engagement** - A tenant engagement system that involves boots on the ground, that tells tenants their rights, inquires about maintenance issues and directs any complaints to 311.
- ✓ **Enforcement** – An administrative monetary penalty system, so that property standards violations are penalized right away rather than through an arduous trip through the court system.
- ✓ **Transparency** – Clear standards of service from MLS, so tenants are aware of the process after they call 311. Tenants and landlords need a straightforward process that is transparent about when inspections will be done, when orders will be issued, and when tickets/fines/or AMPs will happen.
- ✓ **Criteria** – Evaluation criteria should be expanded to include pests, mould, roofs, and whether or not the landlord is meeting the bylaw requirements of RentSafe.
- ✓ **Increased Capacity** – RentSafe should increase the registration fee and its tax supported budget to hire more inspectors and supervisors.
- ✓ **Partnership** – RentSafe should report on progress and difficulties twice a year to housing advocates and groups to ascertain if the program is working, and areas for improvement.

On Behalf of Toronto ACORN,

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