



February 5, 2024

Deputation Regarding Restoring In-Person Hearings at the Landlord and Tenant Board of Ontario
Council Meeting of February 6, 2024

Item: MM 4.2 by Councilors Paula Fletcher and Alejandra Bravo

As a tenant advocate for nearly a decade I can emphasize the need to return to live hearings.

The virtual model not only completely fails tenants who are in the process of being evicted, it allows a “rush to judgement” whereby tenants unfamiliar with either virtual hearings, computers or their rights, are pressed by a system which allows only an average of six minutes per hearing.

In short, 30 cases are regularly scheduled in a three-hour period. Even on a normal stress measurement for Members (judges), this expectation would be grounds for a human rights complaint.

The other elements in this motion are equally important. As landlords ramp up evictions, an already underfunded support system is also stressed to the max. Many legal clinics, for example, still prefer not to see clients in person.

The disembodied feeling described by tenants not used to working in the vacuum of the internet is heightened as time constraints create unbearable stress levels. The pressure to provide quick answers to staccato questions on the spot results in a justice failure.

In Toronto, we have a state-of-the-art building at 15 Grosvenor containing all the supports for contemporary hearings which was just days away from being completed when COVID hit. There tenants would have the opportunity to present their cases complete with recordings and photo evidence presented on large screens which would clearly demonstrate their positions.

It currently is still closed to the public apart from a few security guards. The files are also still closed. Evidence housed there cannot be retrieved for other cases. This has been the case for nearly four years.

How much is it costing to keep this empty building closed? Instead of answering that, what is the cost of the injustice to tenants unable to defend themselves? And to our society as a whole?

Starr Smith

Chair, Mimico Estates Tenant Association