

RentSafeTO:
Apartment Building Standards Program

2022

YEAR IN REVIEW



 **TORONTO**

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MESSAGE FROM THE **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,** CARLETON GRANT

I am pleased to share the 2022 Year in Review for the RentSafeTO Apartment Building Standards Program.

RentSafeTO is a bylaw compliance and enforcement program that works to ensure that apartment building owners and operators comply with building maintenance standards and that tenants understand their rights and can resolve issues with their apartment.

Since the launch of the program in 2017, we have worked to continuously improve the enforcement of bylaws that set standards for Toronto's apartment buildings, enhance tenant engagement, and promote preventative maintenance for more than 3,500 apartment buildings across Toronto.

This report provides an overview of the program and demonstrates how we're working to address tenant complaints, helping building owners achieve compliance with City bylaws, and educating tenants and stakeholders.

In 2022, the RentSafeTO team received more than 11,000 service requests relating to issues such as garbage, illegal dumping, water, and heat. To better address and prioritize the influx of requests, the RentSafeTO team implemented a new response model which helped to streamline and resolve more than 90 per cent of these requests.

As directed by City Council, we also began redesigning the program's evaluation tool. The evaluation tool measures how well a building complies with bylaws and calculates scores for all registered buildings. The redesigned evaluation tool will prioritize issues that have a greater impact on the health and safety of tenants as well as ensure ongoing violations

and issues of non-compliance factor into a building's evaluation score. It is intended to result in a more meaningful and dynamic building evaluation score that better reflects the conditions of a building and the needs of tenants.

To promote tenant education and awareness in 2022, we launched an annual City-wide multilingual public education campaign and hosted a range of stakeholder and community events. Part of this work includes door-to-door engagement with tenants, distributing literature and resources during building audits, holding workshops to address questions from tenants' associations and residents and collaborating with other City divisions on rental and tenant housing initiatives.

The work done through this program over the last five years demonstrates the City's commitment in ensuring that tenants have access to safe and well-maintained housing, and that Toronto's critical housing stock is maintained in a state of good repair. We continue to see a year-over-year increase in building compliance, but we also know there is more work to be done. In 2023, we will be reporting back on the implementation of the revised building evaluation tool and we will continue making improvements to enhance the RentSafeTO program.

I would like to thank staff for their contributions to this report as well as our partner divisions, agencies and stakeholders who have been working to provide safe and adequate housing to Toronto residents.



BACKGROUND

The RentSafeTO Apartment Building Standards Program is the first of its kind in Canada and builds on the City's previous Multi-Residential Apartment Buildings program. The objectives of the program are to strengthen enforcement of City bylaws, enhance tenant engagement and access to information, and promote proactive

maintenance in apartment buildings to prevent the deterioration of critical housing stock. The program applies to all apartment buildings with three or more storeys and 10 or more units which accounts for more than 30 per cent of Toronto's residents who live in approximately 3,500 apartment buildings across the city.

2022 HIGHLIGHTS



The number of audits continues to decrease as more buildings improve their evaluation scores. In 2022, the RentSafeTO team completed 1,815 building evaluations and the average building evaluation score was 81 per cent.



The number of service requests increased in almost every category. A total of 11,110 service requests were received in 2022; a 10 per cent increase compared to 2021.



RentSafeTO operated with a full complement of 35 full-time staff which enabled the team to manage a record number of service requests and improve service delivery.



The multilingual public education campaign leveraged a variety of tactics to reach both tenants and property owners including transit shelter ads, subway posters, digital audio, social media, and local community newspapers resulting in more than 100,000 visits to the RentSafeTO webpage during the campaign.



In addition, the RentSafeTO team held 63 stakeholder and community events to ensure tenants were aware of the program and understood how to resolve an issue by submitting service requests.

TENANT & STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

RentSafeTO continues to progress engagement with various stakeholders. In 2022, the team engaged a diverse group of stakeholders including tenants, tenant advocate's, building owners and operators, social housing providers, other City of Toronto divisions, and multiple interest groups on a variety of initiatives.

This included:

- Conducting workshops and information sessions for tenants and building owners;
- Distributing multilingual educational materials and resources;
- Resolving escalated complaints;
- Engaging Councillors, stakeholders and other City divisions to support rental housing initiatives;
- Providing education around the program and bylaw to tenants and building owners (through advertising, social media, newsletters, updated information on the website, and the interactive web map);
- On-site tenant association meetings and discussions;
- Consulting tenant advocates to help inform program policies; and,
- Conducting a series of stakeholder engagement sessions as part of the revision to the evaluation tool.

Additionally, the RentSafeTO team (consisting of a stakeholder engagement lead, bylaw enforcement officers and management) spend the day on site during building audits to answer questions, provide education and go door-to-door to document any concerns residents have.





BUILDING EVALUATIONS & AUDITS

All apartment buildings registered under the RentSafeTO program are subject to a building evaluation at least once every three years. This results in a final evaluation score (from 0 to 100 per cent) that is used to determine next steps, including the next scheduled evaluation, and whether the building requires a more comprehensive audit.

Buildings that do not pass their evaluation are subject to a building audit. The current

threshold is a score of 50 per cent or less.

An audit consists of a more comprehensive inspection, additional enforcement action, if needed, and door-to-door outreach to ensure tenants can address issues within their units.

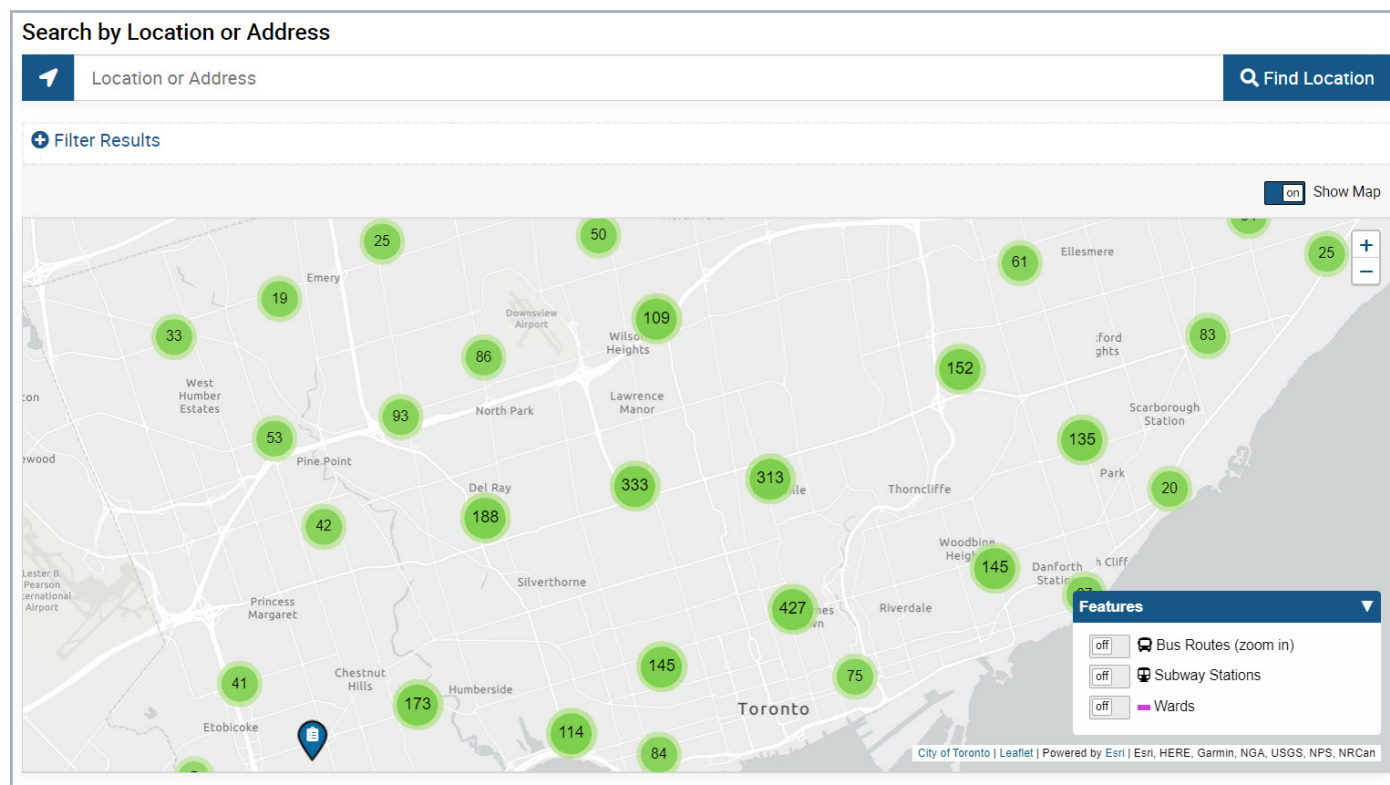
The number of building audits continues to decrease as more buildings have invested in their maintenance programs and responded to tenants' concerns.



RENTSAFETO INTERACTIVE WEBPAGE

Residents and prospective tenants can look up building evaluation scores using the [RentSafeTO interactive webpage](#). The webpage allows residents to view, download or print a detailed report which includes a

breakdown of each category the building was evaluated against and how it scored, as well as details on the building's past evaluation scores.



OPEN DATA

A full dataset that includes building evaluation scores dating back to the program's inception in 2017 is available to [view and download](#).

The dataset provides a full breakdown of how

buildings scored for each evaluation category year over year, as well as details about each building, including when it was registered, building age, number of units, stories, etc.

EVALUATION TOOL REDESIGN

As directed by City Council, staff have started working on the redesign of the building evaluation tool. The changes will prioritize issues that have a greater impact on the health and safety of tenants as well as ensure ongoing violations and issues of non-compliance factor into a building's evaluation score.

Planning for this work involves updating the City's administrative and enforcement tools and engaging with various stakeholders to understand their needs and requirements. In 2023, residents and building owners can expect a more comprehensive list of

categories for building evaluations (increasing from 20 to 50 categories) with issues related to health and safety being weighted more heavily. Additionally, staff will incorporate active Orders and Notices of Violation for in-suite issues into evaluation scores to better reflect the day-to-day experience of tenants. In 2022, the RentSafeTO team held three engagement sessions with various stakeholder groups including bylaw enforcement officers (BEOs), tenants, tenant advocates, the Tenant Advisory Committee, building owners/operators and City staff regarding this redesign. The feedback gained at these

sessions will be considered and incorporated into further decisions and plans for the permanent implementation of the tool. Phase Four of the redesign will be completed in 2023. During this next phase, a fourth engagement session will occur with the same stakeholder groups. Additionally, the program will conduct public consultations to provide opportunities for the public to learn more about the RentSafeTO program and upcoming program changes.

BUILDING EVALUATIONS AND AUDITS PERFORMED

Action	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Building Evaluations	3,421	1,825	1,569	1,469	1,149	1,815
Building Audits	42	42	18	17	7	6

This table provides the number of building evaluations and audits performed from 2017 to 2022.

Based on the current cycle of a 3-year program, the largest number of evaluations occur on the 3rd year – in this case, 2022. Additionally, in 2022 there was an extensive data correction that revealed outstanding buildings that required evaluation.

AVERAGE AND MEDIAN BUILDING EVALUATION SCORES

Year Evaluated	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Average Evaluation Scores	65.5	72.5	78.5	77.3	76.5	81
Median Evaluation Scores	65	73	80	78	78	82

This table provides the average and median building evaluation scores from 2017 to 2022.

In 2022, both the average and median scores increased. This is likely due to the 3-year evaluation cycle for high scoring buildings. It may also be due to improved compliance with relevant bylaws and awareness of RentSafeTO program requirements.



SERVICE REQUESTS

The RentSafeTO team investigates service requests (complaints) related to apartment buildings that are registered under the program. In total, the RentSafeTO team has received 47, 247 service requests between 2017 and 2022 and has closed approximately 94 per cent of them.

SERVICE REQUESTS BY CURRENT STATUS

STATUS	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Closed	6,117	6,933	7,209	5,725	7,937	10,668
Open*	0	8	20	26	2,162	443
Total	6,117	6,941	7,229	5,751	10,099	11,110

This table shows the number of service requests that have been opened and closed between 2017 and 2022.

*The number of service requests in 2022 that are still open include those that are in various stages of enforcement, including those currently in court.

Several factors may have contributed to the increase in closed service requests in 2022, including a full complement of staff, more consistent oversight and training of BEOs (regarding reviews and oversight), awareness of the RentSafeTO program, and greater compliance by building owners and operators. Additionally, education and awareness activities regarding the program have been proactively executed.

10%

increase in service requests. A total of 11,110 service requests were received in 2022 compared to the previous high of 10,099 in 2021.

94%

of service requests have been closed between 2017 and 2022.

44K

service requests have been closed by the RentSafeTO team since the start of the program in 2017.

SERVICE REQUESTS BY CATEGORY

SERVICE REQUEST *	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Property Standards	4,391	5,085	5,372	4,046	7,061	7,661
Adequate Heat	959	1,039	1,061	758	934	1,367
Waste	503	578	530	363	512	820
Zoning **	131	128	125	491	1,482	221
Long Grass and Weeds	51	48	68	22	44	507
Graffiti	54	53	45	40	45	519
Fence	24	7	14	7	8	9
Appliance (Emergency)	4	3	14	24	13	6
Total	6,117	6,941	7,229	5,751	10,099	11,110

***This table shows the number of service requests by category from 2017 to 2022.**

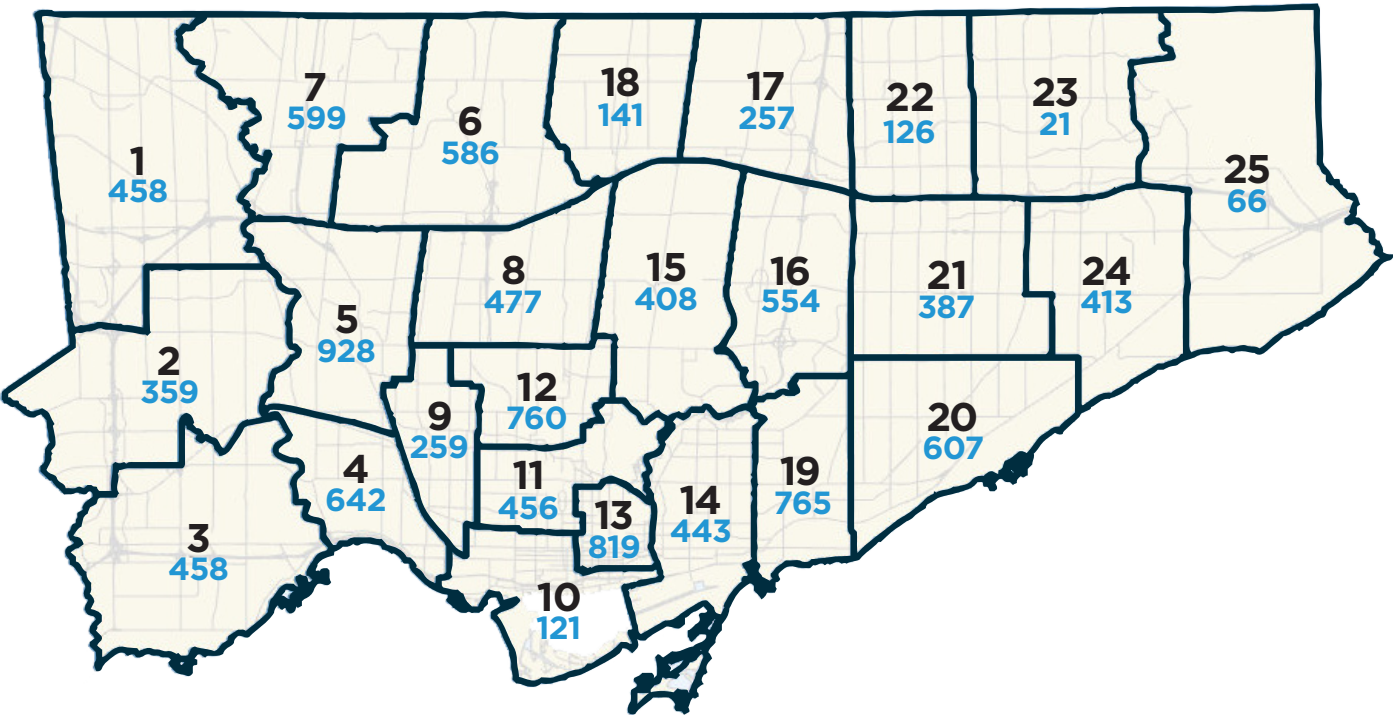
*Note that this includes all service requests received through 311, by phone, email, or online; as well as requests initiated by staff through building audits or evaluations. Non-emergency service requests were not recorded between March and July 2020 as staff resources were redirected to high priority enforcement initiatives during COVID-19 pandemic. ML&S suspended non-emergency in-suite investigations between November 27, 2020, and April 6, 2021.

** Service requests related to COVID-19, including mask regulations and compliance with enhanced public health measures were categorized under Zoning which led to a significant increase in 2021.





COMPLAINTS BY WARD



SERVICE REQUESTS BY WARD

Etobicoke North:	458	University-Rosedale:	456	Scarborough Centre:	387
Etobicoke Centre:	359	Toronto-St. Paul's:	760	Scarborough-Agincourt:	126
Etobicoke-Lakeshore:	458	Toronto Centre:	819	Scarborough North:	21
Parkdale-High Park:	642	Toronto-Danforth:	443	Scarborough-Guildwood:	413
York South-Weston:	928	Don Valley West:	408	Scarborough-Rouge Park:	66
York Centre:	586	Don Valley East:	554		
Humber River-Black Creek:	599	Don Valley North:	257		
Eglinton-Lawrence:	477	Willowdale:	141		
Davenport:	259	Beaches-East York:	765		
Spadina-Fort York:	121	Scarborough Southwest:	607	Total:	11,110



INVESTIGATION

& PERFORMANCE

When a service request is received through 311, a dedicated RentSafeTO BEO is assigned to investigate. The BEO reviews the service request and begins the investigation process.

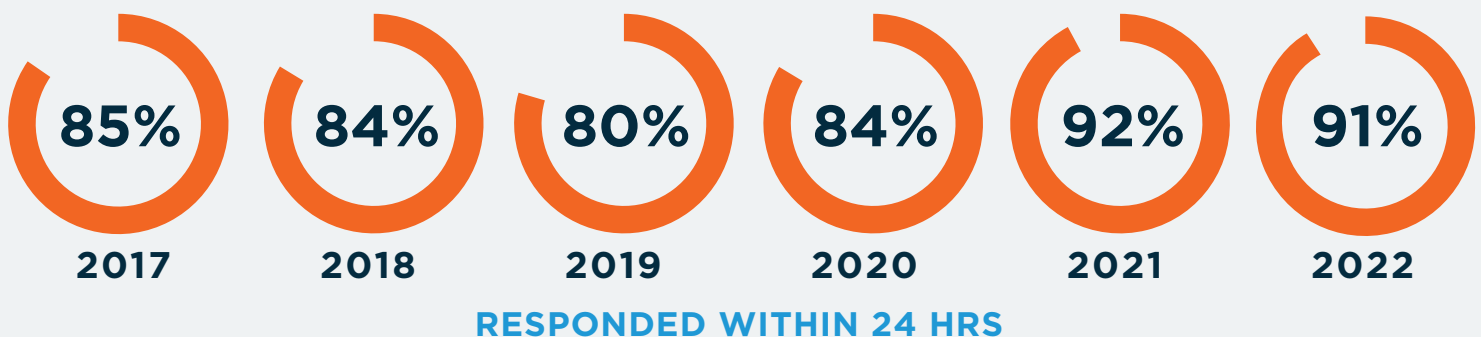
Service requests are prioritized based on the impact to health and safety. Emergency service requests which include low and or no heat in apartment buildings, discontinuation of a vital service, abandoned appliances or the removal of hate graffiti are prioritized over non-emergency requests, such as long grass and weeds, zoning or waste. The RentSafeTO team works to meet an initial response time of 24 hours for emergency service requests and five days for non-emergency service requests.

As per ML&S budgeted service levels, the RentSafeTO team aims to respond to 100 per

cent of emergency service requests within the 24-hour standard, and 70 per cent of non-emergency service requests within the five-day standard.

Once an investigation is opened for a service request, the number of days to close the investigation varies largely due to external factors such as the nature of the service request and the work required to remedy the situation. It also includes seasonal and other factors that may impact the volume of service requests as well as the ability of contractors to carry out remedial action.

PERFORMANCE OF EMERGENCY SERVICE REQUEST RESPONSES TIME



These graphs illustrate the response time for emergency service requests from 2017 to 2022.

“

I first contacted the RentSafeTO team at the height of the pandemic in 2020 when *people were illegally dumping garbage* behind our building. I was so impressed when a Bylaw Enforcement Officer came to investigate, prompting the building management to resolve this issue quickly.

A similar incident happened again in 2022 and the Officer was able to follow up and *get the situation under control* again.

I would like to thank the entire RentSafeTO for their support and for helping to *make Toronto a cleaner more livable city*.

”

- Toronto resident



Investigation times have improved since the introduction of the program. In 2022, staff were able to close investigations in fewer days, despite an increase in the volume of service requests.

ML&S is currently in the process of reviewing service standards and modernizing service delivery models to improve performance. This includes:

- Contributing to the review of bylaws (as adopted by Council in 2018, 2019 and 2020 and improving the regulations for property standards);
- New enforcement measures for Chapter 629, Property Standards, that allow Part I offences for “Failure to comply with an order” inclusive of \$1000 fine;
- Prioritizing service requests to assess the urgency and improve timeliness of resolutions; and,
- Expanding the use of compliance tools which include mediation and education to find solutions to resolve complaints.





AVERAGE AND MEDIAN TOTAL INVESTIGATION RESPONSE TIME

Average number of days by category	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Property Standards	7.7	12.7	7.6	3.4	6.3	4.8
Adequate Heat	5.3	9	8	6	6.1	1.3
Waste	2.7	10.2	7.5	4.6	2.6	13.1
Zoning	10	28.4	13.7	3.3	3.3	2.3
Long Grass and Weeds	2.4	19	4.6	2.6	2.2	19.1
Average	5.6	15.8	8.3	4	4.1	8.1

Median number of days by category	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Property Standards	35	29	24	16	13	1
Adequate Heat	4	4	4	3	3	1
Waste	21	13	11	9	9	6
Zoning	34	33	15	3	4	1
Long Grass and Weeds	21	14	9	14	12	21
Average	23	19	13	9	8	6

The tables above show the average and median investigation response time in days from 2017 to 2022.

The data illustrates that the response time for investigations has improved each year since the start of the program in 2017. In 2022, both waste and long grass and weeds investigation response times were higher due to alignment with the enhanced priority response model and increased awareness as a result of public education initiatives.



ENFORCEMENT

ACTION

The focus of the RentSafeTO program is to bring building owners and property managers into compliance, using progressive enforcement action if compliance is not achieved. This includes addressing property standards issues such as those related to heat, waste and zoning. It may involve issuing fines and charges for non-compliance and remedial action, if required.

Officers will issue a Notice of Violation and/or an Order to Comply to notify a building

owner and/or property manager that they must correct any property violations. Between 2017 and 2022, the majority (92 per cent) of Orders to Comply and Notices of Violation were issued as a result of service requests and approximately 8 per cent were issued as a result of audits. The number of Orders to Comply and Notices of Violation saw an increase in 2022 compared to the prior three years.

ORDERS TO COMPLY AND NOTICES OF VIOLATION ISSUED AS A RESULT OF SERVICE REQUESTS

Category	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Property Standards (Order)	831	875	566	348	502	996
Adequate Heat (Notice)	19	17	12	5	5	100
Waste (Notice)	107	122	82	33	61	61
Zoning (Notice)	13	17	15	11	62	27
Long Grass and Weeds (Notice)	9	21	19	5	9	7
Graffiti (Notice)	20	22	15	13	16	10
Fence (Notice)	8	1	1	-	1	-
Appliance	-	-	1	1	-	-
Total	1,007	1,075	711	416	656	1,201

This table shows the number of fines and charges issued between 2017 and 2022 for non-compliance of the bylaws.



If other enforcement mechanisms have been exhausted, ML&S has the authority to undertake remedial action. This involves obtaining a contractor authorized by the City to undertake the work necessary to remedy a building deficiency and adding the cost of this work to the property owner's property tax bill. This is a last resort to address non-compliance.

ORDERS TO COMPLY AND NOTICES OF VIOLATION ISSUED AS A RESULT OF AUDITS

Category	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Property Standards (Order)	155	122	64	17	25
Waste (Notice)	9	8	6	2	5
Graffiti (Notice)	-	3	1	-	1
Long Grass (Notice)	1	-	1	-	-
Fence (Notice)	1	2	1	-	-
Total	166	125	73	19	31

This table shows the number of Orders to Comply and Notices of Violations issued as result of audits between 2017 and 2022.

REMEDIAL ACTIONS TAKEN

Category	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Property Standards	2	0	4	1	1	0
Waste	1	0	6	0	1	0
Graffiti	1	1	0	0	0	0
Total	4	1	10	1	2	0

This table shows the number of times remedial action was taken against a building owner or operator for non-compliance.



If compliance is not achieved within the noted timeframe, the City can issue a Part 1 or Part 3 charge under the Provincial Offences Act. Part 1 offences, which are often referred to as set fines, are for minor offences and they can be issued for non-compliance under several bylaws including Chapter 354, Apartment Buildings.

A Part 3 offence is for more serious violations. It involves issuing a summons and requires the individual to appear in court. Staff can serve a summons for offences under Chapter 354, Apartment Buildings, as well as other bylaws including Chapter 629, Property Standards, in accordance with the procedures in the Provincial Offences Act.

The most common charge under the RentSafeTO program is the Failure to Comply with a Property Standards Order; staff have issued about 196 orders since the introduction of the program, and fines, which are imposed by the Courts, have ranged from \$200 to \$30,000.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a period when the courts were closed. This led to a considerable decrease in the number of charges submitted to the courts and the number of charges resolved by the courts in 2020 and 2021.¹

Charges submitted to the courts involve notices and orders that have not been compliant within required timelines or standards, while charges resolved by the courts, include those that have been completed and therefore, closed.

¹ ***Continuous education and enforcement measures have provided an understanding of acceptable timelines for building owners and property managers to meet compliance timelines.***





CHARGES SUBMITTED TO THE COURTS

Part 1/3	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Part 1 (set fine)	13	114	94	20	26	15
Part 3 (summons)	36	88	42	52	50	15
Total	49	202	136	72	76	30*

**The program has seen an increase in compliance to notices and orders, resulting in more service requests being closed, and less being taken into further action.*

CHARGES RESOLVED BY THE COURTS

Part 1/3	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Part 1 (set fine)	6	94	91	32	24	10
Part 3 (summons)	11	18	96	12	27	5
Total	17	112	187	44	51	15

The tables above show the number of fines and summons issued in response to violations or charges submitted and resolved by the courts.

Part I (tickets) are given for minor offences. Part III (summons) are available for more serious offences or repeat offences and require the recipient to appear before a Justice of the Peace, as the ticket cannot be resolved through the payment of a set fine.

NUMBER OF TIMES FINES IMPOSED

Charge Status	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Convicted	7	13	55	5	12	14
Grand Total	7	13	55	5	12	14

“

I've been a part of the RentSafeTO team since the program's inception and I believe that in this role, I make the most *impact on people's lives on a daily basis.*

From something as small as plaster and paint work, to the more extreme instances of no heat or no water within the unit, *tenants come to us for help* when they feel like their concerns or issues have not been addressed. They feel like we are their last option for their issues to be resolved.

I am very proud to be a member of this team because at the end of the day, I can go home and say that I've helped improve someone's living conditions.

”

- Bylaw Enforcement Officer, RentSafeTO

CONCLUSION

The 2022 RentSafeTO Year in Review provides an overview of the work that's been done over the last five years to ensure more than 3,500 rental buildings across Toronto are safe and well-maintained for residents.

In 2022, the public education campaign reached more than 1,000,000 residents and increased traffic to the RentSafeTO website by more than 200 per cent during the campaign. The monthly web statistics show that the number of page views continue to grow as more people look to find information about the program and to submit service requests.

During the past year the team has built partnerships with community organizations and provided resources to share and distribute to tenants. These results demonstrate that public education and stakeholder engagement has contributed to a heightened awareness of the program.

This year, the RentSafeTO team began the process of redesigning the program's evaluation tool. The updated tool has new

evaluation categories; different weighting that prioritizes issues that have a greater impact on tenants; evaluation scores that reflect violations and outstanding property standards orders; and new thresholds to determine which buildings will be audited. The updated evaluation tool has been applied to a pilot sample of RentSafeTO buildings to test its impact and inform the final design. The new tool will be phased in for building evaluations over the next two years with full implementation expected in 2025.

In 2023, the RentSafeTO team will also be implementing an enhanced service delivery model and hiring more staff which will help to improve response times for both emergency and non-urgent requests. This will also help to address high priority service requests and better identify issues within apartment buildings that have a greater impact on tenants.