

The Tenant



*Federation of Metro Tenants' Associations
- Fighting for Tenants' Rights since 1974 -*

Fall 2006

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Fall Update

By Dan McIntyre

On June 5, the Federation delivered our submission to the Parliamentary Committee on the new Residential Tenancies Act. All told, we called for 19 amendments to the new Act. We strongly opposed the continuation of Vacancy Decontrol; we opposed the elimination of the 6% interest on last month's rent; we called for a strengthening of maintenance provisions; and called for major changes to the Above Guideline Increase process. We were pleased by the new Act's improvements for tenants on

maintenance issues, AGI issues and eviction prevention.

Later this summer we became involved in the development of possible regulations to the Act. The regulations can't change the Act but they can improve it or make it worse. Despite the fact that the regulations aren't publicly debated, we submitted 22 specific recommendations to the provincial government.

Once the regulations are in place and the Landlord Tenant Board is in place, the Act will become operative. That will likely happen in early 2007.

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In June, the FMTA participated in Pride Day for the third consecutive year; on August 5, we took part in Caribana for the first time ever; and on Labour Day, we marched in the Labour Day parade.

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As always, we are working on several important cases. A large corporate landlord

is trying to stop tenants from using their own air conditioners and they have even tried to evict a tenant for using their air conditioner! Another landlord is trying to evict over 20 tenant households en masse. We are currently opposing an application by the University of Toronto that would exempt them from the City housing policies. We've also started working on a project to involve condominium tenants. There are thousands of tenants living in condominiums, and their rights are slowly being eroded.

On a triumphant note, the Brentwood Towers Tenants' Association, under the leadership of Shawn De Swart, has successfully stopped the conversion of their 900 unit complex into a condominium. This has been a six year struggle. With our support, the Tenant Association prevailed and affordable rental housing will be retained. Congratulations!



Ask the Hotline

By Howard Tessler

Question: I moved into a basement apartment 3 months ago. Just last week the neighbors next door told me that my apartment was "illegal". What does that mean? Do I have to leave? Can I stop paying rent?

Answer: Don't Panic! You do not have to leave. There are thousands of basement apartments throughout the City that provide an important supply of affordable housing. Living in an "illegal" apartment simply means that the landlord has not had the apartment checked out by the City to see if the unit complies with the minimum standards for rental housing. The minimum standards can be as simple as having proper ventilation in the bathroom. If your landlord can make the repairs easily in order to comply, life can go on as before. But if your apartment requires large renovations in order to conform to the minimum standards, your landlord may choose to apply at the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal for an eviction due to renovations requiring vacant possession. If this happens to you, call our Hotline.

The key point about living in an "illegal" apartment is that you have the right to a clean, safe apartment. If there are disrepair issues, the landlord must fix them. Even if your apartment is "illegal", you are not a criminal. Your landlord is the one breaking the law.

(Call the Hotline for an excellent brochure about Living in Secondary Suite Apartments)

If you have any questions about your rights as a tenant, please call the Tenant Hotline at 416-921-9494 Monday-Friday 8:30am – 6:00pm or email us at hotline@torontotenants.org

World Habitat Day

By Emmy Pantin

Housing and Tenants Rights groups across Canada will be holding events in conjunction with the United Nation's World Habitat Day on October 2nd. The theme of this year's World Habitat Day is "Cities: Magnets of Hope." Cities are now home to half of humankind. More than half of Canada's population is located in urban centres.

In May 2006, the United Nations committee on Economic, Social

and Cultural Rights released a report which condemns the federal governments' failure to meet its obligations to its citizens where housing is concerned. The Committee urged the federal, provincial and territorial governments to "address homelessness and inadequate housing as a national emergency."

Provinces have downloaded more and more of their social responsibilities to municipalities, which in turn

struggle to keep up with the demands of increasing populations with fewer and fewer resources. In the middle of all this are people who are struggling to find a place to live, and cannot afford the housing they do find.

In conjunction with World Habitat Day, the FMTA is co-sponsoring a panel discussion at Ryerson University on October 2nd at 1pm. For more information, check out our website at:

www.torontotenants.org

New Staff!

By Emmy Pantin and
Jed Kilbourn

The Tenant Hotline is very proud of counsellor Heather Davis, who has been accepted to Concordia University to work on her PHD. We wish her the best of luck on her academic career. We're also very happy that Heather will continue to work with the FMTA on a community arts photography project. Joining the hotline this fall is Pauline Hwang, an experienced organizer and support worker in the field of worker's rights and social justice. Welcome to the FMTA Pauline!

The Outreach & Organizing team is pleased to announce the recent addition of Kevin Sambrano. Kevin has been working for tenants for the past five years with the High Park Tenants' Association. We're thrilled to have him as a member of the team!

This summer saw the election of our new Board at the FMTA and the appointment of our new chair, Dean Fulford.

Tenant Resource Profile

By Jed Kilbourn

Tenant Duty Counsel

What is it?

The Tenant Duty Counsel Program (TDCP) is a program of the Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario (ACTO) and is funded by Legal Aid Ontario. Tenant Duty Counsel offers legal advice to tenants appearing before the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal (ORHT). Duty Counsel assists tenants on the day of their hearing and they operate on a first-come, first-serve basis. They prioritize those with eviction hearings that day.

How does it work?

Duty Counsel makes a sign-up sheet available at

the Tribunal for tenants who have a hearing scheduled that day. Tenants who want assistance can put their names down for help. Sometimes Duty Counsel is occupied giving advice to other tenants when the adjudicator calls a tenant to their hearing. If a tenant has not had a chance to speak to Duty Counsel when this happens, they can tell the adjudicator that they would like to speak to Duty Counsel before they have their hearing.

If *you* have a hearing date, contact the Tenant Hotline for information about Tenant Duty Counsel and your rights as a tenant.

We're changing our name!

The Board of the FMTA is pleased to announce that we're looking for a new name! Of course it will be our members who will name us, so we're having a contest to come up with the new name. If you've ever wanted to name an organization, now's your chance.

The winning entry will receive a \$100 gift certificate!

Please mail us your name suggestion (along with your name) before December 1st
The winner (along with our new name) will be announced in our next issue!

Just mail the new name to 27 Carlton Street, Suite 500, Toronto, ON M5B 1L2

Federation of Metro Tenants' Associations

27 Carlton St., Suite 500
 Toronto, ON M5B 1L2
Tenant Hotline
 416-921-9494
Outreach & Organizing
 416-413-9442
Office
 416-646-1772
Fax
 416-921-4177

Special Issue!

With help from the City of Toronto, we're producing a special **election** issue of *The Tenant*. Watch for it in October!

Free Workshop!

Are you tired of repairs not being done?

Want to learn how to get your landlord to do the repairs?

Come and Learn!

- ✓ How to fill out a T6 application for maintenance and rent abatement
- ✓ How to prepare for a hearing at the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal

Where: West Scarborough Community Legal Services: 2425 Eglinton Ave. East, Suite 201 (South-East corner of Kennedy and Eglinton)

When: October 18, 2006

Time: 6:30pm - 8:30pm

To reserve a spot call:
(416) 285-0502 ext. 225
Monday – Friday, 9:30am - 4:30pm

Rally!

As part of the international *Month to Eradicate Poverty* there will be a rally at Queen's Park on October 17 at 10am. Show up and show support!

For Your Information!

Look for "the State of the Union" paper on our website. It highlights the work we've done over the years and our struggle to kill the TPA.

Visit our website! www.torontotenants.org

Become a member of the FMTA!

I will pay my membership dues by:

- Cheque or money order (made out to FMTA) Cash

Name: _____
 Address: _____ Apt. #: _____
 City: _____ Postal Code: _____
 Telephone: (h) _____ (w) _____
 Fax: _____ e-mail: _____

Yes! I would like to donate \$ _____ to the FMTA!

Type of membership:

- New Member Renewal

- Individual: \$15/year
 Senior, student or unemployed: \$5/year
 Sustaining Member: \$50/year
 Homeowner (non-voting): \$25/year
 Organization (non-voting): \$25/year
 Tenants' Association: _____ units, \$10/year /unit (minimum 3 units)