

The Tenant



August 2004

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

Did the Liberal Government Get the Message ?

By Dan McIntyre

In this Issue:

• **Putting the Heat on Hydro**

• **FMTA Shows its Pride**

• **Taking Back the 2%**

• **Toronto Tenants Speak Out**

Thousands of tenants have spoken. We need real rent control, effective laws to prevent bad maintenance, and a fair system to resolve issues. The Tenant Protection Act has been a complete failure.

The Government recently completed a rather unique consultation period. This included ten Town Hall meetings around the Province. The one in downtown Toronto was packed with tenants. The Federation distributed thousands of flyers and contacted Tenant Associations to get people out. Dozens of tenants and advocates spoke clearly about how bad a deal we have been getting.

But the consultation process was flawed. First of all, the Government did very little to notify tenants. There were few ads (some had wrong dates) and no mail-outs to tenant households. The location of some of the Town Halls was poor, notably Scarborough and Mississauga. Etobicoke and North York were bypassed, although Etobicoke MPPs hosted their own sessions.

We held several Town Hall

type meetings to make up for the shortfall. We also mailed out 98,000 pamphlets to apartments throughout Toronto to give more people information and an opportunity to participate. More than 800 tenants sent us their message in favour of real rent control, better maintenance and a fairer system.

You can read our submission to the Government on our web site torontotenants.org on our "New Act" page.

According to landlords, everything is rosy for tenants and the market is healthy. We say that the market is unhealthy, overpriced and distorted.

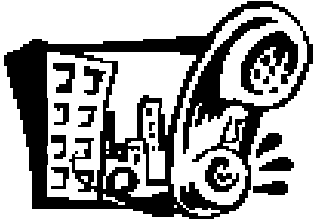
People can't afford current rents, we have long line-ups at food banks, and the waiting lists for non-profit housing is staggering. Just as important, tenants are not getting value for the rents that they pay. And more and more of our incomes are going to the landlord.

So now the Government has choices to make. Do they favour the self-interest of landlords who have reaped the benefits of a bad law? Or do they actually do what a Government should do? Support the tenants of Ontario with a law that ensures fairness, stops exploitation and recognizes the unfair burden that tenants carry.

The Government is still on track to bring in new legislation in the Fall. They have an opportunity to do the right thing for a large constituency of Ontario voters and to keep or exceed their election promise to tenants.

We have much work to do. We must still encourage every MPP to support tenants. We must oppose the loud landlord lobby (funded by our rent money) from misdirecting the Government.

We must be a part of the process every step of the way, and working together will always be our best chance.



This Issue's Hotline Question

By Howard Tessler

Q. A friend of mine mentioned that the government was going to freeze rent increases. Is this correct?

A. On April 20th 2004, the McGuinty government announced that the Annual Guideline Rent Increase would suspend the fixed 2% of the increase for the year 2005. They also made clear that this "suspension" would be only for 2005.

Technically, the Annual Guideline Rent Increase is made up of two parts: a fixed 2%; plus a percentage amount that is based on an inflation rate for operating costs that is calculated over a three year average (see Sec.129.2 of the TPA). That is why the Guideline Increase may vary from year to year but is always more than 2%.

What your friend heard and told you is correct in one way; part of next year's increase will be "eliminated," and part will not. We will have to pay an increase in 2005 but it will not contain that fixed 2% that we have had to pay in the past. The amount of the Annual Guideline Rent Increase is announced by the Provincial Government in August, so we will know the actual amount of the 2005 increase shortly after this newsletter comes out.

So like death and taxes, you can rest assured that rent increases will continue in 2005.

If you have any questions about renewing your lease or any other questions about your legal rights as a tenant, please feel free to call the Tenant Hotline at 416-921-9494 Mon.-Fri. 8:30am – 6:00pm or email us at hotline@torontotenants.org

Tenants' Tempers Flare with Hydro

By Emmy Pantin

Some Queen St. E. tenants had a shock when they received a hydro bill recently. The shock was not a result of the high costs of deregulated hydro. The shock was that most of the tenants in the Queen E. building had been paying hydro through their rent up until that point. When they moved into the building, they had tenancy agreements with their landlord, which included hydro as part of their rent.

It seems that their landlord decided that he was no longer interested in paying for hydro. He then asked the hydro company to turn the billing over to the individual units and supplied the tenants' names and unit

numbers. And hydro evidently agreed. After the deal between hydro and the landlord was done, the tenants then received notice from their landlord suggesting that it was hydro that had requested the change, and that they were now responsible for paying hydro.

The tenants of the Scarborough building say they feel like they're being attacked on two fronts: their landlord broke their tenancy agreement without their permission, and Hydro entered into a contract with the Tenants' without their consent or knowledge.

When asked if the Queen St. E. tenants would like a rent reduction

for a loss of service, most of them adamantly say NO! They want the service returned to them, and their tenancy agreement honoured. These tenants are fighting back. They are working on strategies to get the hydro company to behave responsibly and to stop this practice. The tenants also insist that the landlord should honour their tenancy agreements. The tenants have not ruled out filing an application to the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal, or possibly issuing a news release. Hopefully, the hydro company and the landlord can be persuaded to behave in a fair and just manner. They are at the beginning stages of a very important battle and they won't back down.



Your Federation Out and About

By Gail Nyberg

At a planning session this winter, the Board of Directors of the Federation of Metro Tenants' Associations decided that in order to promote the activities of the FMTA, we should do outreach in new and different places. On June 27th the FMTA was part of Pride Toronto. We had a table on Wellesley Street and Members of the Board of Directors and staff distributed over 10,000 business cards and lifesavers to Pride Day participants. One and all had a great time!

Keep an eye out for the FMTA at more diverse events in the future. You can look for us at the Grange Festival on August 13th. We will have an information booth and we will be giving out materials on tenant issues. We are also very excited about our upcoming participation in the Labour Day Parade on September 6, 2004. If you are interested in walking with the FMTA in the parade, please call the Tenant Hotline at 416-921-9494 for details. Stay tuned for future events!



Board Members Leah Morigan and Kevin Milburn with staffer Gail Nyberg at the Pride Table June 27th, 2004

Did the FMTA Get the Message ?

By Gail Nyberg

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We're on the Web!
www.torontotenants.org

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hotline@torontotenants.org

Earlier in this newsletter my colleague Dan McIntyre asks the question "Did the Liberals get the Message?" He refers to the 98,000 pamphlets mailed out to tenants across Toronto, asking tenants across the city if they wanted real rent control. Let me tell you that the FMTA got the message.

Thousands of tenants responded to the FMTA survey and the Provincial survey and the message is clear – tenants want real rent control, better maintenance and a fairer system to resolve problems between landlords and tenants.

We also heard many different stories from tenants in their replies to our pamphlet. We heard from one senior tenant on Bathurst Street. She forwarded her original lease agreement dated April 9th, 1974 stating that her rent would be \$211.00. The tenant also forwarded her most recent notice of rent increase showing the rent on the same unit going at \$1,121.95. Do you think this tenants' income has grown 500% in the last 30 years – I don't!

We have heard from tenants who have lived in the same units for 20, 25, and sometimes 30 years that have not had any repairs or upgrades, and yet their rents have soared over the years!

I wish to thank all of the tenants that responded to the FMTA survey and I wish to assure them that we did get your message. We will continue to deliver that message to the government. **We are also forwarding a complimentary copy of our newsletter to those tenants who supplied us with their full address. Thank you again!**

On the lighter side – we did get a funny reply that went something like this:

To whom it May Concern, I am a rental agent for a company and I am writing to request a "Book of Rules and Regulations for Tenants and Landlords." I will pay. I have worked for this company since 1977 and have had other books on the subject but I want a more up to date book.

Maybe this is why the landlords don't seem to know what they are talking about sometimes...

Yes, I want to be part of the Tenants' Movement!

Please send me my membership card and information about the services that I receive a member.

<p>I will pay my membership dues by:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Cheque or money order (made out to FMTA)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Cash</p> <p>Please Print: Name: _____ Address: _____ Apt. #: _____ City: _____ Postal Code: _____ Telephone #: (h) _____ (w) _____ Fax: _____ e-mail: _____</p> <p>Yes! I would like to donate \$ _____ to the FMTA!</p>	<p>I am joining as the following type of member:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> New Member <input type="checkbox"/> Renewal</p> <hr/> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Individual: \$15/year <input type="checkbox"/> Senior, student or unemployed: \$5/year <input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining Member: \$50/year <input type="checkbox"/> Homeowner (non-voting): \$25/year <input type="checkbox"/> Organization (non-voting): \$25/year <input type="checkbox"/> Tenants' Association: _____ units, \$10 per year per unit (minimum 3 units)</p>
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Send to: Federation of Metro Tenants' Associations, 27 Carlton St., Suite 500, Toronto ON, M5B 1L2