



Honourable Councillors  
London City Council

As you may be aware, London ACORN has been urging the city to implement a program that seeks greater landlord accountability since its inception in 2020. ACORN Canada is a national, membership-based organization of low- and moderate-income people. ACORN has more than 160,000 members in 24+ neighbourhood chapters across the country.

London ACORN started with the landlord licensing campaign and were encouraged to see a motion by councillors to expand landlord licensing bylaw which was subsequently rejected by the city staff in 2021. London ACORN continued to push for a mechanism to ensure that landlords are held accountable which led the city to direct the staff to report back on an evaluation of a RentSafe London by-law enforcement program, modelled after the RentSafeTO program.

The staff came back with a report last week in which they recommended against a London RentSafe program. This means essentially taking no reformative action during a time of unprecedented crisis.

London ACORN is deeply concerned with the recent report presented by the city staff and would like to present before the council the issues that we feel need urgent attention and action.

It has taken more than a year for the city to produce this report, yet it doesn't do any thorough investigation of the issue in question. The most glaring omission in the staff report presented last week is the complete lack of rationale against implementing a Rentsafe program in London.

- The Rentsafe Toronto program has played an important role in ensuring healthy homes for tenants struggling in substandard housing. While Toronto ACORN continues to push for further improvements in the program such as colour coded signs and more, it has restored justice and helped to protect the rights of countless Torontonians by measurably improving the quality of rental housing in Toronto.
- As per the latest annual report of the RentSafe TO program, in 2021, the RentSafeTO team completed 1,149 building evaluations and received 10,099 service requests.
- In 2021, the RentSafeTO team completed 1,149 building evaluations and the average building evaluation score was 77.6 per cent. The number of building evaluations has gone down from 3,500 to an average of 1,500 in the last three years.
- The London City Staff have repeatedly raised concerns over the costs that a RentSafe program will entail and that there is low Return on Investment if this program was implemented. Moreover, the recent report talks about hiring an additional 37 inspectors. These claims are unfounded, and the number of inspectors required totally exaggerated. The Toronto program applies to all apartment buildings with three or more storeys and 10 or more units. All apartment buildings registered under the RentSafeTO program are subject to a building evaluation but that needs to happen at least once every three years. Only if the building does not pass the evaluation are they subject to an audit. The RentSafe TO had 27 officers and recently added a few more. However, this is when there are almost 500,000 apartment units in the city. In contrast, London has 47,000 units, nearly 1/10<sup>th</sup> of

Toronto. Hence, the claim that we need more than 37 officers and an equal number of Fire Prevention officers in London is exaggerated and needs to be reassessed.

- While there will always be preliminary costs associated with building and implementing a new program, RentSafe is rare in that it is also a program that sustains its own funding by charging a nominal per unit fee to landlords involved in the program. This fee covers the cost of staffing, and of the proactive inspections by housing standards enforcement which are key to this program's effectiveness. As per the RentSafe TO, the landlords pay \$11.24 per rental unit as a registration fee, and \$1,917 for an annual audit to ensure that basic building maintenance standards are met. Toronto has shown us unequivocally that this program is financially viable.
- Essentially Rentsafe allows the city an effective way to track negligent and abusive landlords and hold them to account for failing to uphold their responsibilities. This would be an invaluable tool for a thriving healthy city even during the best of times, but especially during these times of unprecedented hardships.
- It makes complete economic sense to implement such a program as it will ensure so many Londoners access dignified living and contribute to growing the economy.

As you know, London is in a housing crisis. This crisis is not unique to London, although in some ways the problem is exacerbated in London more so than it is in other cities for some very specific reasons. Admittedly, this is a complex problem that cannot be solved completely at a municipal level, however there are tools available to us at the municipal level that can be effective at turning the tide here in London. The rent prices are skyrocketing leaving tenants stuck in precarious housing. The recent inflation has only exacerbated the issues low- and moderate- income people were facing.

We are seeing a rapid increase in homelessness across this city. Seniors and the disabled and other vulnerable communities are increasing getting impacted. Ensuring a healthy home to all tenants will go a long way in preventing another crisis.

It is for these reasons that we strongly believe that implementing a Rentsafe program in London isn't just a good idea, it's an essential measure that the city needs to implement. We strongly urge you to stand with tens of thousands of tenants and support the implementation of Rentsafe program in this city.

Thank you for your diligence in giving this matter the due consideration it deserves. ACORN will continue to fight for the rights of low- and moderate-income people in this city.

Yours sincerely,

London ACORN