

To: City Council
Re: Report SF-23-28 Residential Rental Housing Licensing Program
Date: September 25, 2023

I am not a landlord in Oshawa. Nor am I a tenant in Oshawa. I am a single family home owner in Oshawa. And I am against any expansion of the Residential Rental Housing Licensing Program.

Until last year I was a landlord of a registered 2-unit house on Colborne St in downtown Oshawa for 5 years. I offered housing to people who could not afford to own a house. Single, single on ODSP, couple, couple on ODSP. And the deal was the same when I was a landlord as when I was a tenant 30 years ago. As a tenant I paid my rent monthly, respected the building, and respected my neighbours. In return, the landlord gave me use of an apartment. And I had the same arrangement with tenants when I was a landlord. And with the exception of a couple who did not respect the building or their neighbours, and a single lady who left her cat in a closet when she vacated overnight since her new landlord would not allow it, it worked out well. Rents went up by annual allowed increases while my expenses went up more, but the only thing this meant is that I had less each year for the repairs budget. An expanded RRHL licensing would not have changed that.

I might have been a slum lord one year when I had a furnace fan requiring repair at the same time as a large tree hanging over the house had to be removed. This meant that a boarded up broken window could not be replaced for a year, until additional repair funds were saved up. A City fine under an expanded RRHL licensing would not have changed that.

At one time I had a hoarding tenant. And to help with their rent, they brought in two friends. And being so benevolent, they also brought in two additional couch surfing friends. I felt there was a fire safety issue created by the tenant and my call to the City explained that bylaw could come by to issue a ticket but that the ticket would be to the owner. As the tenant refused entry to me to repair damaged doors/walls/cupboards I was forced to go to LTB and was lucky enough to receive, 6 months after application, an eviction ruling in favour of the landlord. Either a 30-day deadline or a City fine under an expanded RRHL licensing would not have assisted in speeding up this process in my case.

In the 5 years that I owned the registered rental, I never received a call from the City or Fire requesting an inspection. Rather than an expanded RRHL, it would make more sense to change the 2-unit registration bylaw to open it up to inspection say every 4 or 5 years.

The City already has difficulty enforcing its existing 2-unit registration bylaw. A simple search online of real estate listings in Oshawa will show addresses which are advertising 2nd suites, yet few are on the City's log of 2-unit registrations. One listed on Ormond Drive last year appeared to have been in the existing RRHL area, advertised a separate entrance with finished basement apartment and yet is not showing on the list of registered 2-unit dwellings! Other realtor listings clearly identify 3rd unit basement suite potential, and so in my opinion inspections of non-compliant 2-unit registrations should not be limited to complaint responses if the City wants to make rentals safer. An expanded RRHL would not make underground landlords become compliant.

The City already has property standards and fire safety rules in place and my understanding is the City does not enforce these standards/rules without a complaint. Expanding the RRHL is like spraying air freshener in the kitchen instead of throwing out the trash. Please, enforce your existing bylaws instead of spraying air freshener!

Multi res tenants are already being disadvantaged by a higher mill rate than single family homes in Oshawa. People who are less well off financially are the tenants whereas those with the means are the single family homeowners. I do not agree with the City continuing to hurt the people in Oshawa who are less well off. Adding additional financial burden to a tenant makes it harder to help anyone off the streets of Oshawa, in my opinion.

I understand that the proposed expanded RRHL was born from the Centre Street tragedy not many years ago. The hoarding tenant I mentioned earlier had a habit of removing the smoke detector, which contributed to the fire safety issue that took 6 months through LTB. A fine issued by bylaw enforcement to the landlord would not have reduced the risk. And as happened when I continued to replace the smoke detector, a replacement by bylaw enforcement officers (likely at a cost to the landlord) would have been futile due to the habitual disconnect by the tenant. LTB already exists to deal with this type of problem and an expanded RRHL would not assist. Respectfully, I don't believe an expanded RRHL could have prevented the Centre Street tragedy.

I will likely become a landlord again one day when the market improves. However, the additional redtape of a RRHL would encourage me to look to a municipality where there is none.

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Michael Abramczuk

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