

Landlord's Self-Help Centre

A community legal clinic funded by Legal Aid Ontario

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Sent by email:

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May 30, 2018

Ms. Margaret Josipovic
Project Expeditor
City of St. Catharines
PO Box 3012, 50 Church St.
St. Catharines, Ontario
L2R 7C2

Re: Consultation - Rental Housing Licensing By-law

Landlord's Self-Help Centre (LSHC) is a specialty community legal clinic funded by Legal Aid Ontario to support small landlords across the province through the delivery of legal services, educational material and initiatives, and community development outreach. We also engage in law reform activities aimed at improving the operating environment for our small landlord client constituency. We offer the following comments with respect to the proposed licensing by-law for St. Catharines landlords of four and fewer rental units.

As curious as the decision is to become a residential landlord in the current regulatory environment, where the playing field is anything but level and the risks are high, many opt to rent. For many, leveraging their property investment by renting a portion of it to generate the revenue needed to supplement the cost of home ownership is the strategy used to purchase their piece of the pie. This continues to happen despite provincial policies which govern residential tenancies across Ontario being heavily weighted in favour of tenants while landlords, large and small, must navigate an operating environment where a tenant can game the legal system and live rent-free for six months or more.

The small landlords who rent their basement, ancillary structure, a secondary unit, an apartment above a store, a flat, condominium unit, a duplex or triplex comprise the secondary rental housing market. The secondary rental market is vital to Ontario's rental housing landscape as these housing providers bridge the gap in affordable housing that was created by the lack of purpose built rental

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housing stock. The Province acknowledged the need for additional rental housing stock with the *Strong Communities through Affordable Housing Act, 2011* which promotes the creation of secondary rental units in municipalities province-wide through amendments to official plan policies and the *Planning Act*.

We believe that local municipalities should be developing retention strategies aimed at protecting the supply of existing rental units, promoting the creation of new units, and staving off the loss of units to the less onerous and financially appealing short term rental market such as Airbnb rather than implementing a licensing regime which will increase the regulatory and financial burden for the small landlord housing provider.

Municipal by-laws enacted to protect the health and safety of neighbourhoods and ensure property owners comply with zoning and the standards established for health, housing, safety and maintenance serve as an excellent enforcement mechanism and are a preferred landlord licensing and foster an operating environment which does not place additional financial or regulatory pressure on small landlords.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Landlord's Self-Help Centre

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Susan Wankiewicz". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a small flourish at the end.

Susan Wankiewicz
Clinic Director