

by Jane Herman

Why You Should Vote “No” to the Tenant Tax



Attention all tenants: The City of London has recently proposed to levy a new “licensing” fee per rental unit. The City intends to charge this fee to landlords who will in turn pass it on to tenants.

In theory, this fee is supposed to reflect the cost of enforcing licensing administration and other fees, but the fee proposed by the City is actually based on the number of rental units in a property.

The City initially claimed that the funds raised from the new tax would assist in cracking down on student behaviours, but changed their approach when they found out it would violate the Human Rights Code. Then they claimed it was needed to ensure there would be no violations of parking, garbage and noise by-laws...until they were told that if they just enforced the by-laws they already have, the new tax would not be needed! Now they are saying that it is needed to control sub-standard housing. (The current Property Standards by-law, if enforced, would do just that). Currently, there is appropriate legislation, sufficient revenue and staff in place to address these issues. It's clear that this proposed tax is just a moving target that won't help to solve noise, garbage, parking and property standards problems.

London tenants already pay property taxes in their rent at twice the rate that private homeowners do. Given that there are in excess of 50,000 rental units in London, a monthly tax of even \$2 per unit would yield a new \$1.2 million annually in revenue for the City. This amount could easily be increased annually, as the council seeks to shift tax liability from homeowners to renters. Ultimately these increased costs would be passed on to tenants.

So far there have been two public meetings held at City Hall because large numbers of tenants have showed up to express their opposition to the new tax. It's important that the voice of tenants who will be most directly impacted by this new tax continue to be heard. Please fight this tax with your voice and your pen: telephone, email or write to your local councilor and tell them to enforce the existing by-laws instead of imposing a new tax on tenants. The complete list of London City Councilors can be found at:

http://www.london.ca/d.aspx?s=/City_Council/default.htm

Post petitions opposing the tax in your building, collect signatures and deliver them to your councilor. Keep up the pressure and be ready to go on short notice to Council Chambers when a hearing is called.