



Friday, May 29, 2020

The Executive Committee
University of Toronto Students' Union
12 Hart House Circle
Toronto, ON | M5S 3J9
executives@utsu.ca

RE: Fixed-Term Residential Tenancies During COVID-19

Dear Premier Ford and Minister Clark,

As the Executive Committee of the University of Toronto Students' Union (UTSU), representing over 38,000 full-time undergraduate students at the University of Toronto - St. George campus, we are writing to you today to ask that more leniency and leeway be given to Ontario tenants seeking to end their fixed-term residential leases early. COVID-19 has presented unique circumstances that have disrupted the housing situations for many Ontarians, including post-secondary students.

As you likely know, Toronto has a high proportion of renters: roughly 47% of Toronto residents were renters in 2016.¹ Many of these renters are post-secondary students. The UTSU's 2019 Tenant Survey found that 91.1% of respondents had lived or rented in the City of Toronto.² Finding secure housing in Toronto is essential for many students attending school at U of T, along with Ryerson University, OCAD-U, George Brown College, York University, and numerous other institutions in Toronto.

The COVID-19 pandemic has cast great uncertainty onto students' housing situations. Many students, both international and domestic, had signed fixed-term leases but were forced to move out of the city as post-secondary campuses closed and classes were moved online. Under normal circumstances, fixed-term tenancies cannot be ended early without the consent of the landlord, but tenants do have the option of subletting or assigning another person to the tenancy. However, COVID-19 has made it extremely difficult for tenants to find subletters or assignees, putting many students in a situation where they have to pay rent for a unit they cannot reside in. With 50% of students surveyed by Statistics Canada saying they are "very" or "extremely" concerned about being unable to pay for accommodations this fall, this could exacerbate an already precarious financial situation for students.³

The housing situation caused by COVID-19 demands flexibility and understanding for students struggling to make ends meet. For this reason, the UTSU urges the Government of Ontario to allow for tenants to give 30 days notice to end their fixed-term tenancies earlier than the termination date for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic, regardless of circumstances.

¹ Statistics Canada. 2017. *Toronto, City [Census subdivision], Ontario and Ontario [Province] (table). Census Profile. 2016 Census.* Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2016001. Ottawa. Released November 29, 2017.

<https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E> (accessed May 13, 2020).

² University of Toronto Students' Union. "UTSU Tenant Survey." Google Form. Created June 2019.

³ Statistics Canada. 2020. *Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on postsecondary students. The Daily.* Ottawa. Released May 12, 2020. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/200512/dq200512a-eng.htm> (accessed May 14, 2020).



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
STUDENTS' UNION

Yours,

The UTSU Executive | executives@utsu.ca | 416-978-4911

CC:

Parm Gill, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing (Housing)

Suze Morrison, MPP & Critic for Tenant Rights (New Democratic Party)

Sara Singh, MPP & Critic for Housing (New Democratic Party)

Stephen Blais, MPP & Critic for Municipal Affairs and Housing (Liberal Party)

Priyan De Silva, Critic for Municipal Affairs and Housing (Green Party)