



Minister Steve Clark  
Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing  
17th Floor, 777 Bay St.  
Toronto, ON M5G 2E5

July 9, 2021

Re: Renters deserve protection against unsafe heat in their homes

Dear Honourable Steve Clark,

Tenants deserve to have safe and comfortable homes where their right to reasonable enjoyment of their tenancy is protected. That is why we are calling on the Ford Government to take legislative action to ensure tenants can stay safe and comfortable in their homes during the hottest months of the year.

In Ontario, heating is considered a vital service and landlords are mandated to maintain a minimum temperature of 20 degrees Celsius in every unit from the 1st of September until the 15th of June. Right now, the *Residential Tenancies Act* does not put any limits on the maximum temperature allowed within residential units, and because of this gap tenants are subjected to inside temperatures that clearly exceed what is considered comfortable or even safe in the hotter months of the year. Additionally, some tenants are being harassed by their landlord or threatened with eviction for using window air conditioning units to stay safe and comfortable.

As the threat of climate change escalates, the need to establish fair protections from hot temperatures for renters is paramount. The evidence is clear that climate change is increasing the frequency, intensity, and duration of heat waves. Last month's devastating and shocking heat wave in British Columbia contributed to 777 deaths, and the 2018 heat wave in Quebec led to 79 deaths. Heat kills. The people most susceptible to dying in extreme heat waves are the elderly, people with underlying health conditions, mental illness or addiction who live alone in non-airconditioned apartments.

That is why we are calling for the government to move forward with:

- Working with public health units to establish a provincial maximum temperature to ensure rental units are safe, and a tenants' right to a reasonable enjoyment of their unit is maintained. Many jurisdictions have ruled that 26 degrees is a fair maximum temperature standard, including Toronto, Mississauga and Ajax.
- Enshrining in the Residential Tenancies Act a tenants' right to safely use window air conditioning units in accordance with all bylaws.
- Protection for tenants against landlord harassment, including repeated threats to evict tenants for safely using window air conditioning units in accordance with all bylaws.
- Upgrading Ontario's building code and investing in a green jobs retrofit program to make housing more green and energy-efficient, including community housing and purpose-built rental buildings, while not burdening tenants with unfair rent hikes.

- Partnering with municipalities to grow urban forests to reduce the heat island effect and lower temperatures in towns and cities.

Practical short-term and long-term solutions are needed now. It is our hope this letter serves to help your ministry better support the health and safety of all residents of Ontario. I am available for a meeting to discuss this important issue in greater detail.

We look forward to hearing your response to this matter.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Jessica Bell in black ink.

Jessica Bell  
MPP, University–Rosedale  
Official Opposition Critic, Housing, Tenant Rights, and Urban Planning

Handwritten signature of Suze Morrison in black ink.

Suze Morrison  
MPP, Toronto-Centre  
Official Opposition Critic,