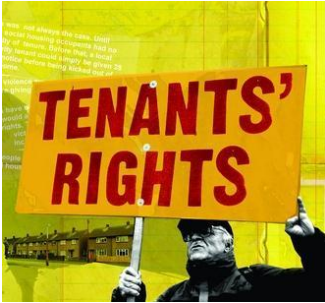




We need a strong voice for tenants at Queen's Park



In Oxford County, 24% of dwellings are rentals. The long wait list for social housing - over 1,200 households and counting - are testament to the critical lack of affordable housing. Over the past five years, the cost of rent has increased by 7%. The average rent in Woodstock is \$881, the third-highest in western Ontario. This spring, Woodstock had a critically low vacancy rate of 1.8%. A balanced acceptable rate for a community is 3%.

In Oxford County, utility costs are a significant concern, including those in social housing. For those living in non-social housing units, utility costs can force tenants into arrears and eventually eviction. Relief for low income tenants in this area and making units more energy-efficient would lead to more stable housing.

The provincial *Residential Tenancies Act* allows private landlords in Ontario to set rents at whatever amount they want for vacant rental units and all units in buildings built after November 1, 1991. It's a two-tiered system that's not fair for tenants, and a recipe for sky-high rents. Additionally, for residences that offer room and board rates, the board portion of cost is not controlled. This means that the landlord can raise the board portion by any amount as long as proper notice is given.

The provincial government should treat social housing providers fairly when paying social assistance benefits. Presently, the Province provides a higher shelter allowance for social assistance recipients living in private market housing than in social housing. Oxford County considers this lost rental income. Social housing tenants are paying the price. It's time to fix the rules.

Ask your candidates:

- Will your party introduce rent controls for vacant units and rentals built after November 1, 1991?
- Will your party fix the social assistance rules to ensure that social housing providers are treated the same as private market landlords?
- How will your party ensure that social housing tenants are receiving the appropriate supports?

Resources:

Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario: www.acto.ca

Elgin-Oxford Legal Clinic: www.eolc.ca

