

Submission to the Standing Committee on Social Policy
Reviewing Bill 184
**Protecting Tenants and Strengthening Community Housing Act,
2020**

Submitted by

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It is unclear to tenants why the Conservative Government of Ontario has decided to introduce Bill 184 in the Legislature during the COVID 19 Pandemic. Tenants are experiencing an exceedingly high level of stress between trying to determine how to pay their rent in a period of record unemployment as well as living in apartment buildings, a congregate-living situation unrecognized by Public Health.

An ordinary and reasonable person would strongly believe that the tabling of Bill 184 would have been the appropriate moment for the Government to present a legislative framework to address the rent arrears mounting the first of each month for a large number of Ontario tenants that have lost their employment during the Pandemic. Instead, the Government has deliberately chosen to remain silent and allow these most vulnerable tenants to remain under the current regime which leaves eviction as the only solution to rent arrears. This stance of the Government is unfathomable when the Premier keeps reminding the citizens "we have the brightest minds in the world". Where are these "brightest minds" to address an overwhelming issue that affects one of the most vulnerable populations in Ontario; tenants about to lose their shelter?

At second reading, the Minister of Housing stated that:

Finally, we're proposing to update the law so landlords would not be required to give tenants a printed pamphlet outlining their rights and responsibilities. This information is clearly described in the standard lease that most landlords in the province are required to use. The guide to the standard lease is available in 23 different languages; the pamphlet is not. So we're proposing to make a change that would allow us to give landlords a grace period if they inadvertently used an older version of the lease after it was updated.

What the Minister fails to understand is that for many tenants their sole contact with the residential tenancy legislative regime occurs when they sign a lease with the property owner/manager and receive the pamphlet. The printed pamphlet, outlining the rights and responsibilities of the tenant, is the only document the vast majority of tenants have to help them understand the regime. Removing the pamphlet, leaves the tenants in the dark.

Do not take away this small, yet vital, tool in assisting tenants, who in many ways have great difficulty in navigating the complexity of finding and maintaining housing. Continue to offer them this small beacon, a simple pamphlet, to guide their way in protecting their rights and knowing their responsibilities as a tenant.