

# The Tenant



January 2003

**Federation of Metro Tenants' Associations  
- Fighting for Tenants' Rights since 1974 -**

## Is That All There Is?

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By Dan McIntyre

Optimistic tenants were hopeful that the words of the Divisional Court last summer and the ensuing investigation by the Ombudsman would lead to meaningful change and hopefully end the onslaught of Above Guideline Rent Increases. Pessimists took the position that it was not going to happen.

Right now, it looks like the pessimists are right. On December 31, the Government put out a news release announcing changes to end unfair rent increases for tenants. Alas, it turned out to be a virtually meaningless change to the regulations.

*If a landlord applies*

*(in the future) for an above guideline rent increases based on utilities, and if that landlord received a rebate (the promised hydro rebate), then that rebate must be taken into account. Golly!*

Then we learned that Chris Hodgson was resigning as Minister. Maybe a new Minister would be mandated to make changes. Instead, Helen Johns was appointed interim Minister. She is Minister of Agriculture and presumably will be looking after her new responsibilities in her spare time.

A letter we just received from Associate Minister Tina Molinari advises that their review is still in progress.

Meanwhile, Toronto Tribunal offices continue to do a brisk business as landlords continue to apply for even more increases.

Since September (just after the Court decision and about the time the Ombudsman started an investigation), there have been 120 new applications affecting over 11,000 Toronto households.

Both opposition parties have come out with their platforms for tenants. We encourage all tenants to closely review these platforms.

Many pundits predict a Spring election. We expect tenants to vote in record numbers and to cast informed ballots.



# Tenant College 2003

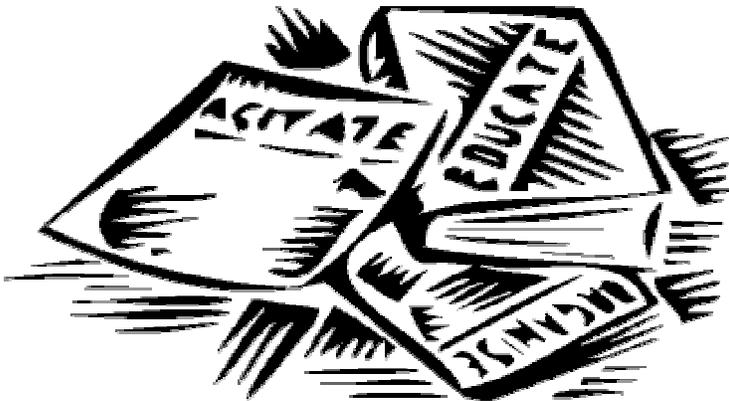
**Saturday February 22**

**OISE at 252 Bloor St. W.**

3 workshops for Tenants and Tenants Associations will be offered between 1 p.m. and 4:30 p.m.

- The Basics: What do the recent changes to the Tenant Protection Act mean for Tenants?
- Energizing the Tenant Community: With two elections on the horizon, provincial and municipal, it's time for tenants to get active!
- Democratic Process: It's a mess, but it's worth cleaning up and being a part of.

For more information to register, Call the FMTA Outreach Team at 416-413-9442  
Registration is limited.



## Volunteer Profile

By Michelle Mulgrave

Tenant Associations always need the support of their members. Without tenant support many associations do not survive tough times.

Many tenants support the FMTA and one of our supporters is Savannah Nesha. I first met Savannah when I delivered flyers to her unit for an upcoming tenant

meeting. Savannah's building was facing an above the guideline increase and like many tenants she was worried about what would happen.

Since our first meeting, Savannah has attended all of FMTA's events. Savannah is always willing to help in any way possible. She has even provided us with treats. Thank

you Savannah for your continued support and smiling face.

Support the tenant association in your building. We are only as strong as our weakest link. If you would like to form a tenant association in your building the Outreach and Organizing Team can help you. Call us at 416-413-9442.

## Hotline Question of the Month

By Howard Tessler

Since the end of November 2002 many Toronto tenants have received letters from the City of Toronto informing them of an automatic rent reduction they can take starting January 1<sup>st</sup> 2003. This month we will address some of the automatic rent reduction questions tenants have been asking.

**Q.** My neighbor in the building next to us received a letter telling them about a rent reduction. How come I haven't received one?

**A.** The letters were sent out to tenants in buildings that were assessed at a lower value and have been issued a reduction in property taxes above a certain percentage (2.49%). The fact that your neighbor's building received a tax reduction does not mean that you will get one as well.

**Q.** I rent a condo. Am I still eligible for the tax reduction?

**A.** Yes. The provincial legislation states that only multi-unit residential buildings must be sent out notices of automatic rent reductions. However, this year the City of Toronto decided to send out notices to all tenants whose property received a tax reduction.

*If you have any questions about your legal rights as a tenant, call the Tenant Hotline at 416-921-9494 Mon.-Fri. 8:30am – 6:00pm or email us at [hotline@torontotenants.org](mailto:hotline@torontotenants.org)*

## **FMTA Announces New Hotline Co-ordinator**

Vivienne Loponen, Chairperson of the Federation of Metro Tenants' Associations announced the appointment of Gail Nyberg to the FMTA staff in January.

"We are delighted to have someone of Gail's caliber working for the tenants of Toronto," said Ms. Loponen, "This is such an important time for tenants and we now have a great team in place".

Gail Nyberg is the former Chair of the Toronto District School Board and has a long history of community involvement. Most recently she has been a Canada Census Commissioner and a communications consultant.

"Tenants have got a raw deal in Toronto and I was looking to get involved in a community cause. During my political career, I often attended tenants meetings and I wanted to help the Federation in

achieving their goals of justice and fairness to tenants" said Nyberg.

Dan McIntyre, Outreach and Organizing Co-ordinator for the FMTA stated "Having Gail working for tenants is great for tenants and she will be a big help to us all".

The Hotline service of the FMTA (416-921-9494) is a front line service available to all Toronto tenants who have questions about their rights, about maintenance, about rent increases, and about protecting their housing. It is the first place to call for tenants being threatened with eviction or any other problem. The service is funded by the City of Toronto.

"The Tenant Hotline is an important part of Toronto life and we want to make it better and better" Nyberg said.

## **Landlords Say the Darndest Things!**

By Howard Tessler

Letters were sent from the City of Toronto informing some tenants that the taxes on their dwellings had been reduced starting January 1<sup>st</sup> 2003 by a certain percentage. When tenants have taken off the automatic rent reduction these are some of the things they have been told:

- "The City is not responsible for deciding what rent is correct."
- "This is Canada. I can do whatever I want."
- "It's valid if you were paying the real rent."
- "I'm appealing this and I'll win."
- "I won't raise the rent this year, if you don't take the reduction."
- "Throw the letter in the garbage."
- "It's only valid for one month."
- "My taxes are too high."
- "Move out."
- "You should respect me. I'm the landlord."
- "This is a hypothetical amount."
- "It didn't go through yet."
- "You can get it only when you renew."

Imagine what they say when you ask them to fix something!

## **Federation Board for 2003**

The biggest volunteer commitment is to be a member of the Board of the Federation of Metro Tenants Associations.

At our Annual General Meeting, a full Board of 15 dedicated tenant volunteers was elected. There are representatives from every area of the City, an excellent mix of young and old, men and women, and our Board reflects the diversity of the Toronto population.

The Board held its first meeting on December 17, and elected the following Officers; Vivienne Loponen (Chair), Henk Mulder (Vice Chair), Elizabeth Smith (Secretary), and Terri Hammond (Treasurer). Other Board members are Bernice Bradt, Pamela Dewey, Sylvie D'Iorio, Alf Edwards, Joe Edwards (no relation), Jennifer Fretz, Shirley Morgan, Michael Oliphant, Francesca Scalzo, Susan Slater, and Ahmed Syed.

The Board also has the following standing committees; Tenant Services, Law Reform and Communications, Finance and Fundraising, and Personnel.

Members can write to the Board at our address. With your help, the FMTA Board is dedicated to meaningful change for tenants. And the sooner, the better.

**Ripped from the Pages of Yesterday's Headlines...**

*Toronto Star* January 6, 1945

By Emmy Pantin

**Civic Franchise**

To the Editor of The Star.

Sir: I have returned from overseas a few months ago and I am over the age of 21. I have also paid rent for four years. Neither my wife nor I received a vote on New Year's Day. I went to the polling station and inquired but my only reply was that I only rented a flat, and therefore I'm not eligible for a vote. I would sincerely like your views on this point, as many other soldiers' wives and soldiers have to live in rooms because of our house shortage. G.W. PALMER

When I first came across this letter to the editor in the *Toronto Star* archives, I was shocked. I had no idea that as recently as the 1940's, citizens that did not own property – tenants – were not eligible to vote in municipal elections.

The battle for enfranchisement has been a long and a hard one, and there has been much suffering for suffrage along the way.

As a group, tenants have been poorly served by all levels of governments to a lesser or greater degree. The worst example is the current provincial government.

Maybe, if tenants stand up as a group and demand action on the issues that effect them, a political party whose platform is to eradicate things like rent control and just balances between landlords and tenants won't get into office.

We have a political voice. The law was changed so that tenants were given the right to vote over a half century ago. Let's use it.



**Federation of Metro Tenant's Associations**

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We're on the Web!  
[www.torontotenants.org](http://www.torontotenants.org)

E-MAIL:  
[fmta@torontotenants.org](mailto:fmta@torontotenants.org)

**Yes, I want to be part of the Tenants' Movement!**

Please send me my membership card and information about the services that I receive a member.

<p><b>I will pay my membership dues by:</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Cheque or money order (made out to FMTA)      <input type="checkbox"/> Cash</p> <p><b>Please Print:</b>                  Name: _____                  Address: _____ Apt. #: _____                  City: _____ Postal Code: _____                  Telephone #: (h) _____ (w) _____                  Fax: _____ e-mail: _____</p>	<p><b>I am joining as the following type of member:</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> New Member      <input type="checkbox"/> Renewal</p> <hr/> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Individual: \$15/year  <input type="checkbox"/> Senior, student or unemployed: \$5/year  <input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining Member: \$50/year  <input type="checkbox"/> Homeowner (non-voting): \$25/year  <input type="checkbox"/> Organization (non-voting): \$25/year  <input type="checkbox"/> Tenants' Association: ____ units, \$10 per year per unit (minimum 3 units)</p>
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Send to: Federation of Metro Tenants' Associations, 27 Carlton St., Suite 500, Toronto ON, M5B 1L2