



Suite Talk from the High Chair

In starting my second term as president, I first wish to thank everyone for the mandate. It should be easier this year knowing somewhat what to expect. Looking back I feel we have had a successful year. Check out our recently created website – wrama.com. We would like your comments but keep in mind we wanted something professional, simple, informative and economical. Speaking of economical, we are pleased to let you know that despite some increases to our operational costs, with our growing membership, we can go again without raising dues!!!

Some issues we will be looking at in 2003 include bringing down taxes on buildings over 6 units. This is being strongly resisted by area politicians since they would have to get extra tax dollars from homeowners. (Heaven forbid they cut spending.) It has had some success in the Kingston region, but only after landlords were persistent.

Something I feel we should be doing is consistently reminding our politicians that since rent controls were partially removed the vacancy rate has risen. Landlords are upgrad-

ing apartments on vacancy. Tenant advocates are still stuck in the need for controls even though few new units are built under that system or landlords can't afford proper maintenance. Our current provincial government seems to feel the need to overcompensate, so let's keep the facts in front of them.

I am looking forward to seeing you all in the new year.

Your President,

Glenn Trachsel

Housing Tribunal Office to Close in 2003

~ Reprinted from *The Record*, Tuesday, November 27, 2002, Frank Etherington

Tenant advocates and some landlords are unhappy about the scheduled closure of a provincial government office in Kitchener that provides information to hundreds of people facing evictions or rent increases.

Four people who work at the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal's downtown agency at Duke and Ontario streets have been told the office will close some time in 2003.

The employees, who said yesterday they don't know when their jobs will end, refused comment on the closure.

But Carol Kiley, program development manager with the Tribunal, confirmed in Toronto the four staff will be replaced by one worker based at an existing government information office at Kitchener City Hall.

She said the other three have been offered jobs at the tribunal's London office or at call centres that provide information for tenants and landlords.

Kitchener tenant advocate Mary

Pappert said yesterday she has numerous questions about the closure and will protest the move to local MPPs.

"This could be a major inconvenience for tenants and landlords," she said. "Government tried to close the office a few years ago and there was a real hue and cry . . . it's the only human contact people have with the Tribunal (and) everything else is by telephone with call centres located anywhere in the province.

"How can one person in Kitchener do the work of four and, if tenants can't get information, are they supposed to drive to London?" Pappert asked.

She represents about a thousand tenants — many of them senior citizens — who belong to a local tenants' group called Renters Educating and Networking Together.

Pappert and Gay Slinger, a lawyer at Waterloo Region Community Legal Services who often represents tenants, agreed staff at the Kitchener office are efficient and helpful as they

give advice to tenants and landlords.

"I don't know how one person at City Hall can deal with the volume of calls handled by that office," Slinger said yesterday.

"The closure will be a tremendous loss of service for tenants and landlords."

Kiley said other Ontario municipalities where housing offices were closed experienced no reduction in service and people can call a toll-free number to get information if the person at City Hall is busy.

She also said no one will have to drive to London to get help or advice from a tribunal official.

But Bob Eby, property manager and past president of the Waterloo Regional Apartment Management Association, is still unhappy with the closure.

He said dozens of local landlords who use the Kitchener office are already experiencing higher fees for filing eviction or rent-increase applications and will now receive less service as government cuts staff.