

AN EXPLORATION OF TENANT PARTICIPATION IN PRIVATE RENTAL HOUSING

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This report was funded by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) but the views expressed are the personal views of the authors and CMHC accepts no responsibility for them.

The authors wish to acknowledge the guidance and advice provided by the CMHC Project Officer, Jim Taggart,

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Research has indicated that tenant participation in public sector housing has provided an enhanced social environment for its residents, and improved the cost-effectiveness of publicly operated rental housing operations. The objective of this report was to explore the degree to which tenant participation occurs in the private rented sector and to identify case studies of these examples. The intent was to document the attitudes and perceptions of tenant associations and property owners/ managers about tenant participation, and about its potential in the private rented sector.

During the research, there proved to be limited examples of tenant participation in private rental housing. However, patterns emerged regarding the perceptions and attitudes about tenant participation from private property owners/managers and tenant organizations. The types of tenant participation that emerged can be placed on a continuum encompassing; no participation, some tenant participation, and tenant empowerment, where tenants are included in the decision making process. These categories were further broken down as: no participation, information sharing with tenants, consultation with tenants, tenant empowerment, and finally, shared ownership with tenants. The report provides descriptions of each of these categories, and a summary of the perceptions and attitudes of the key stakeholders. Recommendations for future research about tenant participation in private rental housing are also provided. The case studies and contacts that were used to develop these are presented as appendices to the report.

Résumé

Les recherches indiquent que la participation des locataires au fonctionnement des logements du secteur public favorise un milieu social de meilleure qualité pour les résidents, tout en améliorant l'aspect coût-efficacité des logements locatifs exploités par le secteur public. L'étude visait à mesurer la participation des locataires du secteur locatif privé et à trouver des études de cas traitant d'exemples sur le sujet. Les chercheurs avaient pour but d'étayer les attitudes et les perceptions des associations de locataires, ainsi que des propriétaires et gestionnaires immobiliers, au sujet de la participation des locataires et du potentiel de cette notion au sein du secteur locatif privé.

Au cours des recherches, peu d'exemples de participation des locataires au fonctionnement des logements locatifs privés ont été répertoriés. Par contre, on a pu remarquer certaines tendances parmi les propriétaires et gestionnaires du logement privé et les associations de locataires quant aux perceptions et aux attitudes relatives à la participation des locataires. Les types de participation des locataires se classent selon la progression suivante : aucune participation, légère participation, et responsabilisation des locataires, où ces derniers participent au processus de prise de décisions. Ces catégories ont par la suite été subdivisées comme suit : aucune participation; mise en commun de l'information avec les locataires; consultation des locataires; responsabilisation des locataires; et finalement, propriété partagée avec les locataires. Le rapport contient une description de chacune de ces catégories et un résumé des perceptions et attitudes des principaux intervenants. Le document fournit également des recommandations en vue de recherches ultérieures sur la participation des locataires dans le secteur locatif privé. Les études de cas et les personnes-ressources utilisées pour élaborer ces recommandations sont présentées en annexe.



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1.0 INTRODUCTION AND OBJECTIVES

In a 1989 evaluation of public housing in Canada investigating tenant participation in the day-to-day operations of their housing community, residents indicated better than average satisfaction with their living conditions. Tenant participation in the public sector has contributed to increased tenant satisfaction, which in turn potentially benefits housing owners and manager in terms of cost-effective operations. The benefits include enhanced quality of life for tenants, and reductions in building operating and maintenance costs to property owners.

In light of these findings in the public sector, The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) commissioned this study to explore the extent of tenant participation in the private rental sector.

Several macro-level factors impact and characterize the private rented sector and, in turn, will influence, both positively and negatively, the potential to adopt tenant participation experience that has developed in the public rented sector. The key factors include:

- Diminishing role of public housing, and growing reliance on unsubsidized private rental stock - the traditional clients of social housing that might most benefit from participation based empowerment now remain in the private sector.
- Historically high levels of ownership affordability are attracting moderate income rental tenants to the ownership sector, leading to a softening of the rented sector in many markets.
- High vacancy rates which are placing greater pressure on landlords to find innovative solutions to filling empty units and retaining existing tenants.
- Regulatory environment that creates antagonistic relations between landlords and tenants.
- New legislation redefining relations between landlords and tenants. For example, in Ontario, new legislation defining tenant-landlord relations is perceived, on tenant side as restricting tenant power.

The original objective of the study was to compile an inventory of examples of tenant participation occurring in cooperation with property owners or managers in the private rental sector. This inventory was to be used to prepare an overview of the state of tenant participation in the private market.

Early in the study, it became clear that a critical mass of case studies was not readily available. Rather than rely on concrete examples, the study focused on surveying the attitudes of key stakeholders towards tenant participation in private rental housing, including property owners, managers and tenants. The few case

studies that were discovered some insight into how successful models of tenant participation could be developed in various communities.

The study's geographic scope was originally intended to include Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia. However, it was narrowed down to a North American and primarily to a Canadian context. The few responses that were received from outside of Canada were, however, also incorporated into the report.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Literature Review

The literature review on tenant participation in private rental housing involved several bibliographical searches using the computer catalogue at the Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, CMHC's Canadian Housing Information Centre, and CD-ROM searches at local universities. A thorough review was performed of all relevant tenant participation material using keywords such as: *tenant participation*, *tenant satisfaction*, *tenant management*, *tenant/landlord relations*, *tenant associations*, and *landlord associations*. While a list of texts related to tenant participation was discovered, these were primarily related to public and non-profit housing. Other databases such as those available on the Internet (World Wide Web) were thoroughly searched.¹

Based on this review, it is clear that there is very limited documented evidence of the subject of tenant participation in the private rental sector. While there is extensive documentation and analysis of tenant participation in the public and social housing sectors, researchers are not yet addressing the private rental market (though many responded to the concept with interest). Where research is occurring in the area of private rental housing, it does not specifically address participation issues.

2.2 Establishing Direct Contacts

Since the literature review and contact with researchers provided few examples of tenant participation in private rental housing, the study relied entirely on establishing direct contact with individuals and organizations who had first-hand knowledge of the private rental sector. In total, over 150 individuals or organizations were directly contacted by the researchers. The process of identifying contacts targeted major urban centres in Canada and in the U. S.²

The types of contacts included landlords, property managers, and their respective associations, as well as tenant organizations, including tenant associations, tenant advocacy organizations, and community legal aid offices. Contact was also made with other stakeholders less directly involved in the private rental sector in order to identify possible case studies, which included non-profit housing organizations, tenant- landlord lawyers, tenant-landlord mediation centres, municipal housing and planning departments and municipal politicians.

¹ See list of web sites in Appendix B.

² The majority of contacts (54%) were in Canada; 28% were in the US; 12% the UK and the remaining 6% in Australia. A few enquiries were also made to contacts in France, Denmark and the Netherlands.

These individuals and organizations were identified through a combination of Internet searches, a mail out to members of the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association, phone calls to major landlords, property managers, and tenant associations, and personal contacts. Most individuals contacted were unaware of any specific relevant examples.

Limited contacts were discovered with comparable organizations in the US, UK and Australia. As in Canada, there is an extensive literature relating tenant participation in the public rented sector in each of these other countries, but very little evidence of attempts to replicate this experience in the private sector. In the UK this was expected as the private rented sector represents only a very small proportion of the total housing stock (less than 10% - by comparison it represents some 20per cent in Australia and almost one third in the US and Canada)

2.3 Data Collection

In order to solicit feedback from project contacts and other sources, a reporting format was developed and circulated. A study outline and information survey sheet were distributed to various housing and tenant associations. Data collection focused on asking appropriate contacts to identify examples of tenant participation occurring in cooperation with landlords and property managers in private rental housing. In the absence of concrete examples, respondents were asked to comment on three issues:

1. The constraints to tenant participation in private rental housing
2. Perceived benefits of tenant participation in private rental housing
3. Possible mechanisms for implementing tenant participation in private rental housing

The survey focused on those directly involved in private rental housing, and/or their representative associations- namely property owners, property managers and tenants. Larger property owners and managers were also surveyed. The survey of tenants was limited to organizations and associations representing tenant interests.

There was considerable difficulty in identifying examples of cooperative tenant participation from tenant associations and advocacy organizations. Reflecting the antagonistic environment surrounding tenant-landlord relations, these organizations generally deal with tenants experiencing problems with their rental housing.

The language used during the survey influenced results considerably. Respondents generally assumed that "tenant participation" implied antagonistic relations, and as such, was antithetical to the notion of cooperative relations. The chair of one association of landlords was offended by the concept and sounded irritated. Respondents also reacted strongly to the concept of "tenant-landlord

cooperation.” Initial responses often included confusion, and in some cases laughter or disbelief. Others, particularly larger property management and developer/owner companies, appeared more comfortable with the concept. Referring to “innovation in tenant-landlord relations” was the most understandable concept and helped to lead respondents back to the subject of tenant participation.

The most valuable sources of information for identifying case studies were residential property industry journals, larger property owners and management companies, associations of property owners, and non-profit housing organizations.³

³ The following newsletters and magazines associated directly with the private rental industry were particularly useful:

Multi-Unit Report. Editor: Barbara Carss. Produced as a supplement to Canadian Property Management Magazine; Ottawa Region Landlords Association Newsletter. Journal of Property Management. Published by the Institute of Real Estate Management.

3.0 DEFINITION OF COOPERATIVE TENANT PARTICIPATION

The definition of cooperative tenant participation incorporates the idea that both tenant and property owner/manager come together to discuss and act on issues pertinent to both parties. The term cooperative as it is used in this study does not refer to housing co-operatives.

The emphasis on cooperation implies that tenant participation, as used in this study, excludes instances where tenants organize in opposition to owners/managers. There are numerous examples of non-cooperative forms of tenant participation, where tenants rally together to demand action of a property owner/manager. This kind of tenant-landlord interaction is generally combative and confrontational.

There are degrees or levels of cooperative tenant participation. On the one hand, the signing of a lease involves cooperative participation from the property owner and the tenant, however, as a form of participation it is minimal at best. At the other extreme of the continuum, the creation of safety committees that implements physical changes to the residential living environment in order to reduce crime and provide a safe living environment involves considerable participation. Similarly, any involvement in a management committee would fall at the more active end of the spectrum.

The following table presents a continuum of tenant participation which reflects a progressively greater degree of tenant responsibility, which is normally reserved for ownership or management of rental housing. The more passive range of activities in the continuum include receipt of information and consultation prior to decision-making by owners/managers. More active forms of participation include direct involvement in decision-making related to the operation & maintenance of a building or unit.

Continuum of Tenant Participation ⁴

1. No Participation
2. Information Sharing: one way communication (Landlord to tenant)
3. Informal Participation: small scale involvement
4. Consultation with Tenants: collecting tenant views
5. Tenant Empowerment: ability of tenants to be included in the decision making processes.
6. Shared Ownership: gradual move from tenancy towards full ownership by tenant.

⁴ From study terms of reference, background discussion paper.

There are numerous examples of small-scale, informal participation occurring in isolated instances-such as painting a wall or fixing a leaky faucet. These were considered to be part of normal tenant-landlord relations and were not treated as case studies. Instead, the study focused on continuous activities initiated by either tenants or owners/managers.

The actual activities performed at each stage of this continuum, and case study examples are reviewed in section 5.0

4.0 THE MAJOR STAKEHOLDERS

The major stakeholders in the private rental market include property owners, managers, and tenants of rental housing. Most of the contacts established were with the associations representing these stakeholders. While some larger landlords and property management companies were contacted, the analysis of tenant perspectives was based entirely on the views of organizations and associations representing tenant interests.

It should be noted that property owners vary from large corporate entities with a large portfolio of properties managed by professional property management divisions, to small "mom and pop" landlords that own only one or a few units. The total rental universe in Canada, as reported in the 1991 census was 3.7 million units. However the CMHC survey universe of properties with 3 or more units in centres of at least 10,000 population accounts for only some 1.84 million units.⁵ As much as one third of rental properties are less than 3 units and owned by small investors.

The relationship between owners and tenants is directly impacted by the characteristics of the investor. Depending on whether the property is self managed, or a professional property manager is retained, the owner may have a greater or lesser level of direct contact. Small owners are also far more vulnerable to vacancy loss, as a single vacancy may represent one third of a half of their portfolio. As such they may be more amenable to more co-operative relationships in order to retain quality tenants.

4.1 Residential Property Owners

Analysis of the perspectives of this stakeholder group was based on contact with the following:

Residential Property Owners Associations: primarily city-based, with provincial-level umbrella organizations. There are a range of associations, including Multi-Housing Associations, Apartment Associations, and Investment Property Owner Associations. These associations differ mainly in terms of the size of the investor being represented. There are no national associations of residential property owners.

Larger Property Owners: There are several larger land developers also functioning as property owners. The activities of these companies are limited largely to individual city-regions. In many cases, these developers also function as property managers.

⁵ Derived from 1991 Census and CMHC: Rental Market Survey System.

4.2 Residential Property Managers

Many small investors manage their own properties. Absentee owners, bigger investors and investors who are also self-employed professionals (doctors, dentists, etc.) may use property managers. As a result, property management organizations generally include property owners in their membership.

Property managers in Canada are not highly organized, and since many investors operate their own properties relatively few are certified. Professional certification in Canada includes Certified Property Manager (CPM) a designation awarded to professionals in the real estate management industry. Accredited Residential Manager (ARM) is the certification awarded to specialists who manage residential properties which includes rental apartment complexes, rental mobile homes, rental condominiums, rental single-family homes, and condominiums. There are approximately 800 certified property managers in Canada.

In principle, property managers represent the interests of both tenants and owners. For example, ARM trained managers are described as being “in a position to improve the quality of life of people who live in residential properties while at the same time enhancing the value of the assets they oversee.”

The major organizations representing the interests of property managers that were contacted as part of the study of tenant participation were as follows:

- Association of Property Managers- Provincially-based.
- Professional Property Management Companies- City-based
- Certification & Training Association- The Real Estate Institute of Canada (REIC) and the Chicago-based Institute of Real Estate Management (IREM) are responsible for providing advanced education for Canadian real estate management professionals. REIC includes provincial affiliates and is part of an international network.

The United States has a national residential property management association; The United Kingdom has a national association of estate agents.

4.3 Residential Tenants

Tenant assistance and advocacy organizations inform tenants, help tenants to organize and lobby for tenants rights with government in order to keep rents at a reasonable level. These organizations also promote the right of tenants to organize and negotiate collectively with owners. Tenant organizations may have newsletters for members providing information about general and new issues for tenants, and they will help tenants organize their own building associations to get proper maintenance and fight against rent increases. To some extent, the existence

of tenant organizations is a response to property owners who have their own lobbying organizations to try to convince various levels of government to loosen building and health standards and to deregulate rents.

The types of organizations representing tenant's interests are as follows:

- Tenant assistance and advocacy organizations: City-based.
- Legal Aid Clinics: City-based
- Non-profit housing organizations: City-based, with provincial affiliations

5.0 TYPOLOGY OF TENANT PARTICIPATION

The case studies identified during the course of the study, can be grouped into several categories. At one extreme, many survey respondents felt tenant participation could not exist in an environment defined mainly by tenant resistance to owner/manager interests. At the other extreme, some owners were providing an environment that stimulated rent-to-own opportunities for tenants.⁶

In general, tenant participation in the private rental sector can be categorized into the following typology using information gleaned from the survey of key stakeholders.⁷

Tenant Participation

Type	Description
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1. No Participation

Tenant participation seen as antithetical to cooperative relations. Most common response to survey was that no participation occurred by either tenant or landlord.

2. Information Sharing to Tenants

Growing trend towards greater dissemination of information to tenants, as part of customer service. Information shared included services that were available to tenants, and local recreational and sporting activities. However, these activities were seldom supplied, on site, by the property owners.

3. Informal Participation

Several respondents indicated that there were countless instances of tenants and landlords working in cooperation to address minor maintenance issues. However, these cases tended to involve informal, small-scale maintenance activities, such as painting, where tenants billed the owner for any expenses incurred. One reason tenants go to smaller landlords is because they can bargain and negotiate more easily.

In these cases, owners/managers were neither actively promoting nor discouraging tenant participation in

⁶ Two examples of this type of participation were discovered; a multi-level complex at Toronto's Harborfront, and the Strathcona Apartments in Ottawa.

⁷ Full descriptions of the individual case studies are included as an appendix to the report

maintenance activities. To some extent, spontaneous tenant involvement in maintenance activities within the unit was seen as an indication of good tenant-landlord relations. However, this type of participation was entirely motivated by the tenant, and generally occurred without landlord intervention. As one respondent working for a land developer put it, "Happy tenants are more likely to do small jobs around the unit without bothering the landlord."

A municipal department encouraged cooperation and participation between tenants and owners/managers in order to facilitate the implementation of solid waste recycling program. The program was initiated entirely by the municipal agency.

4. Consultation with Tenants

Growing reliance by larger owners/property managers on formalized consultation with tenants, which may involve the creation of tenant committees for recreational facilities.

A property owner in Ottawa recognized that customer service meant providing tenants with the opportunity to offer input and advice, as well as to provide services, in order to retain existing tenants for longer periods of time, and attract new tenants. Some property owners and managers encouraged the establishment of tenant bridge clubs, recreational facilities, craft groups, pool exercise programs, and playgrounds.

However, tenant consultation was not focused on empowerment. Tenants were not actually afforded an opportunity to formally make changes and tenants perceived this to be a unilateral type of participation. Consultation was usually initiated by property owners.

5. Tenant Empowerment

Tenant participation was actively encouraged by some property owners/managers and the decision making processes of the housing environment was placed in the hands of organized tenant committees. Examples include the development and implementation of programs for, crime and vandalism prevention, recreational and family care, blockwatch initiatives. The U.S. had some examples of well developed crime and safety programs in the private rental sector, specifically the Arizona Crime-free Multi-

housing program, which gave tenant organizations authority to form committees, and make physical changes to the buildings and property, in order to provide a safe living environment. The types of illegal or illicit activities addressed by these examples ranged from graffiti to drug dealing and prostitution. Some evidence of safety programs was also found in Canada's large urban centres. The examples were jointly initiated by tenants and property owners.

6. Shared Ownership

No examples of shared ownership were found, however, there were two initiatives by landlords that attempted to offer rent-to-own opportunities to tenants; one in Ottawa at the Strathcona Apartments, and the second, in Toronto, at the Toronto Harborfront buildings. However, in both examples, the tenants overwhelmingly rejected the concept. Tenants in both communities perceived these initiatives as confrontational and formed committees to protest the initiatives.

In instances like these, Ontario's Landlord-Tenant Mediation Project serves as a vehicle for to assist in restructuring relations between tenants and landlords.

6.0 OVERVIEW OF TENANT PARTICIPATION IN PRIVATE RENTAL HOUSING

This section summarizes the perspectives of the property owners/managers and tenants, as well as constraints and possible opportunities for tenant participation as described by property owners, managers and tenants. The formality of tenant involvement, and impact of the case studies is also reviewed.

6.1 PROPERTY OWNER/MANAGER PERSPECTIVES

Since a large number of property owners also play the role of managers, the perspectives of owners and managers are presented together.

Property owners and managers of residential rental properties indicated a wide range of constraints and opportunities for increased tenant participation in the private rental sector. The attached table presents a list of the constraints and opportunities, and a brief discussion of some of the issues follows.

Owner/Manager Perspectives on Tenant Participation in Private Rental Housing	
Constraints	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mistrust /Loss of Control • Separation of Responsibilities • Impermanent Tenant Population • Availability of Property Managers • Restrictive Regulatory Environment • Comparison with Commercial Sector • Small vs. Large Property Owners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building Cooperation and Trust • Customer Service Approach • Tenant Retention • Building Safety • Liability Issues • Property Management Education

6.1.1 CONSTRAINTS

Mistrust/Loss of Control

Since most tenants do not have an equity interest in their rental units, many property owners believe tenants do not have respect or concern for the building environment. Many property owners therefore do not believe that increased tenant participation will increase respect or responsibility for the buildings.

Separation of Responsibilities

Many of the property owners and managers that were contacted indicated a strong belief in the separation of responsibilities associated with rental housing. Many owners are content to fulfill their legal obligation to maintain and manage properties. One recurring message was that owners lack interest in, and don't

expect tenants to be interested in direct participation in day-to-day operations. Tenants are seen as choosing rental arrangements because they cannot or are not interested in management and maintenance activities. This argument includes the belief that tenants who want to contribute to property management can and should resort to condominiums. As a customer, the tenant is understood to have no particular interest in getting involved beyond signing a lease agreement. As one landlord association representative stated, if they don't even want to change a lightbulb, why would they want to get more involved in building maintenance?

Impermanent Tenant Population

The private rental sector includes a more transient population, with tenants either saving to buy a house, or moving between rental units. One property manager indicated that tenants typically remain in a unit for about two years before their lifestyle changes and then they move on. Under these circumstances, trying to establish continuity in decision making would be difficult.

Availability of Property Managers

The growing availability of professional property managers also serves as an impediment to tenant cooperation. Owners who use licensed professionals see no benefit to allowing tenants to participate in day-to-day operational concerns of the buildings. There was some belief that involving tenants in operational issues of a building would generally be cost prohibitive, as oversight would be more costly than hiring a professional to do the work.

Restrictive Regulatory Environment

The regulatory and legislative environment in which landlords and managers are operating is also perceived to restrict opportunities for informal cooperation between tenants and landlords. This is particularly the case in Ontario, where recent legislative changes are perceived as eroding informal relations between tenants and landlords. Legislatively imposed rent controls have widened the gap between tenant and property owner, to the point that cooperative participation between tenant and property owner is diminishing rapidly. For example, the new legislation in Ontario is seen as destroying the kind of relationship that led a property owner to put up a playground in a mobile park.

Comparison with Commercial Sector

A comparison was made between the residential and commercial rental sectors. One respondent felt that the focus of the study made more sense in the commercial sector, where tenant involvement is encouraged on a wide range of decision-making issues.⁸ One incentive in place which encouraged tenant involvement in improving the efficiency of building operations and maintenance is the concept of lease payments based on common area costs separate and distinct from space costs. Unlike the residential sector, commercial leases often include a clause which links rent levels to building operation and maintaining expenses. Any

⁸ Source: Peter Delisle, Montreal, Quebec, Real Estate Institute of Canada.

savings realized in these areas will be reflected in lower rent payments. Commercial tenants are encouraged to contribute to the process of lowering costs. In contrast, residential leases tend to include a flat rent that remains constant regardless of operation and maintenance costs. This gross rent leaves residential tenants with no incentive to control costs, such as heat or utilities.

Small vs. Large Property Owners

Property owners with small properties are perceived to have more flexibility with rental rates from unit to unit, and less formality regarding tenant participation with maintenance issues. However, the participation of tenants in maintenance activities is generally not a priority from the perspective of these small landlords. Instead, smaller landlords like to keep relations with tenants as simple as possible. The smaller investors have neither the time nor the interest in encouraging their tenants to participate in any meaningful way.

6.1.2 OPPORTUNITIES

While the majority of owners and managers responding to the survey indicated either disinterest in or disagreement with the concept of tenant participation, a minority of respondents provided very positive responses. These respondents pointed to several advantages and opportunities to tenant participation.

Building Cooperation and Trust

More progressive owners/managers understand the importance of building trust and maintaining open lines of communication with tenants by breaking down typically hostile barriers. For example, rather than referring to themselves as 'landlords,' Minto, a real estate company in Ottawa, prefers the term 'property owner.' The philosophy amongst Minto staff is to view every one of Minto's tenants as being ultimately responsible for paying their salary. As a result, staff feel a stronger commitment in responding to tenant concerns and needs.

Customer Service Approach

The approach taken by Minto is indicative of a movement towards a more explicit customer service orientation within the private rental sector. A progressive property owner is one who implements an innovative customer service program, aimed at maximizing existing tenant satisfaction, and attracting new tenants. To some extent, this new approach is a response to persistently high vacancy rates. One study of tenant turnover, or 'churn', estimated that the value of each retained tenant is \$845 a year, in addition to vacancy loss.⁹ Citing studies which identify customer dissatisfaction as the most significant cause of tenant turnover, improved customer service is seen as an mechanism for reducing tenant turnover.

⁹ Based on a calculation of the cost of churn for a 75 unit property with an annual occupancy rate of 94%, market rents, generally sound operation and in good repair. These costs are associated with painting, cleaning, shampoo/finish, maintenance, advertising/marketing.

Tenant Retention

Rather than relying on conventional strategies for attracting and retaining tenants, a customer service approach is proactive. For example, a suggested marketing strategy for seniors, includes offering seniors the services they want and are willing to pay for, increasing the visibility of top leadership, offering meals, exercise programs, social activities, and emergency response systems.¹⁰ Tenant input is a necessary prerequisite for the improvement and marketability of the rental product. Satisfied tenants are seen as the best advertisement for a property.

Building Safety

By reducing incidences of criminal activity in and around rental buildings, particularly apartment complexes, the benefits to property owners and managers include increased property value, fewer vacant units, less property damage, lower maintenance and operating costs, better appeal to present and future residents, stronger resident retention with less tenant turnover, and better relations with residents and surrounding neighbourhood. This was a recurring theme that was reiterated by several landlord associations, particularly in the U. S.¹¹

Liability Issues

An increasingly strong motivation for promoting tenant participation is the potential reduction of liability issues associated with criminal activity on rental properties. This is generally of more concern in the United States. On occasion, property owners are also being found liable in situations where they were either aware of or should have known about previous criminal activity but did not take reasonable steps to eliminate it.

Property Management Education

Lessons learned about customer service, operational and financial management in the commercial property management sector could be incorporated into the curriculum of the residential property management education system. The Institute of Real Estate Management encourages a culture of participation in the commercial sector. The same culture of participation could be encouraged in the private sector.

6.2 TENANT PERSPECTIVES

The typical tenant's motivation for taking up residence in a building is to find a safe, secure and affordable place to live. To the extent that a tenant intends to take up longer term residence, there will also be a strong desire for a higher quality of life beyond these minimum requirements. These motivations can place the tenant in an antagonistic relationship to landlords (e.g. in terms of continually

¹⁰ Lobo, Derek. "Renting to Seniors," Multi-Unit Report, Vol.2 No.4, December 1996.

¹¹ The best example of an organization dealing with safety issues was the Arizona Crime-free Multi-housing Program.

pressuring the landlord for improved services), particularly where the landlord is perceived to be providing a low quality living environment. This perception is often reinforced as a result of inadequate communication and trust between the tenant, and the manager and owner.

The table below lists the constraints and opportunities as perceived by tenants and tenant organizations.

Tenant Perspectives on Tenant Participation in Private Rental Housing	
Constraints <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative View of Property Owner • Marketing vs. Quality of Life • Tenant Discrimination • Imbalance of Power • Lack of Tenant Interest 	Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving Building Security

6.2.1 CONSTRAINTS

In comparison to owners and managers, the tenant organizations that were contacted during the course of the study were far more critical of the possibilities for tenant participation in private rental housing. Property owners are perceived as having little interest in pursuing meaningful interaction with tenants.

Negative View of Property Owner

One consistent theme which emerged during discussions with tenant organizations was a negative view of landlords.¹² Even the word “landlord” was viewed as having negative connotations of power and dominance. Larger corporate property owners were viewed as being strictly interested in the financial value of their assets, while middle-sized property owners were viewed as lacking the necessary expertise to carry out meaningful property management. The small property owner was viewed as having little tolerance for tenant problems and as someone that viewed tenants as nothing more than obstacles to earning a decent living from their investment. These perspectives emerged from several tenant advocacy groups in Toronto Ottawa, and Vancouver. These of course were the extreme perspectives. The less extreme perspectives focused on the view that property owners and tenants are driven by different and contradictory motives. While landlords want control over an investment with the objective of increasing its value, tenants want to minimize their rent, and in some cases, build community.

¹² In particular, two Canadian tenant advocacy groups that were very vocal about this negative view of landlords were the Federation of Ottawa Tenants Association and the Tenants Rights Action Coalition in Vancouver, B.C.

Marketing vs. Quality of Life

Several of the respondents acknowledged that some owners and managers were attempting to build more positive relations with tenants through public relations initiatives, such as hosting barbecues for tenants or encouraging interested tenants to get involved in gardening.¹³ However, these initiatives were viewed primarily as marketing strategies to address low vacancy rates and were not viewed to be efforts to enhance tenant quality of life.

Tenant Discrimination

A respondent from Australia expressed concern that encouraging tenant participation could result in unfair discrimination against those tenants not participating in tenant programs. An example cited was a Queensland Real Estate Agents' "Good Tenant" program. "Good Tenant" status is determined by the level of tenant participation for a range of responsibilities. Under this program, "Good Tenants" are rewarded with improved access to amenities, which ultimately becomes discriminatory in nature.

Imbalance of Power

A perceived imbalance of power defining tenant landlord relations was often cited as a constraint to tenant participation. In Ontario, legislative changes being introduced by the current government were perceived by tenant advocates as contributing to this imbalance. In order to level the playing field, the goal of tenant associations is to achieve a relationship with owners comparable to a union-management situation. In this climate of tension, one respondent equated the landlord-initiated programs with "union-busting techniques" used to prevent tenants from joining or establishing tenants associations, by diverting tenant interests. Tenant associations, it appears, do not encourage tenant/landlord collaboration.

Since they are built as a response to antagonistic relations, tenant associations tend to be created in opposition to a landlord, not in cooperation. Tenant committees in private rental housing tend to be formed to deal with specific disputes occurring in an adversarial context. These disputes commonly include unfair rent increases, overdue repairs or inadequate security. Once the conflict has been resolved, the association generally dissolves or becomes inactive. Consequently, the existing institutional mechanism for organizing tenants is seen to be inappropriate as a means of promoting tenant participation.

Lack of Tenant Interest

A final constraint to involving tenants in decision making or operation & maintenance of activities is the desire by many tenants to completely avoid participating. Tenants pay their monthly rent in order to occupy an apartment, not to maintain the property or get involved in management activities. Tenants

¹³ Minto Developments in Ottawa regularly organizes this type of activity.

generally want to avoid getting involved in the hassle and responsibility of owner/manager activities.

6.2.2. OPPORTUNITIES

Tenant associations and advocacy organizations were able to suggest very few opportunities for increased tenant participation in private rental housing.

However, one potential area of collaboration involves improving building security. Larger municipalities in BC and Ontario have established Crime Free Multi-Housing Committees involving landlord, tenant, police and city representation.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

While this study was limited in its breadth of case studies, the various stakeholder perspectives and attitudes provided insight into the nature of tenant participation in private rental housing. Conclusions are drawn from the various stakeholder perspectives and recommendations for improved tenant participation are suggested.

7.1 Conclusions

Tenant participation varies by socio-economic group

There is some indication that the types of tenant participation will vary depending on rental housing types and socio-economic groups, however, this study was not able to identify a sufficient number of case studies or survey respondents to distinguish between these variables. Although a more detailed analysis of tenant participation could consider variables such as household income/rent and rental housing type, the experience from this exploratory study suggests that the low volume of participation is insufficient to generate a statistically valid universe.

Change antagonistic attitudes

An underlying factor limiting cooperation is the ubiquitous culture of antagonism that exists between landlord and tenant. The most damning perception by both landlords and tenants is that the system works against their interests. The culture of antagonism also influences relations between tenants and property managers.

Improve relations at the governmental level

The tenant rights/rent regulation system automatically places both tenants and landlords in an adversarial relationship. Generally, tenants believe they have no voice, and are therefore unwilling to participate, while some landlords believe that they are at the mercy of rent controls, and are equally unwilling to participate in cooperative measures. Tenant organizations want more rights for tenants and more equality with landlords.

Third party intervention

A key to promoting tenant participation is the coordination by an interested third party that could organize tenants in a positive way, such as a mediator or tenant coordinator. Many commercial shopping centres have a third party coordinator.

7.2 Recommendations for Research

Analysis of the costs and benefits of participation

These conclusions underline the need to increase awareness about the potential mutual benefits of co-operative participation between landlords and tenants. Before landlords will seriously consider this option, they must be convinced that there is a benefit. They will then respond through enlightened self interest. A study of the economic benefits of tenant participation in the social rented sector is one place to begin.

Focus group study

Another way to raise awareness is through a focus group study of stakeholders, using illustrations from the public/social rented sector and from the types of initial response gathered from this exploratory investigation.

Creating incentive through an awards initiative

Another way is to sponsor a small award program, such as the CMHC annual housing awards, using participation as a theme. (given the limited extent of participation, it might be necessary to incorporate participation in the private rented sector as one category of a larger theme on tenant empowerment).

Improve Property Management Education

Lessons learned in the commercial sector should be studied by tenant and property owners/managers in the private rental sector with the objective of incorporating similar practice, where appropriate, into property management accreditation programs.

APPENDIX A CASE STUDIES

CATEGORY: CRIME PREVENTION AND SAFETY

Name of Initiative

Arizona Crime-Free Multi-Housing Program

Location

Phoenix, Arizona

Objective

To help residents, owners and managers of apartments keep drugs and other illegal activity off their property. To provide education to residents and owners about illegal activity and crime prevention, and address community security concerns.

Description

Classroom training is provided by the local police agency. Subjects covered include applicant screening, criminal background checks, property security improvements, etc. Additionally, information about illegal activity is provided along with presentations by the fire department and an attorney who specializes in landlord-tenant issues. Police assist in the inspection of the properties from a security viewpoint. Residents are invited to crime-prevention meetings and are encourage to form a Block Watch.

Source of Funds

All the committee members are volunteers. The police seminars and safety training is funded by the local municipalities, and any of the approved capital improvements are funded by the property owners. When safety improvements are required at the properties, supplies and contractors are offered by local companies at reduced rates.

Contact Organization

Arizona Multihousing Association
Mr. Peter Vardalos
Communications Coordinator
2400 E. Arizona Biltmore Circle, Suite 1200
Phoenix, AZ 85016
Ph. (602) 224-0135 Fax (602) 224-0657

Name of Initiative

Lees Apartments

Location

Ottawa, Ontario

Objective

To provide a safe and crime free apartment complex.

Description

The Lees Apartment complex was a run-down complex known for drug dealers, prostitutes and petty thieves. When the building was purchased by its present owners, they took a customer service approach to the tenants. The managers of the complex revived rundown basketball courts, created a water slide and bought bicycles for the young people of the complex. As the property manager at the complex observed, "If you give tenants responsibility and respect, they will usually respect their environment. Tenants will also be satisfied and remain as tenants."

Source of Funds

All improvements were borne by the property owner.

Contact Organization

Mr. Frank McDonald

Property Manager

170 Lees Avenue

Ottawa, Ontario

Name of Initiative

St. Jamestown Safety Initiatives

Location

Toronto, Ontario

Objective

To provide an environment where tenants, property managers, police and community- based groups work together to promote safety in a densely populated neighbourhood.

Description

Belmont Property Management renovated and provided free space at 565 Sherbourne St. for an on-site base for foot patrol police officers. The foot patrol officers monitor six high rises in the area.

Ten youths and a service coordinator will be hired to survey tenants and members of the local Cabbagetown Business Improvement Association about their safety concerns. Volunteers from the community will be trained as well.

Source of Funds

This is a pilot project that is funded through the federal government and coordinated through Parachute Employment Centre, a non-profit community agency.

Contact Organization

Mr. Harry Nicholls, Belmont Property Management

Ph. (416) 256-7500

Thomas Vegh, Parachute Employment Centre

Ph. (416) 363-1689

Other initiatives

Crime-Free Multi-Housing, New Westminster, BC

Gwen Renquist, Police Liaison, (604) 525-5411

Blockwatch Initiatives

Judy Graves, City of Vancouver Tenant Assistance Program, (604) 873-7488

CATEGORY: CUSTOMER SERVICE

Name of Initiative

Community Residential Care Home

Location

Hamilton, Ontario

Objective

To provide women with psychological problems an opportunity to participate in the decision-making processes of the residential care home.

Description

Services provided include informal consultation between tenants and the property owners, about tenant personal and family problems, sometimes in a group or one-on-one setting. The residents, which are all non-smoking women, are also involved in the tenant selection process. Care homes like this are typically only 40% to 50% occupied. This care home in particular is 100% occupied and has a waiting list of prospective residents.

Source of Funds

The project is funded entirely by the property owners.

Contact

Community Residential Care Home
153 George St.,
Hamilton, Ontario L8P 1E4
Kathleen Ward, (905) 525-8422

Name of Initiative

Minto's Tenant Retention

Location

Ottawa, Ontario

Objective

To enhance the tenant environment through customer service.

Description

Minto Development suggested that to retain tenants and draw new tenants, they would focus their marketing efforts on providing services to the current tenant base, such as organizing social and recreational committees, organizing sporting events, barbecues, etc. They also mentioned that they have recently initiated committees on safety and crime prevention.

Source of Funds

Any funding required is provided by Minto.

Contact

Dan Gibson

Minto Developments

427 Laurier Ave. W, Suite 300

Ottawa, Ontario

(613) 230-7051

Other Initiatives:

Tenant Retention Programs

Derek Lobo, RentSmart, 1 800 898-0347, (905) 319-2524

Mobile Home Park Playground

Phil Sweetnam, Stittsville, (613) 836-3005

CATEGORY: MAINTENANCE IMPROVEMENTS

Name of Initiative

Port Alberni Non-Profit Housing Association (PANPHA)
General Repair and Improvement Team Project (GRIT)

Location

Port Alberni, British Columbia

Objective

To organize tenants, volunteer contractors, and landlords to make repairs and renovations to improve the existing housing quality available to low income families.

Description

The project will involve tenants and landlords in a process to make urgently needed repairs to neglected and unlivable rental units. Project will last for 12 months, and will affect 15 units. Target groups are single, homeless-at-risk and low income tenants living in substandard housing. PANPHA has spent last two years maintaining close relationship with low income residents and hosting events providing keen insights into the nature and scope of these housing issues.

Source of Funds

Funds are provided through volunteer contractors and the property owners.

Contact

Ms. Sandra Leicester
PANPHA GRIT Project
5060 Argyle St.
Port Alberni, British Columbia V9Y 1Y4
Ph. (250) 723-0066

CATEGORY: TENANT TAKE-OVER

Project Initiative

Stratcona Apartments

Location

Ottawa, Ontario

Objective

To provide tenants the opportunity to convert their rented units into tenant owned condominiums

Description

The property owner offered a lease to own program to the current tenants of this heritage building in central Ottawa. However, total tenant consensus was necessary in order for the conversion to be realized. Since the building is regulated by current rent controls, rental prices are cheap, and converting the units would have greatly increased the cost. While some tenants concurred with the concept, several vocal tenants formed protest committees to lobby against the idea. The initiative was never realized.

Contact

Mr. Sandy Smallwood
Andrex Holdings Ltd.
190 Bronson Ave.
Ottawa, Ontario K1R 6H4
Ph. 238-1835

Project Initiative

Tenant Take-over and Maintenance Training

Location

Toronto, Ontario

Objective

To provide an opportunity where tenants can eventually purchase their residential units.

Description

Tenants of a large, 800-unit building in Toronto are trying to raise capital to purchase the building. The building is in distress, both in terms of social and physical problems. The building has been in receivership for the past year. During that time, tenants have tried to purchase the building under various government programs, but have been unsuccessful to date. City of Toronto has guaranteed 25% of the total mortgage. CMHC would guarantee the remaining 75%. The objective is for the tenants to purchase the building and set up a non-profit cooperative. Part of the project would involve training tenants in order to undertake maintenance, thereby saving money. However, this training component is on hold until the purchase comes through.

Tenants are currently preparing proposals to take over ownership. The owner has been preparing counterproposals as he tries to reassume ownership. This is not an example of tenant-landlord cooperation.

Contact

Grace Ollerhead
Tenants Non-Profit Redevelopment Coop
Toronto, Ontario
(416) 323-1912 Ext.25

CATEGORY: MUNICIPAL INITIATIVE

Project Initiative

Recycling Pilot Project

Location

Toronto, Ontario

Objective

To boost awareness about recycling in apartment complexes across Toronto.

Description

The program attempts to gain tenant and landlord cooperation for a recycling pilot project in 13 apartment buildings in metropolitan Toronto. The program ties in with seven other recycling and composting initiatives, as part of Toronto's goal of diverting 50% of waste from land fill by the year 2000. Trained community groups and volunteer residents who will be designated as "recycling stewards" are key to the plan.

Source of Funds

The Metro Toronto Works Department has budgeted \$165,000 for recycling pilot projects across the Metropolitan Toronto area.

Contact

Andrew Pollock,
Manager Waste Reduction and Planning
Metro Works,
Toronto, Ontario

APPENDIX B *Private Rental Sector Websites*

CANADA

Fair Rental Policy Organization
<http://www.pm-online.com/frpo.html>

Real Estate Institute of Canada
<http://www.reic.ca/>

The Real Estate Institute of Canada, a not-for-profit membership organization, has been educating and certifying professionals in real estate since 1955. REIC's mission is "Establishing, maintaining, promoting and advancing professional standards of practice among those occupations concerned with real estate."

RPS Resource Property Services
<http://www.rpsresource.com/>
Toronto-based property management company.

UNITED STATES

AACS ONLINE: The Apartment Association of Colorado Springs

<http://www.aptassoc.org/>

The Apartment Association Directory, sponsored by Apartments Online, provides useful information about Apartment Associations from across the country. This information is designed to help link associations and their members. This site is geared towards the multi-housing professional and is not consumer oriented.

Apartment Owners & Managers Association of America
<http://www.aptassoc.com/aoma/>

Clark County Rental Association (CCRA)

<http://www.aptassoc.com/ccra/>

The purpose of CCRA is to educate landlords and property managers in successful management techniques, and keep them up-to-date on the ever changing laws and regulations which govern the rental housing industry.

HACLA Home Page

<http://www.hacla.org/>

Home page of the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles

The Institute of Real Estate Management

<http://www.irem.org/>

IREM is the only organization that serves the needs of all real estate management professionals: managers of apartments and office buildings, asset managers, property supervisors and management company owners; Confers the industry's most recognized designation for real estate managers - the CPM; Recognizes residential managers through the ARM program; Sets the standard for real estate management companies by identifying the best in the business as AMO firms; Trains more than 6,000 real estate and asset managers per year throughout the United States and Canada; Has codes of ethics that are rigidly enforced, setting apart its designees from all others in the real estate industry; Advocates legislative positions that are in the best interest of real estate managers and management companies; Is dedicated to educating and identifying real estate managers who are, first and foremost, committed to meeting the needs of real estate owners and investors

National Association of Residential Property Managers (NARPM)

<http://www.narpm.org/>

NARPM, founded in October 1988, provides a permanent trade organization for the residential property industry. As a group, managers of small residential properties oversee billions of dollars worth of assets, yet have had little or no voice in such important matters as tax law, legislation, legal document requirements, accounting practices, insurance, building codes, zoning, and utilities. Until recently, there was no organization to represent this large group of property managers and their clients.

New York City Rent Guidelines Board

<http://www.nycrgb.com/>

Rents, Markets, and Trends '96. Housing NYC is a comprehensive look at the current state of rental housing in New York City. It includes the most recent income and expense data, our price index of operating costs, and studies on mortgage financing and housing affordability. Over 80 pages of

text and 50 pages of detailed appendices. This year we have also included a new section on the "State of the Rental Market, 1996" \$28 per copy - Postage Included

NPMA Home Page-National Property Management Association Inc.

<http://www.npma.org/>

NPMA is a professional organization composed of members dedicated to enhancing the professionalism and education of those who maintain property in all its forms, in government, business and institutional environments. The NPMA accomplishes its mission through education, training and by promoting standards of competency and ethical behavior. We provide a broad range of education training products, informative publications and forums for the exchange of ideas and services which are developed and delivered by staff and member volunteers.

M&M Property Management

<http://www.mmmproperties.com/>

M&M Property Management is one of the largest residential management companies. M&M Property Management has over 18 years experience specializing in residential property management.

Pennsylvania Residential Owners Association (PROA)

www.emmanet.com/proa

RECOL Property Managers

<http://recol.com/recol/propertyman/pm.htm>

Rental Housing Association of Greater Springfield, Inc.

<http://www.the-spa.com/rhags>

San Diego Professional Property Managers-Residential Property Management

<http://www.sdppm.com/welcome.html>

Seattle Tenants Union

<http://www.pan.ci.seattle.wa.us/seattle/owr/landlord.htm>

Non-profit membership organization committed to preserving affordable and decent rental housing in Washington. Promotes right of tenants to organize and negotiate collectively with landlords.

TCRS Property Managers

<http://www.tcrs.com/>

Trammell Crow Residential is the premier real estate development and management firm in the nation. Building on the experience and financial stability that created the nation's largest commercial real estate company, Trammell Crow began developing apartment communities over three decades ago. Today Trammell Crow Residential Services is one of the nation's largest property management firms. Nationally acclaimed and nationally recognized.

Tenant Net Home Page

<http://tenant.net/main.html>

TenantNet focuses on New York City and New York State. However, information covering other cities and areas is available (even if limited in some cases).

UNITED KINGDOM**Bath Property Services.**

<http://www.bibs.co.uk/bibs>

Links to other UK Letting Agents

Cardiff Institute of Higher Education-BSC(Honours) Housing Studies

<http://www.cihe.ac.uk/prospect/faculty/chscours/bschs.htm>

The course provides students with a comprehensive programme of study, integrating all aspects of housing policy and practice. It is intended to produce professionals for both the public and private sectors. Integrative studies reinforces the interrelationship between the modules by focusing on the partnership between the public and private sectors of housing and welfare provision. A field trip, usually to Europe, forms an important part of the course.

Chancellors Estate Agents Property Management Services

<http://www.chancellors.co.uk>

The Letting Centre-LetLINK

<http://www.letlink.co.uk/tenant.html>

LetLINK is a new on-line service for residential letting. Available worldwide, LetLINK provides a comprehensive Internet site for the United Kingdom letting sector. It lists some

properties available, local agents, information for landlords and tenants, and advice for people relocating to the United Kingdom.

Newcastle University-Town and Country Planning Department
<http://www.ncl.ac.uk/~ntcp/staff.html>

Sheffield Hallem University-Certificate in Tenant Participation
<http://www.shu.ac.uk/courses/parttime/ctp.htm>

Simply Lets
<http://www.simplylets.co.uk>

Simply Lets is a specialist agency which concentrates solely on residential lettings and property management. The company was formed shortly after the 1988 Housing Act came into force which provided landlords greater security in letting their properties. This legislation introduced two new types of tenancy, Assured and Assured Shorthold. Under the new style leases, the length of tenancy and an open market rent are agreed at the outset, and the landlord has a guaranteed right to possession at the end of the fixed term. These changes were planned to revitalise the private rented sector of the housing market which had been in steady decline since the late 1940's.

South Bank University London-School of Land Management and Urban Policy
http://www.sbu.ac.uk/~mktg/pg_prosp/lmup/tenparticipation.html

The National Certificate in Tenant Participation is awarded by the Institute of Housing, and has been validated by South Bank University to gain the award of a University Certificate. It is intended as a first step professional development course, aimed at both housing workers and tenant activists and is intended to provide a formal qualification for those who have already gained some experience of tenant led housing initiatives.

AUSTRALIA

Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI)
<http://www.ahuri.edu.au/homepage.html>
 AHURI is a four member consortium consisting of the Royal Melbourne Institute of technology (RMIT), Monash University, Queensland University of Technology (QUT) and

the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) Division of Building, Construction and Engineering. AHURI provides an independent service to government and private sector organisations to develop policy and programs from inception to implementation.

Inner Urban Regional Housing Council
<http://www.infoxchange.net.au/rhchome/iurhc/index.html>
 Melbourne, Australia

Queensland Community Housing Coalition Ltd
<http://www2.eis.net.au/~qchc/>

Real Estate Institute of Queensland (REIQ)
<http://www.qld.realnet.com.au/>

Residential Tenancies Authority (RTA) Queensland, Australia
<http://www.rta.qld.gov.au/>

The administration of the Residential Tenancies Act 1994, for which the RTA has responsibility, affects all those involved in the rental industry. This includes real estate agents and property managers, property owners (lessors), tenants and associated professions (such as accountants, solicitors and industry organisations e.g; REIQ, POA, Tenants Union).

A review of the Act for the Department of Public Works and Housing began in September 1995 and was completed in October, 1996. The Act incorporates residential tenancy and rental bond laws and, through the Authority, provides tenants, lessors and agents with greater access to tenancy information and a dispute resolution service which offers mediation as a cost effective alternative to legal action.