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MEDIA RELEASE

Bureaucracy Whitewashes Councillor

Thursday, March 16, 2006

Councillor Michael Walker (St. Paul's Ward 22) is the Chair of the City of Toronto Tenant Defence Sub-Committee and the City's Tenant Advocate. He was also the Chair of the highly successful City-sponsored Tenant Forum held in the Council Chambers on Thursday March 9, 2006.

On Friday, March 10, 2006, Councillor Walker was consulted by City staff on the content of a City media release on the Tenant Forum, which included specific quotes attributed to the Councillor. On the basis of the Councillor's agreement, a media release was to be distributed to the media by City staff later that same day.

Remarkably, and without notice, the City media release was altered prior to its release in a manner that deliberately misrepresents the Councillor's viewpoint and intent. There are three specific cases of this unauthorized whitewashing:

1. The Councillor agreed to a title for the release that read: *Tenants Want Province to Keep its Promise to Restore Rent Control*. It was altered to read: *Tenants Want Province to Change Rent Rules*. The effect is to delete the phrase *Keep its Promise ...* which is apparently too politically sensitive for bureaucratic sensibilities; and to delete *Restore Rent Control*, in favour of the watered down *Change Rent Rules*.
2. The Councillor agreed to an attributed quote. In the City's release, the quote was altered without notice to delete the words: *It's time to bring back real rent control as promised by Premier Dalton McGuinty*. This is a patently unauthorized whitewashing undertaken by City staff for political purposes known only to themselves.
3. The Councillor agreed to a listing of seven of the key issues that were raised at the Forum. In the City's release, the list was altered without notice to delete one such issue that was clearly raised and debated at the Forum: *The devastating impact vacancy decontrol has had on the affordability of rental housing*.

Said Councillor Walker, "This is the worst kind of stage managing of events and censorship of an elected official that I have ever come across. The new Strategic Communications unit established only this month by the City Manager now takes it upon itself to covertly alter the words of an elected official for its own political purposes. This is a matter of civil rights that I take very seriously. I will not be second guessed by City bureaucrats."

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