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MEDIA RELEASE

Tenants Need Real Rent Control Now

Monday, March 13, 2006 – TORONTO – On March 9th, 2006, the City of Toronto held its second city-wide Tenant Forum. Tenants from across the city filled Toronto City Hall Council Chamber to speak to their experiences as tenants and to offer their suggestions for change.

Premier Dalton McGuinty promised Ontario's tenants he would repeal the unfair Tenant Protection Act and replace it with real rent control within the first year of his government. This has not happened. The promise has been broken. Toronto's tenants made it clear at the Forum that they had not forgotten the promise made and the promise broken. Tenants are demanding Dalton McGuinty keep his promise.

"The lack of movement by the provincial government has contributed to a large increase in evictions in Ontario this past year – up 11%. People are losing their homes here. We need rent control now," stated Tenant Forum Chair Councillor Michael Walker.

"We work hard to get the landlord our rent money – let's see the landlord work hard for our money for a change," exclaimed one tenant referring to continuous bad maintenance of the apartment building where she lives. "One in ten evictions in Ontario occurs without a hearing. Many evictions involve the people who need our help most – is this system fair and respectful?" asked a tenant advocate speaking at the Forum.

City Council renewed its call for reforms to the Tenant Protection Act in February with a vote of 30 to 1, endorsing my package of recommendations from the Tenant Defence Subcommittee. This 16-point package includes elimination of vacancy decontrol; mandatory hearings for all evictions in an Ontario Civil Court; removal of costs-no-longer-borne for above guideline rent increases; not allowing any rent increase if there is an outstanding work order on the property; City Council veto power on rental housing demolition or conversion to condominium; and reform of the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal (ORHT).

"Affordability is at issue, not vacancy rates. What good is a vacant apartment when a person can't afford it?" asked Walker, "A large landlord's return on his investment prior to the Tenant Protection Act was over 10% and their profit is even larger now – that's outrageous! If you're looking for a quick buck, you shouldn't be a landlord – these are people's homes. Rental housing is not a speculative commodity."

Said Councillor Walker, "The tenants of Toronto continue to wait for the provincial government to act. Each day, more evictions and suffering occur. The question has to be asked: Who is the government working for – landlords or tenants? For once, Dalton McGuinty, keep your promise – restore real rent control."

- 30 -

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