

My Name is Margaret Anne McHugh. I am co-chair of the Dartmouth ACORN Chapter, and I am appearing here today on behalf of ACORN Nova Scotia. ACORN is a member based, tenants union and social justice organization representing low and moderate income people.

We pay attention to what is going on housing, and what policies make our members, and all tenants, more precarious in their housing -- experiencing higher rents and experiencing more evictions, renovictions and non renewal of fixed term leases -- every year.

I wish I could say thankyou for extending the rent cap for two years... anything else would be cruel at this point, but why can't you make it effective? Tim Houston's government has decided to make evictions easier and faster, at a time where we have record numbers of people sleeping on the streets, and after ACORN published a damning report earlier this month, showing **Fixed Term Leases are making Nova Scotia the Eviction Capital of Canada.**

The temporary 5% rent cap, which is the highest in the country, falls short of real rent control and is meaningless, anyway, as long as landlords can continue to get around security of tenure with a Fixed Term Lease ... And ... can raise the rents to whatever they feel the market will bear when a suite is vacated. So this bill would seem to satisfy landlords but there is nothing in it for tenants.

As Seniors on a fixed income, my husband and I have seen our rent increase by only 12% since 2018. Manageable, but we are paying just about 50% of our income in rent. But they have, every year, raised the rent the amount of the cap. 5% this year... So, in two years my rent will have increased by almost the same amount it did over the last 6. It is not tenable, when on a fixed income, to pay 10% more every two years (actually more compounded!) into the future. That 5% is the highest in the country... And ...we are better off than many because at least one of us has an actual defined benefit pension plan. What are Seniors supposed to do when almost half of us are on GIS -- well 46% of us in NS ... too many, who have paid their dues, are losing their housing, without any fault, except incomes that are too low, and ending up in tents and shelters. 41 Pallet shelters just for Seniors in Dartmouth. This gov't should be ashamed.

The rent cap does not include vacancy control and Halifax has some of the fastest rising rents in the country. Why? Landlords have an incentive to evict tenants, even long term, no issue, tenants, just in order to raise the rent. 84.4% of tenants who have moved in the last 5 years are paying more in rent than they were in their previous apartment.

Can it really be considered *rent control*/when new tenants have no option for tenure, housing is precarious, and must continue to move into apartments that only become more and more expensive as each year passes? Of those on **Fixed Term Leases**, that responded to our survey this year, **95.9% of respondents said that wanted and signed 12 month leases**. Those 241 respondents, who reported that they wanted a standard lease, are not protected by rent control

And now, this bill makes it easier to evict people. The change in eviction guidelines for rental arrears is nothing short of cruel. 3 days is a hospital stay, or time necessary to wait for a paycheck. In a province where the average cost of a one bedroom is \$2,215, and wages remain some of the lowest in the country, with the median income at \$36,400 – not enough to rent an apt. in Halifax, or many other places in the province – it is an absolutely predictable outcome that tenants will end up in rental arrears.

What is the plan when more people, at this point potentially masses of them, become homeless as a direct result of this change in guidelines? Who are landlords going to rent to when people are living paycheck to paycheck and must struggle to make rent on time? What good could possibly come from a change like this? Nothing good but plenty of problems and many more homeless people. The gov't talks a lot about "balance but everything they have done is to make life easier for landlords-- not for tenants.

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By Margaret Anne McHugh, Dartmouth, NS