



# STUDENT HOUSING NOVA SCOTIA

## Submission to the Standing Committee on Law Amendments

Bill 467: Interim Residential Rental Increase Cap Act (amended)  
and Residential Tenancies Act (amended)

September 16, 2024



## STUDENT HOUSING NOVA SCOTIA

### **General Commentary**

The Student Housing Association of Nova Scotia (Student Housing Nova Scotia) is a non-profit organization that develops, operates, and advocates for housing that meets the needs of post-secondary students in Nova Scotia. For more than 50 years, we have provided secure and affordable housing to thousands of students. We also engage in research about student housing, and develop and support initiatives that deliver housing programs and resources to students.

We are pleased to see the extension of the 5% rent cap for an additional two years. However, we know that the current fixed-term lease regime erodes tenant protections and means that this extension will not protect many Nova Scotian renters. If this government truly wishes to protect students and vulnerable renters, it's vital that they explore more robust and effective forms of rent control.

We were disappointed to learn that Province has decided not to create a Residential Tenancies Enforcement Unit, which has long been called for by both tenant and landlord groups. We echo these calls for the Province and the Minister of Service Nova Scotia to take greater measures to enforce the Act and ensure a fair rental system for all Nova Scotians.

While we urge the province to explore further rent control measures to protect vulnerable Nova Scotians, this submission will focus on concerns and recommendations respecting Clauses 10 and 12 of Bill 467.

### **The Experience of Student Renters in Nova Scotia**

Students are a uniquely vulnerable population in our province, especially when it comes to housing. Of the over 50,000 students in this province, the vast majority are renters, and make up a large proportion of the 133,000 rental households in Nova Scotia.<sup>1</sup>

Many students are first time renters, and worryingly, more than a third (36%) of students in Nova Scotia reported being discriminated against by landlords – 7% higher than the rest of the population.<sup>1</sup> Further, a national survey conducted in 2021 found that students in Canada were paying 25% higher rent than the rest of Canadian renters.<sup>2</sup>

### **Changes to Eviction Rules for Non-Payment and Late Payment of Rent**

Clause 10 of Bill 467 shortens the window for landlords to evict tenants when they don't pay rent. Tenants can now be evicted as early as 13 days after rent was due, more than two weeks sooner than the current 30-day minimum. Section 10AF (1)(a) of Clause 12 will also allow landlords to potentially evict tenants who are repeatedly late on rent, even if rent is paid within this new 13-day window. Moreover, Bill 467 does not provide any further guidelines or stipulations respecting eviction for late rent. Without further regulation, this could conceivably mean that someone who is one day late on rent on more than one occasion could be at risk of eviction.





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Student Housing Nova Scotia is both a housing provider and landlord, and we recognize the importance of maintaining a balance between protecting tenant rights and ensuring landlords can maintain their properties. However, we are deeply concerned that this new 13-day eviction time frame will disproportionately affect those most vulnerable, including students. As a landlord and advocate, we strongly feel that the changes outlined in this submission will exacerbate the power imbalance between tenants and landlords.

With rent and cost of living at record highs, many Nova Scotians are living paycheck to paycheck, and nearly 1 in 2 students go without groceries or necessities to pay rent.<sup>1</sup> According to the Provincial Housing Needs Assessment Report, 95% of students did not feel they could find suitable alternative housing on short notice.<sup>1</sup> Decreasing the eviction timeframe to 13 days means that an unexpected situation, such as a delayed student loan, job loss, or illness, could push a student into homelessness.

It's imperative that the current rules and timelines eviction due to non-payment of rent are maintained and that alternative measures that allow more flexibility are explored. With these considerations in mind, we urge the government to make the following amendments:

- 1) Amend Bill 467 to remove Clause 10, and maintain the existing eviction timeline for non-payment of rent.
- 2) Amend Bill 467 to remove section 10AF (1)(a) from Clause 12, protecting tenants from eviction for late payment of rent even after rent is paid.

There are many aspects of Bill 467 that are positive. However, the changes outlined in Clauses 10 and Section 10AF (1)(a) of Clause 12 have the potential to further increase the housing challenges being faced by renters in this province.

Ensuring that students have access to stable and affordable housing is crucial, not only for their own success, but for the success and growth of our province.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mitchell Archibald, Executive Director

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<sup>1</sup> Nova Scotia's Provincial Housing Needs Assessment Report (2023)

<sup>2</sup> Unité de travail pour l'implantation de logement étudiant (UTILE). On Student Housing in Canada (2022).