

September 29th, 2021

**RE: Students calling to stop the existence of illegal and unsafe Multi-tenant rooming houses**

Dear Mayor John Tory and Councillors,

We are writing this letter in support of the recommended regulatory framework at the upcoming vote on Multi-tenant housing regulations. These regulations are helpful to the City, and would serve to protect students and lower-income individuals living in illegal Multi-tenant housing. We speak on behalf of these students, who do not have rights, cannot sign contracts with their landlords, and are living in constant fear. Multi-tenant homes are one of the few forms of housing that people, especially students living with low incomes, can afford in Toronto; and there will always be a demand for them. Therefore, students from across the city, collectively representing over 176,500 full-time, part-time and graduate students in the Greater Toronto Hamilton Area, are calling on you to stop the existence of illegal and unsafe Multi-tenant rooming houses.

We are not asking the City to convert single family homes to Multi-tenant rooming houses. We are asking for all Multi-tenant rooming houses, that already exist throughout Toronto, to be regulated and legalized. Voting against the legalization of Multi-tenant rooming houses - whether it is your intention or not - would mean that you are actively supporting unsafe and unjust living situations for students and many others across the city.

While the cost of post-secondary education serves as the most significant barrier to accessing higher education, there are a multitude of economic barriers that shut out many communities from our institutions. Across the city, students have reported finding it nearly impossible to access safe, affordable and accessible housing. Many students – disproportionately international students, have shared experiences of mistreatment within their tenant/landlord relationships. Many students fear eviction and being left homeless if they were to speak up for the action they need the City and other levels of government to take to keep them safe.

We have heard from students who were forced out of rooming houses during inspections with nowhere to go; situations of overcrowding with 7 individuals sharing one bathroom, kitchen and common space; and rogue landlords threatening deportation to international students seeking support for unsafe or unfair conditions. These are only a few of the accounts shared publicly by students, it is terrifying to consider even greater injustices and unsafe living conditions that exist behind closed, unregulated doors.

On May 30th 2018, Helen Guo, an international student at the University of Toronto Scarborough, tragically lost her life in an electrical fire incident in an illegal Multi-tenant rooming house in Scarborough. Other tenants suffered minor injuries while trying to escape. Rooming house deaths overwhelmingly occur in illegal homes, often due to safety infractions that regulations would have addressed.

Therefore, we are asking for City Councillors to stand in solidarity with your constituents, who are pleading with you to put their safety first. A student has already died waiting for the City to recognize that shared homes must be regulated and legal. Students' lives are at risk. In 2019, the federal government

declared housing to be a human right and Mayor Tory quickly echoed this reality in Toronto. It is critical for the City, then, to look at the safety of vulnerable students and lower-income residents through the promised human rights lens by voting yes to regulating Multi-tenant housing.

Mayor John Tory, and Councillors, we are urging you to display your leadership to ensure this issue is properly addressed. The students know that affordable housing is a key objective for your term of office, and you have been a credible leader on the issue of housing affordability. We understand that building more affordable housing for tenants with very low incomes is a slow process, however, a great first step is supporting Multi-tenant housing regulation across ALL Toronto neighbourhoods. It is time for you to make Multi-tenant rooming houses regulated and legalized to ensure a safe living environment for everyone living in Toronto.

Students have long-called for their governments to invest in affordable housing. We know that safe and regulated Multi-tenant rooming housing is a solution for many students' housing needs. The collective undersigned are in favour of the city staff's recommended regulatory framework for the legalization of Multi-tenant rooming houses. We are asking you, our councillors, to think of us - students and young people - when you vote on September 30th and October 1st.

Sincerely,

Scarborough Campus Students Union  
University of Toronto Mississauga Students Union  
Association of Part-time Students Union  
University of Toronto Students Union  
University of Toronto Graduate Students Union  
York Federation of Students  
York University Graduate Students Association  
Continuing Education Students' Association at X University

