

# RentSafe Owen Sound Collaborative

## Survey of Landlords and Property Managers on Rental Housing Conditions in Owen Sound



### BRIEFING NOTE for City Council

July 2021

#### Overview

The **RentSafe Owen Sound Collaborative** is planning an online **survey of landlords and property managers** who own or manage rental housing in Owen Sound. The purpose of the voluntary survey is to find out more about:

- the current state of rental housing conditions in our community, and
- the types of issues and challenges that housing providers are facing.

The survey results will be used to inform possible actions to support landlords in maintaining healthy conditions in their rental units and improve housing conditions for tenants.

#### About the survey

The current survey is for landlords and property managers operating residential rental properties in Owen Sound, including private market, non-profit, and social housing. A similar survey will be conducted with tenants who rent housing in Owen Sound (anticipated for Fall 2021).

The survey invites landlords and property managers to share their views and experiences regarding a range of issues including:

- percentage of their rental units affected by issues such as flooding, plumbing leaks, mould, bedbugs, rodents, other pests, structural disrepair/damage, heating issues, pet damage;
- percentage of their rental units requiring significant/costly repairs;
- challenges with maintaining units, such as difficulty hiring contractors or tenants not providing timely access;
- experiences involving tenants, such as conflictive relations, concerns about tenant mental health, hoarding, or illicit activities;
- experiences with services such as housing support programs, social services, by-law enforcement, and the Landlord & Tenant Board;
- anticipated changes to the ownership/management of their rental properties, such as renovation/upgrades, conversion to short-term rentals, anticipated sale to outside investor, etc.;
- effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on experiences as landlords/property managers.

The online survey is anonymous and takes 12-15 minutes to complete. Dissemination of the survey will occur through existing networks, such as the Y Housing program, via social media, and by word of mouth.

The survey questionnaire was created by members of the RentSafe Owen Sound Collaborative, based in part on a City of Montreal tenant survey on rental housing conditions. It will be presented as a joint initiative of the **Grey Bruce Health Unit**, the **Bruce Grey Poverty Task Force**, **Community Voices**, and **RentSafe**. Other members of the RentSafe Owen Sound Collaborative have reviewed and approved the survey.

The survey is being conducted in collaboration with Dr. Erica Phipps at the University of Ottawa, who led the RentSafe EquiP community-based research in Owen Sound (see below) and serves as director of the Ontario-wide [RentSafe](#) initiative. The University of Ottawa has granted research ethics approval for the survey.

The survey is tentatively scheduled to launch in July/August and remain open through the month of September 2021.

## Why this survey?

The [RentSafe EquiP](#) community-based participatory research in Owen Sound (2017-2020) documented multiple gaps and challenges that contribute to unhealthy and unsafe conditions in low-income rental housing, which in turn exacerbate health and social inequities. The research also revealed a lack of data and knowledge about the extent of substandard conditions, such as mould, pests, structural disrepair and inadequate heat, in rental housing units in the community.

Taken together, the results of the landlord/property manager survey and tenant survey proposed for later this year will paint a more fulsome picture of the rental housing landscape in Owen Sound, including the views, experiences and concerns of both housing providers and tenants. As such, it will provide a stronger foundation for community dialogue and awareness-building around challenges and solutions.

The results of the current survey will shed light on opportunities to better support landlords in providing safe and healthy rental housing, including the specific needs of small-scale landlords. In the context of the regional housing crisis and the current scarcity of adequate and affordable rental units in Owen Sound, the survey may provide insights into how to support and retain landlords who play an instrumental role in providing low-income housing options in the community.

## About the RentSafe Owen Sound Collaborative

The RentSafe Owen Sound Collaborative is a voluntary collaboration among people from various agencies and organizations as well as landlords and tenants who have been working together since October 2019 to support the right to healthy and dignified housing for all. Most of the ~25 individuals involved in the Collaborative forged relationships and a shared commitment to tackling housing inadequacy through their involvement in the RentSafe EquiP participatory research.

The RentSafe Owen Sound Collaborative is an inclusive space in which people from diverse sectors are working together to (1) better understand the causes and consequences of housing inadequacy as seen from multiple viewpoints, and (2) foster new ways of conceiving of issues and finding new ways of working together toward potential solutions. For more information: <https://rentsafe.ca/owen-sound/>

## How might City Council wish to engage?

The RentSafe Owen Sound Collaborative would welcome the involvement of City Council in any of a number of ways, including:

- Assisting with dissemination of the online survey to the Owen Sound community
- Inviting a report on the survey findings at an upcoming Council session
- Facilitating community dialogue on the survey findings and possible options to address identified concerns
- Sharing the Owen Sound survey with other municipalities that may be interested in pursuing a similar effort
- Getting involved in the RentSafe Owen Sound Collaborative: Councillors and/or city staff are always welcome to participate in or observe regular meetings and/or specific initiatives.

## For more information:

To learn more about the landlord/property managers survey or the RentSafe Owen Sound Collaborative more generally, please contact:

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