

June 21, 2009

To the Editor,
The Toronto Sun

Re: no safe haven.

There are some factual errors and partial truths that characterize your story about the YWCA Pape Avenue Apartments. First and foremost, they are just that-- apartments. They are permanent homes for women-led households. It is not a shelter, with all the protection and security that that would imply. It is, quite correctly, however, a place that is intended to be different from the atmosphere that sometimes envelops social housing because it assumes a community of women will participate in creating such a place. Mostly, this is true.

But YWCA, like other permanent housing providers and condo boards, has from time to time a group of residents who make life difficult for others. Disputes among them, have, in the case of the story the Sun has chosen to tell, spilled over into the life of the building. Like all landlords, we have only legal means for actual breaches open to us. To date, these have not been sufficient for the bodies that have the power of legal redress and eviction --the police and the Rent Tribunal-- to remove anyone or charge anyone with a criminal offense.

Unlike other landlords, we have community workers who try to assist the community to build their skills to get along, but this method only works as long as the people who live there participate. Hearsay, accusations and one-sided stories given air time in printed broad sheets are neither good journalism nor helpful ways to assist tenants in managing conflict.

We are active in our communities of housing and respectful of the law and regulations that govern our work. Equally, we respect the dignity of all our tenants. Eviction --rightly-- is seen as a last resort under The Landlord and Tenant Act. Extreme life distress sometimes brings with it complex social problems. If this were a condominium community, would the interest be so newsworthy?

We are, of course unable to disclose details of our residents' lives, and this means that they can not know the particulars of our work with their neighbours to resolve their tenancy issues. In the meantime, we are working just as hard as we have for the last 140 years to provide safe, affordable communities in which families can get ahead.

Sincerely,



Heather McGregor
Chief Executive Officer