

June 20, 2018

Mr. Spencer Chandra Herbert
Chair, Rental Housing Task Force
Government of British Columbia
Legislative Buildings
Victoria BC



RE: Submission to the Rental Housing Task Force

Dear Mr. Chandra Herbert,

Thank you for the opportunity to share our knowledge and experience as it relates to pets in rental housing. The Revill Group, is a Canadian pet amenity consultant serving hi-density condominium, strata, apartment communities and municipalities. We are the Canadian representative of BioPet Laboratories, an international biotechnology company established in 2008, specializing in animal genetics. BioPet Laboratories full-service laboratory provides comprehensive DNA analysis, reporting, research, product development; and hosts the online DNA World Pet Registry® management system to some 3000 plus multi-family communities and more than 250,000 registered canine pets in Canada, USA and UK.

The Revill Group and BioPet Laboratories share a mission and vision:

Protect the
environment

Expand public
access for dogs

Promote
responsible dog
ownership

We believe that organizations; such as ourselves, help to deliver pet education and measured accountability that creates a positive pet-friendly community culture, protects the health and safety of pets and residents, and instils confidence that result in landlords choosing to open more pet friendly housing. We graciously provide an un-biased opinion based on our experiences of implementing sustainable solutions in North America and the UK.

Relevant stats from the recent [Angus Reid Institute Poll\(dated March 28th, 2018\)](#) tell us:
63% of Canadians say landlords should be able to refuse to rent their properties to pet owners.
64% of B.C. residents say landlords should be able to refuse to rent their properties to pet owners.

We consider our pets as part of our families in Canada. We will provide, defend and protect them against anything. As British Columbia revises Residential Tenancy Act and appoints a Residential Task Force to revise the rental landscape in the province, this is an opportunity to create and change laws to:

- Further protect pets
- Protect rental availability
- Equip buildings and property managers with the knowledge and arsenal they currently lack while respecting the rights of both pet and non-pet owners

Topic

It is our view that a mandatory, forced and unwelcoming environment is no place for family pets. Forcing landlords to accept pets, with no tenant accountability or measurement in place is inappropriate, irresponsible and is not in the best interest of landlords, tenants or pets. With the growing number of pets today, consider that many hi-density approved pet-friendly properties could reach a 40% pet capacity.

Recommendation

The best course of action is to build confidence and security on both sides so that expectations are understood and met. Most existing non-pet friendly, hi-density multi-family properties are not presently equipped to properly accept pets. In many cases they lack the space, knowledge, infrastructure and amenities to effectively handle pets. The City of Toronto is presently going through this exact exercise.

Topic

Currently, as per the Residential Tenancies Act for the Province of Ontario, landlords are allowed to refuse to rent to pet owners. However, they are not allowed to put a "no pets" clause in a rental contract. Which means, rental applications can be submitted by potential tenants that indicate not owning a pet; they then can bring a pet to the residence upon taking possession without any recourse. This type of legislation creates a negative relationship between landlord and tenant. It also does not allow for the landlord to include unforeseen damage caused by a pet in the contract.

Recommendation

The Revill Group is presently assisting The City of Toronto's Planning and Development team to create a set of Pet Friendly Design Guidelines for Toronto's multi-unit, high-density communities that include the large and growing pet population. In these areas, existing facilities may be at or nearing capacity, and additional space, facilities, and amenities are increasingly required to support the growing pet population and their owners, as well as to provide open space and facilities for everyone to enjoy.

The purpose of the study is to develop a series of guidelines to include the design and planning of pet amenities in multi-unit, high-density communities. The study will focus on three scales – the neighbourhood, the building, and unit - covering the private to the public realm, with recommendations and strategies tailored to address issues associated with each.

Notes:

- As it relates to The Residential Tenancies Act in Ontario, there are no legal references that "animals are considered part of the family" in Ontario.
- As per the Ontario Human Rights Commission and the Residential Tenancy Act "refusing to accept pets" is not considered a "[Type of Rental Housing Discrimination](#)" nor "[Prohibited Grounds of Discrimination](#)"
- Disability is an exception where guide dog(s) are allowed where a "no pets" policy is in place.

Topic

There is no one size fits all approach to renting to tenants with pets. It is our view and experience that forcing landlords to accept pets will create a hostile and adversarial relationship between landlords, pet owners, and non-pet owning residents.

As mentioned, most existing non-pet friendly, hi-density multi-family properties are not properly equipped to accept pets. In many cases they lack the space, knowledge, infrastructure and amenities to effectively handle an influx of pets at this time.

The 2004 introduction of a half a month's rent for a pet deposit was a step in the right direction. It achieved desired results because landlords had monies to maintain their assets should pet damage occur.

We recommend incentivizing landlords so they may choose to allow pets, and enter the growing pet community demand. Not all will have the resources.

Recommendation

It's important to incentivize landlords to accept pets. There are costs associated to properly prepare a pet-friendly property.

As properties equip themselves, and demand grows; landlords begin to compete for pet owning tenants vs. restricting them. (as found in the U.S.)

a) Establish a reasonable monthly pet fee. (it's effectively used in most U.S. States) Example \$30 - \$80/month. These fees can be used to help landlords prepare their property for pets. Monies could help provide suitable pet space, waste management and pet amenities that could help attract pet owners while ensuring pets do not interfere with the health, safety and enjoyment of other residents.

b) Establish and educate pet rules that pet owners must abide by to ensure property assets are protected, and that the health, safety and enjoyment of all residents are being taken into consideration.

Notes:

Monthly pet fees should not be considered a maintenance fee to clean up after residents' pets, whether this be pet waste or physical property damage. Pet owners are responsible for cleaning up after their pets as well as pet damage (accidents or not) and would be held accountable should they be discovered not following pet rules and municipal laws.

Again, thank you Mr. Chandra Herbert for allowing us to contribute to the Rental Housing Task Force. We hope our input brings value to the decisions proposed regarding pets in rental housing. We are available should there be any questions about our submission or further required information.

Kindest regards,

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