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To: clerks@stcatharines.ca
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Subject: Vital Services Bylaw: Hallway Temperatures
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Hello Mayor and Council

I am a long term tenant at 165 Ontario street in St Catharines.

On February 13 2023, St Catharines Council took a vote to remove apartment building hallways from the Vital Services bylaw (2022-159). I am writing to ask for a reconsideration of this decision, as it has had a powerfully negative effect on a large number of people.

In this bylaw, the definition of "Adequate and Suitable Heat" is defined saying:

"adequate and suitable heat" means that the minimum temperature of the air in the accommodation which is available to the tenant or lessee is twenty (20) degrees Celsius at one and one-half (1.5) metres from above floor level and one (1) metre from exterior walls in all habitable space and in any area intended for normal use by tenants, including recreation rooms and laundry rooms but excluding locker rooms and garages;

According to the Standard article attached, the reasons given for removing the provision for hallways were that:

1. That the city received more than the anticipated number of complaints.
2. That the requirement would be hard to enforce.

Neither of these reasons make any sense, to me.

First, the exceptional response does not indicate an error in judgement by council when enacting the bylaw. In fact, it indicates that landlords had been providing inadequate heat prior to the bylaw but tenants had no means to complain or obtain enforcement. This should be a "get busy" signal not one to withdraw parts of the bylaw.

Second, it should be no harder to enforce temperatures in a hallway than in an apartment unit. One simply goes in, takes a temperature reading and files charges as appropriate. The ensuing actions would be no different; the landlord failed to comply with the bylaw.

While I'm trusting council meant well with this decision, there have

been strong negative consequences to the 300 people in this building, as well as about 150 people in our neighbour building at 158 Ontario street which is also owned by CLV InterRent REIT.

The central hallways in this building are fed by rooftop pressure fans that force outdoor air into the halls, without any warming. This results in air, at outdoor temperatures, being forced into the unheated central core of the building. Since this increases air pressure in the hallway, the cold air is then pushed into our apartments around doors and through mail slots. Then exhaust vents in our kitchens and bathrooms, which lower the air pressure, pull it through the entire unit.

This left us with a marginally heated apartment, flooded with drafts of ice cold air that left many of us shivering and cold all winter long.

The hallway walls of our apartments were cold to touch. One could measure a heat gradient of 3 and 4 degrees between the outer walls, where the heaters are located and the hallway walls. Our closets would pour out cold air when we opened them. The shower walls in our bathrooms were also cold to touch, sometimes dipping to 14 degrees or less.

In the hallways themselves, the air temperatures would repeatedly dip to single digits. In fact, I read 6 degrees in the hallways on Christmas day of 2022.

The landlord's own cleaning staff were wearing hoodies and other outdoor apparel to keep warm while working.

We could not leave our apartments to do laundry or visit a neighbour without putting on a jacket or sweater.

On several occasions I woke up shivering in my own bed.

This year, with the temperatures rolling down towards winter, the hallway temperatures have already dropped to 14 and 15 degrees on more than one occasion.

Clearly this is NOT acceptable. The purpose of the bylaw was to ensure that tenants were comfortable in their own homes. The removal of enforcement for hallway temperatures has undermined that purpose very badly.

Across my 39 years in this building, including 5 landlords and 3 management companies the solution to this problem has been simplicity in itself: turn the fans off during the winter. The hallways pick up heat from the apartments and usually sit about 2 degrees below the apartment temperatures. Everyone was warm and comfortable.

But in 2022, CLV InterRent REIT (our latest landlord) decided not to do this. They kept the fans on, freezing us all out of house and home. When pressed for a reason, all I got was a bunch of babble about smells and

fresh air. Nobody was warm and comfortable.

Now in 2023, they are once again running these fans, filling the hallways with outdoor temperature air. Nobody is going to be warm and comfortable.

I submit that, the bylaw's phrase "any area intended for normal use by tenants" clearly does include the common hallways. They are an integral part of our lives in this building and of the building itself. To let a landlord pump ice cold air into them is both stupid and inhumane.

I am, therefore, asking Council to re-open this topic and to reconsider the decision to exclude the common hallways from Bylaw 2022-159 and, further, to direct your inspection staff to properly enforce it.

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