

<https://www.thestar.com/opinion/editorials/2023/05/11/ontario-needs-to-fix-a-dysfunctional-landlord-and-tenant-board-which-has-caused-immense-problems.html>

## Ontario needs to fix a dysfunctional landlord and tenant board which has caused immense problems

Tenants and landlords deserve timely justice when they are wronged. The provincial government should be working overtime to provide it.

By [Star Editorial Board](#)  
Thu., May 11, 2023

It appears Ontario Premier Doug Ford is fond of expediting justice when it comes to matters involving the police. The premier recently announced plans to eliminate tuition fees for students entering police college in an effort to get more Ontarians into law enforcement.

However, when it comes to getting Ontarians out of dangerous living situations the provincial government has shown far less urgency. Justice isn't expedited at Ontario's Landlord and Tenant board: it is delayed, delayed, delayed. Consider that as of January, the backlog of cases stood at a staggering 38,000.

According to reporting by the Star, that amounts to an increase of some 13,000 cases in just the last year. Hearings which once took days to schedule now take seven to eight months and scheduling of some tenant applications can take up to two years.

"The Board is fundamentally failing in its role of providing swift justice to those seeking resolution of residential landlord and tenant issues," the ombudsman declared.

On a human level, that amounts to thousands of people left in limbo in unsafe or untenable living situations. Consider the case of one renter who waited for more than a year for a hearing despite living in a black-mould infested home. Delays hit landlords too, as highlighted by the case of one who was forced to wait several months to evict a tenant facing weapons charges.

How did this happen? The answer is a perfect storm of neglect, inefficiency, and bad luck.

According to a damning new report from Ontario Ombudsman Paul Dubé, the board's "excruciatingly long delays have had immense negative impacts on the thousands of landlords and tenants who depend on it to resolve their tenancy issues."

Reasons for the enormous backlog include the failure of the Ford government to fill crucial vacancies on the board, aging technology that is prone to glitches, and a surprise pandemic that wreaked havoc on an already over-burdened and inefficient system.

The housing crisis narrative in our society often ignores the plight of renters, a reality demonstrated by the facts of the report. According to the ombudsman, tenants wait much longer than landlords for closure at the board with the average landlord filing typically taking 221 days to resolve, compared to 427 days for tenants.

The ombudsman is calling for an "aggressive" strategy to tackle the problem, one that sees the reappointment of board adjudicators and the triaging of cases so that tenants who have been waiting the longest are addressed first.

### **Provincial actions come late**

It's encouraging that the provincial government finally appears to recognize the gravity of the problem and recently, took steps to correct it. Last month, Queens Park announced plans to double the number of adjudicators as well as impose new rules for property owners to prevent so-called

“renovictions.” Ontario said it will spend \$6.5 million to beef up board staffing to chip away at the growing backlog.

This is a solid step in the right direction. Tribunals Ontario said it hopes that “significant inroads” can be made into the backlog this fiscal year.

But the province’s actions come late. There is no doubting that this crisis was made worse by COVID-19. But it also happens to be a crisis that might have been averted altogether or made significantly mitigated had the provincial government taken responsible action at the appropriate time to adequately staff a system critical to the health and safety of so many Ontarians.

Ford would presumably like Ontarians to see him as a housing hero on account of his mission to get homes built quickly. But his government’s failure to advocate and protect the wellbeing of people who rent homes paints a different picture.

Tenants and landlords deserve timely justice when they are wronged. The provincial government should be working overtime to provide it.