

Tenant tax break touted

By **DEREK PUDDICOMBE**

Ottawa apartment dwellers may soon get a rent break.

The group Tenants and Landlords for Fair Taxation (TLFT) is applauding a city staff report recommending a \$2.5 million, or .05%, reduction of the multi-residential property tax assessment.

If adopted by council, the report would spare most tenants an increase, while others could see reductions of \$2-12 a month.

Use reserve funds

Staff are also recommending that the \$2.5-million shortfall be covered by the city tax stabilization reserve and are urging council to lobby the province to look at ways of "reaching more comparable assessments between multi-residential and resi-

dential property tax classes."

It will be up to the city's corporate and economic development committee, meeting today, to forward the staff recommendations to council, which has the final say on whether renters will get a break.

"There is still a considerable way to go, but the staff recommendation is a big step forward," said Fran Go-ing, a spokeswoman for the tax fairness group.

"Any rent reductions are better than rent increases due to taxes."

Before the recommendation, the group said tenants were facing rent increases of 2%, or \$18, based on a place that rents for \$900 a month.

The group said yesterday that if the city does not enact a revenue-neutral tax ratio policy, any upward shift in assessment would drive up taxes on apartment buildings and

result in rent hikes.

While the report raised concerns that the tax reduction wouldn't make its way to tenants, landlords sent a letter to the city suggesting the majority would pass the full reduction on to tenants.

'Significant' report

John Dickie, chairman of the Eastern Ontario landlord organization, is encouraged by the staff report. "It is significant and will certainly make the situation of tenants better off," he said.

Landlords promising rent relief include Minto, Osgoode, Regional, Urbandale and Taggart.

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