

Ontario Human Rights Commission Policy on Rental Housing

The Ontario *Human Rights Code* makes it illegal for landlords to discriminate by not renting to someone based on reasons like their race, ethnic origin, source of income, age, or that they have children. It is also illegal for landlords to treat tenants in a way that causes them to be disadvantaged because of these reasons. But people looking for a place to rent and sitting tenants all across Ontario face this kind of discrimination every day. The Ontario Human Rights Commission had historically focussed most of its work on employment issues. With the change in the way human rights cases are dealt with in Ontario, the Commission had a new role in policy development and we were pleased to see them address housing problems.

The Commission decided to try to find out why landlords were not applying the Code to their business decisions and why tenants from disadvantaged groups were living in the worst rental housing. Once they heard from the public about discrimination that was occurring, they adopted a policy about Human Rights and Rental Housing. This document gives guidance to landlords, tenants and the Members of the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal about how common forms of discrimination can be overcome.

To develop this policy, the Commission held consultation sessions in Toronto, Ottawa, Waterloo and Sudbury during the summer of 2007. ACTO shared our experiences of fighting discrimination with them. We also organized legal clinics, tenant groups and people who had faced discrimination to make presentations at the consultation sessions.

[The Commission's policy document](#) reflected many of the concerns that we brought to the consultation. Decisions of the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario on housing cases and the everyday practices of landlords will tell us whether this policy will have a positive impact for Ontario's tenants. We will be watching.