

One of the determinants of health is housing and this cut in the In- Person hearings in favour of Teleconferencing Calls are and will have a negative effect on our clients:

Below is the background information on this campaign to stop phone hearings of landlord and tenant disputes.

Everyone affected by telephone hearings in the North should be contacting their MPPs to protest them. Post cards expressing opposition to the phone hearings are available at the [Kinna-Aweya Legal Clinic](#) and [AIDS Thunder Bay](#). Drop by and sign one or pick some up to distribute.

Dear Friends and Members of the Economic Justice Committee: (June 15th 2009)

RE: Eviction by Telephone

I am writing to request your help in a postcard campaign challenging the routine use of phone hearings to evict tenants. Thunder Bay has recently experienced a drastic erosion of services provided by the Landlord and Tenant Board, the administrative tribunal that hears landlord and tenant disputes. At the beginning of the year, the Board announced a pilot project to replace in person hearings in Thunder Bay with video conference hearings, a change that we believe seriously compromised a tenant's right to a fair hearing. In May, the situation was made worse when phone hearings were introduced to purportedly deal with "uncontested and other straightforward matters". In fact, all hearings are now routinely scheduled for phone hearings although a party may object if they feel a phone hearing would be unfair.

We have serious concerns that these changes will result in a deterioration of tenants' rights. Obviously, the quality of a hearing is significantly diminished when you cannot see a witness in order to establish credibility and when you cannot hand photographs and other evidence to the adjudicator. In addition, unrepresented tenants no longer have the benefit of speaking to tenant duty counsel or to a mediator in person. The effectiveness of the mediator and tenant duty counsel in facilitating agreements or ensuring that a tenant has an opportunity to obtain legal representation from the legal clinic has been severely compromised in these half hour phone hearings. Many low-income tenants will simply be evicted by default. While we see this as a grave injustice, the Board will be able to boast its success in efficiently dealing with "uncontested" matters.

We hope you will support this campaign by signing a postcard and distributing it to others who are concerned about tenants' rights to fair hearings. Please act promptly as the pilot project is being reviewed this month.

Thanks for your anticipated support in this campaign.

Yours very truly,

Mary Veltri
Staff Lawyer