

Supporters rally around tenants who pledge fight to keep their cat; [SA2 Edition]

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Full Text (355 words)

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Richard and Marian Ryll say they'll fight as long as it takes to keep Fluffy the cat living with them in their Don Mills apartment.

And Toronto city councillors, provincial New Democrats and the Toronto Humane Society are banding together to help them.

District Court Judge Lorraine Gotlib shocked animal lovers and tenant advocates this week when she ruled that because the Rylls had signed a commercial lease form that includes a no-pet clause, they would have to get rid of Fluffy or move.

Her order allows the landlord, M & R Properties, to evict the Rylls from the 164-unit Cassandra Blvd. building if the pet is still in the apartment April 1.

But the Rylls, both 56 and living on disability pensions, can't afford to buy a house and don't think they will be able to find another apartment in Metro's tight rental market.

Appeal planned

Their lawyer, Ron Jefferies, told reporters yesterday that he plans to appeal the case. If an appeal is granted, the eviction notice will be put on hold until a higher court makes a ruling, he said.

Meanwhile, New Democrat MPP Ed Philip said he will introduce a private member's bill next week asking the province to ban no-pet clauses in leases.

And the humane society is asking the city to throw its support behind an appeal to Attorney-General Ian Scott to bring in legislation.

The issue will go before the city's neighborhoods committee later this month and Councillor Jack Layton said he is "convinced council will move behind those tenants who are fighting for their rights."

Humane society spokesman Liz White estimated that about 10,000 pets in Ontario are destroyed every year because of no-pet clauses in apartment leases.

Tenant lawyer Michael Melling, chairman of the Metro Federation of Tenants Associations, said no-pet clauses violate human rights because people who can afford to buy homes can have pets while those who rent cannot.

Philip noted the province actively encourages nursing homes and seniors buildings to keep pets as a comfort to elderly people.

"On the other hand it allows private developers to discriminate against pet owners," he said.

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