

Testimony of Shannon R Clark
Senate Urban Affairs and Housing Committee
September 28, 2010

Good morning Chairman Yaw and members of the Committee. I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you today.

My name is Shannon Clark. I am the Secretary of the Landlord Association of Towanda, a Realtor© with Century 21 Jackson Real Estate, a Towanda Borough Councilwoman, as well as a member of the Regional Housing Consortium, a board member of the Bradford County YMCA and of Futures Community Support Services. I own approximately 10 residential and commercial buildings throughout Bradford County and handle property management for my real estate clients.

Since our last meeting in January, the housing situation continues to be an issue in Bradford County. The lack of available rentals, as well as affordable rentals has become a serious problem to local residents, low to moderate income families, senior citizens and to some single income oil and gas industry workers. The concentration of requests for rentals seems to be in the Towanda/Wysox area.

Rents in our area seem to have stabilized in price, however they are prices are quite high. 3 bedrooms apartments and houses are renting now for a minimum of \$1500, plus utilities. If the tenant requests that all utilities be paid by the landlord, which would include, heat, electric, water, sewer, cable, internet, garbage removal, snow removal & lawn care, rent will be in the area of \$2,000 and higher. There are still properties that have 4-6 bedrooms that are renting for \$2,500- \$3,000 a month. Two bedroom houses and even apartments are between \$1,000- \$1,250 per month, plus utilities. We typically do not have crews of men looking for housing at this time. It is more likely to be a local resident that has children in a particular school district, an oil & gas industry worker with his/her family or senior citizens searching for a house or apartment.

Personally, I have reserved two apartment buildings for local residents and plan to continue to rent at the price of \$500 and under. Programs that help find housing for low income, people with disabilities and seniors, contact me daily to see if I have any apartments available, unfortunately I have not had an availability in months. On the flip side, I have houses that I do rent to gas industry workers, where I am paid directly by the Company. Generally, if there is an issue, I contact the Supervisor, and the issue is resolved immediately. It is fairly simple and lucrative.

Some landlords are not renewing current leases with tenants knowing the local resident cannot afford what they feel they can get from gas industry worker. Evictions are more common.

As a realtor and a landlord, we are at a loss as to help the local residents find affordable housing. At this time, I think that subsidies need to be increased to our area for local residents to be able to retain their current housing status and for those seeking housing.

Thank you.