



London City Council
For Sept 24th Council Meeting

Please accept London ACORN's Submission regarding item #8.2.2 Renovictions - Amendments to the Business Licensing By-law to Introduce a Rental Unit Repair Licence

What is ACORN?

ACORN Canada, the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now, founded in 2004, is an independent grassroots organization that fights for social and economic justice for low and moderate income communities. ACORN has over 182,000 low- to moderate-income individual members in over 30 neighbourhood chapters in 10+ cities across the country. ACORN started organizing in London in 2020 and has grown to have two neighbourhood chapters with elected board members.

Background

Since our beginning in 2020, London ACORN has been advocating for strong municipal policies and programs to support and protect tenants and low-income communities. Our members have led organizing in their buildings to defend their homes from greedy and predatory landlords who are looking to evict tenants in rent controlled units so that they can raise rents and increase their profits. These landlords exploit loopholes in provincial legislation that enable renoviction, demoviction, and raising rents above the annual cap (Above Guideline Increases). They also neglect repairs, building maintenance and pest control to save money and “encourage” tenants to leave.

With provincial legislation (lack of vacancy control) enabling financialized landlords in the City to abuse the use of N13s and raise rents beyond what low and moderate income tenants can afford, London ACORN has been focused on municipal solutions in light of there being no desire from the province in maintaining affordability in rental housing and preventing no fault evictions.

ACORN members have organized tirelessly through building and neighbourhood tenant meetings, actions, town halls, and workshops to ensure its members and tenants city-wide know their rights and how to work with their neighbours to defend their homes. Additionally, ACORN members have met with City Councillors and City Staff to bring these issues forward and advocate for local action.

ACORN commends the efforts of the City of London to tackle London's current struggles with bad landlords and renovictions. Our members were heartened to see CPSC unanimously pass a motion in July to strengthen a draft anti-renoviction bylaw and find ways

to protect tenants who are already facing renovictions. Those hopes were unfortunately dashed upon the report back from City Staff at the most recent CPSC meeting.

The proposed bylaw, as-is, will not do enough to disincentivize renovation or ensure tenants have the best chance of maintaining their housing. The bylaw needs to be improved to better ensure that tenants are able to obtain temporary housing, and are able to successfully exercise their right of first refusal. We share our recommendations for amendments with City Councilors and staff below.

Currently ACORN is organizing and supporting tenants in multiple residential buildings in the city facing renovation. ACORN has been organizing with tenants against renovations now for over a decade across Ontario. Tenants that call these renovated buildings home are seniors on fixed income, tenants with disabilities, single parents, and low wage workers.

Response to City Staff Report

ACORN members, tenant advocates, and legal experts have all emphasized time and time again that it is vital for an effective anti-renoviction bylaw to include requirements for accommodation supports and/or rental top ups for tenants being displaced by renovations. At CPSC's PPM in July, a whopping twenty speakers echoed this. Our members bravely divulged their personal struggles and the terrifying experience of facing potential homelessness because they are not being effectively protected from displacement.

City staff were directed to report back to CPSC on possible temporary accommodations or rental top ups for displaced tenants, and in the report back staff ultimately recommended against adding this component to the bylaw for a number of reasons. Below we address City Staff's concerns and include recommendations for improvement.

City staff argue that if we include the accommodations/rent top up component, administrators may need to consider exemptions, and they believe most landlords would request an exemption due to the difficulty in finding vacant units in the city. The staff report also argues that adding the accommodations component would cause a burden to the city, because staff would be required to mediate between landlords and tenants on acceptable short-term accommodations.

Requirements for accommodations and rent top-ups, if added to London's bylaw, would not be a wholly novel regulation in Canada, nor in Ontario. ACORN originally fought for and won the first anti-renoviction bylaw in New Westminster, BC in 2019, and this bylaw included requirements for landlords to provide temporary housing to impacted tenants. Because of these changes, the city went from seeing more than 300 renovations to zero the year after the bylaw passed. Despite this, the City of New Westminster was not overwhelmed with requests for landlords to be exempted from the bylaw, nor did they struggle to keep up with such applications. The addition of a rental top up as the alternative to providing accommodations aids with this issue. If a landlord is unable to access another unit for tenants to live in while renovations are taking place, the landlord can simply provide a rental top up - which would be equal to the difference between the tenants' current rent and the average market rent in the city.

Accommodations and rental top-up requirements are also not new in Ontario (even discounting Hamilton's anti-renoviction bylaw). Indeed, the City of Oakville since 2019 has had regulations for landlords intending to demolish rental properties, including requirements for landlords to provide tenant relocation costs and rent gap payments while redevelopment is taking place. The [City of Toronto's Rental Housing Demolition and Control Bylaw](#) also has requirements for landlords to provide rental top ups (both Toronto and Oakville refer to this as "rent gap" payments) and/or accommodations to tenants displaced by demolitions. Toronto's regulations have been updated periodically over the past 20 years, but they've had language in their bylaws regarding similar regulations since at least 2007. In each of these cases, the city in question has not been overwhelmed by requests from landlords for exemption from these regulations.

ACORN Recommended Amendments

To encourage and enable tenants to exercise their right of first refusal, landlords must be required in London's anti-renoviction bylaw to:

1. Provide tenants who wish to exercise their right of first refusal a comparable unit while renovations are being completed that is acceptable to the tenant **or** monthly compensation equal to the difference between the tenant's current rent (including the cost of utilities) and the Average Asking Rent in the neighbourhood while renovations are being completed, in addition to the compensation they are entitled to under the RTA.
2. With the license application, the landlord must provide the City with completed tenant relocation & assistance documentation of the arrangements made with the tenant, indicating that the tenant agrees with the arrangements, including arrangements for tenant reoccupation of the rental unit once renovations are complete or confirmation from the tenant that they understand their rights and do not wish to exercise their right of first refusal. This includes confirmation that the tenant understands their rights and does or does not wish to reoccupy the unit once repairs or renovations are complete.

We understand that the City of London is under a tight timeline to determine the budget needs for 2025. To accelerate this process, we encourage City Staff to review [Hamilton ACORN's Communication for the October 19th Emergency and Community Services Committee](#), which provides recommended language for an amended Renovation License and Relocation By-law, including requirements for accommodations and rental top-ups provided to tenants displaced during renovations, as well as other recommendations to improve the bylaw.

Tenants are counting on bold action from City Hall. If the province of Ontario is going to turn its back on low and moderate income tenant communities and prioritize landlord and investor profit, we need our local government to take a stand and protect the most vulnerable in our city. We cannot afford to see more of our community members forced out of their homes due to ill-supported fears of potential litigation.

Sincerely,
London ACORN

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