



# ACORN Canada

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24<sup>th</sup> June 2020

To  
The Standing Committee on Social Policy

We, at ACORN Canada, are writing to express our concerns relating to Bill 184, *Protecting Tenants, Strengthening Community Housing Act, 2020*.

ACORN Canada is a community organization and our members who are primarily low-and-moderate income tenants, are extremely concerned about the new Bill as it deeply compromises the rights of tenants.

We strongly believe that Bill 184 will be catastrophic for tenants, especially during the ongoing pandemic when there are many tenants who cannot pay their rent because of COVID-19, or for any other legitimate reason now and into the future.

ACORN Canada conducted a survey to understand the State of Renters during COVID-19. The survey clearly demonstrated that the pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on low-income renters.

- 70% of respondents have been impacted financially, yet only 42% of people qualify for government benefits such as the CERB or EI.
- Almost 35% didn't have enough money to pay the rent on May 1st.
- 15% of respondents have been threatened with eviction if rent is not paid.

To access the survey, please visit: <https://acorncanada.org/resource/state-renters-during-covid-19-survey-report>

Bill 184 is only going to make things worse for tenants, especially who are most vulnerable.

- First and foremost, it **takes away a tenant's right to easily defend themselves at eviction hearings**. Tenants facing eviction for non-payment of rent would no longer be allowed to raise new issues, such as disrepair, at the hearing unless they formally applied to introduce that matter in advance. This measure also places an additional procedural burden placed on tenants which will limit their ability to challenge the amount of arrears the landlord is seeking. This will be especially difficult for marginalized tenants such as those for whom English is not their first language, those with disabilities, low literacy levels, among others.
- **Secondly, it takes away a tenant's right to a hearing following a repayment agreement**. Currently, if a tenant and landlord reach an agreement on repaying rent arrears prior to a hearing, and if the tenant fails to fulfill that agreement, the tenant is entitled to a hearing before eviction can proceed. Bill 184 would allow landlords to proceed straight to an eviction order without a hearing. Moreover, at an LTB eviction hearing, tenants have the ability to speak to a duty counsel lawyer before making an agreement that will affect their rights. They also have the opportunity to get the input of a Board



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mediator who can explain the implications of signing a repayment agreement, inform them of their rights, and ensure that the plan is reasonable. The new approach will forego all of that, depriving tenants of crucial source of financial and legal information and advice.

- **The Bill also makes an illegal rent increase legal** if the tenant doesn't file an application to fight the increase within one year.
- **It will allow landlords to withhold information about utility costs.** Currently landlords with suite-metered units must give prospective tenants information about electricity consumption. Bill 184 removes this requirement.
- Lastly, **it will essentially transform the Landlord and Tenant Board (LTB) into a debt collection forum**, by allowing landlords to pursue tenants for rent and utilities arrears through the LTB, instead of small claims court as is currently the case.

While the Bill must **protect tenants' rights**, the present form is only meant to further developers' profits.

We urge you to reconsider these provisions and ensure that changes are made that provide REAL protections to tenants.

Yours sincerely,

Marva Burnett  
President  
ACORN Canada

For more details, please contact Judy Duncan at [canadaacorn@acorncanada.org](mailto:canadaacorn@acorncanada.org) or 416-996-6401