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CAMPAIGN TO SAVE MANOR VILLAGE

TENANT TESTIMONIALS

Ottawa ACORN

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ACORN Canada is a multi issued, mass-based union of low- to moderate income people with chapters across the city, province and country. The purpose of our union is to give working class people power so that they can have their voices heard at the highest levels of the country. ACORN is both a deeply rooted community union working on local campaigns, as well as a large organization that connects working class people across the country to effectively fight the corporate practices and government policies that are at the root of most of our problems.

Tenants from Manor Village, a complex of townhomes in Nepean, reached out to ACORN after news that the property had been sold to Smart Living Properties - a property management company with a history of involvement in renovictions. After two tenant meetings it became clear that there was an even more immediate threat facing their neighbourhood: Stage 3 LRT.

City staff are recommending that the City expropriate the land at Woodroffe/Majestic where Manor Village tenants reside, demolish 120 residential townhomes and mass evict 300+ low income and working class tenants to make way for the future Knoxdale LRT Station. Tenants desperately don't want to leave their homes; many are multigenerational households with deep roots in the community and most tenants are on assistance or working low wage jobs. Tenants cannot afford the new rental prices on the market (the average tenant in Manor Village is paying \$1,100-\$1,300/month for a 2-3 bedroom townhome which would now go for double that price nowadays!).



Since forming a new tenant union mid September through ACORN, Manor Village members have:

- Knocked on every single one of their neighbours' doors
- Had two tenant organizing meetings
- Half a dozen action planning meetings
- Delivered a letter to Smart Living Properties' Headquarters
- Organized three phone blitz actions calling the Mayor, councillors and city staff
- Partnered with the University of Ottawa's Access to Justice Lab
- Organized a petition action at Tunney's Pasture
- Called media outlets to get out the word
- Held meetings with individual councillors and city staff asking for their support and to save Manor Village from demoviction.

Tenants continue to organize and build momentum from the ground up in anticipation of Monday, November 2nd when Transportation Committee considers staffs' proposal. Out of the six options for future Stage 3 LRT development only two require demolishing these homes, four do not.

In the following sections of this report you will find testimonies from members of the tenant union living in Manor Village to demonstrate that the City isn't just voting on whether or not to destroy buildings, but whether or not to destroy families.



"My name is Alison Trowbridge and I've lived here for almost seven years with my seven year old son. This is our home, it's our safe place. It is where he can battle his mental health in a safe location. He's a runner and having this property to defend against that, you know I have a whole community who stops him in his tracks and helps me when I can't get to him. They keep him safe.

This is a neighborhood that he knows, I know that if he does get away and is having a meltdown, he is still safe, he knows the streets, he knows where to go and where not to go. It's that reliance of the neighborhood, I call and at the drop of a hat, they'll be there no matter what.

This building is set up for his mental health, we've battled that for the last seven years. If I lose this home, we end up on the street. We become another statistic. We can't afford to live anywhere else, we can't afford the new rates, this is the rate that I can afford and get by and put food on his table, as a single mom.

Knowing that we could lose our home is terrifying. I already have enough battles to deal with lately, schooling, his mental health and now I have to worry about losing our home and food on the table and his school, and his community and his safe place and it's heartbreaking."



LISA BILOW

"My name is Lisa and I'm a tenant at Manor Village. I'm also an ACORN member. I wanted to talk about why I love this neighborhood, this community. It's my home. A lot of my neighbours have now become good friends, or were friends of mine before. Peggy Rafter was one of the first people to welcome me to this community. Diane has been a long time friend and neighbour.

When my mother got sick, she passed away two years ago, we were gone for long stretches of time because we had to take care of her and we never had to worry about our home. Diane would come in and check on it, our friends and our neighbours would always make sure that our home was safe. And that's the nice thing about our community- it's that we're friends and we're family and we look out for each other.

You're not just tearing down buildings, you're tearing apart homes. It's not just 120 houses, it's 400 people or more. These are families and we want to stay together, we want to stay here. We've made this community our own. And we support each other. So please support us in our fight to keep our homes. Thank you."



AMANDA MCMAHON & PEGGY RAFTER

"My name is Amanda McMahon and Manor Village has been my home for 32 years, if not more, I've grown up here with my mom and now my four children grow up here. Being evicted from here for the LRT or any other reason would be detrimental to our family. Trying to find somewhere else to live for the amount of rent that we pay here isn't going to be possible. My mom had a heart attack seven years ago and lost the use of her right arm. I take care of her and she's lived here with me the whole time as well.

She's on ODSP, I'm on Ontario works, and we're screwed if we have to move"

"Hi my name is Peggy, I'm a tenant at Manor Village. I've lived here for 30+ years and due to the LRT, we've been told that we're going to lose our homes. Let me tell you why we shouldn't lose our homes. We are affordable, we're a great community, I've raised both my children here, I'm now a grandma and enjoy having my grandchildren here. I pay \$1133 all inclusive and to move now... I mean rents are atrocious and homelessness is out of control, so please keep this in mind and support us in our fight"



"My wife Robyn and I moved here to Manor Village because it was a nice neighborhood that we were familiar with because my wife used to work for the company that owned the properties, and we were familiar with lots of the tenants living here. The people here are great and friends here at Manor Village are reliable and honest working people, families and a great mix of all ethnic backgrounds.

We like to brag that we have no crime in our neighborhood and that also is why we don't want the LRT to demolish this community and our housing. It's a place where you can hear the children playing outside. All of us living in Manor Village rely on what we pay now in rent and can't afford to be driven out of our homes. It is clear that developers and the City of Ottawa have plans to drive us into a rental market to make more money off of us. There are 12,000 people waiting for homes like we live in now, rents have become so inflated that landlords are demanding uncontrolled prices without intervention.

This is why we are all fighting to stay at Manor Village because it's one of the last affordable townhouse complex left to live in Ottawa."



"I've lived in Manor Village since September 2018 while Samiya just moved in a couple of months ago. There's four of us that live here so when you divide the rent among us it works out to just over \$400/month which is affordable on our budgets.

If we were forced to move we'd have nowhere else to go. We even tried looking and the cheapest housing we can find is \$650/month plus hydro and internet. Samiya is a high school student and can't afford more than what she's paying right now. I can't move back home to an abusive living situation.

My expenses are already going up - when I turn 25 in a few days I'm going to lose my coverage for my medical equipment. When this happens I'll go from paying \$180/month to \$400/month. This is going to be tight let alone having to pay more money in rent if I'm forced to leave.

Being able to stay would mean feeling safe and secure in my housing. I worked really hard to feel secure with my roommates. As a low income person, this rent is affordable and makes my life slightly more affordable so I can pay additional bills. For Samiya it would mean being able to focus on her studies. For both of us it would mean a lot - it would mean stability."



Despite countless stories like those here, we keep hearing the same rationale from the City as to why the demoviction of Manor Village is even being considered. Here is what we've heard and ACORN members' response:

- **Stage 3 LRT is a long ways away - plenty of time for tenants to find alternative housing!**

Every single year rents are rising faster than our incomes. Earlier this year the City declared a housing and homelessness emergency. If tenants cannot afford to move now, they certainly won't be able to afford to move 3-5 years from now. We heard from multiple tenants that if this plan passes they'll have to leave Ottawa or wind up on the streets.

- **The City had two public open houses - we've consulted the community!**

None of the tenants we spoke to could recall receiving notice of these public consultations (one in person, one online). Meanwhile, ACORN has generated 320+ emails to city staff, the Mayor and city councillors and knocked on every door in Manor Village collecting petition signatures of tenants stating that they do not want to leave their homes.



- **We need to balance the desires of the community and the long term costs of the project!**

According to city staff the plan that displaces tenants is actually MORE expensive than other options. Options that don't require demoviction may have greater long term maintenance costs because of curves in the tracks, however, if tenants are evicted the City will pay more in building new housing for affected tenants, increased shelter costs, and tenants will struggle to pay for moving costs and additional rent. City staff have not factored in these added costs of displacement.

- **Other preferred options will completely disrupt Woodroffe Ave!**

The City should be prioritizing tenants' right to housing over traffic and noise concerns. The fact that these issues are being weighed with greater importance than tenants' ability to keep a roof over their head is insulting to families.



WHAT WE'VE HEARD CONTINUED

- **The City will help tenants find other affordable housing!**

The strongest language in staff's recommendations is that the City will "encourage" the affordable housing sector and private developers to offer alternative affordable housing. This is unacceptable for a number of reasons : 1) tenants don't want other housing, they want the housing they currently live in to stay 2) even if tenants were to accept alternative housing the City has no concrete plan to do this and 3) the City has no municipal tools to require rental replacements for tenants. Unlike other municipalities, Ottawa doesn't have a rental replacement bylaw or tenant assistance policy in cases of redevelopment.



The Manor Village ACORN Tenant Union has heard every reason as to why tenants should allow Stage 3 LRT to bulldoze their community and put their families at risk of homelessness and housing insecurity. But tenants are united in their demands to save Manor Village from demoviction.

YOU can support the campaign by:

- 1) Registering for a virtual deputation at Transportation Committee on Mon, Nov 2nd OR providing a written submission in support of Manor Village tenants
- 2) Joining our social distance march on **Thurs, Oct 29th at 3:30pm starting at 5 Majestic Drive**
- 3) Sharing our online action that generates emails to the Mayor, councillors and city staff: <https://acorncanada.org/take-action/urgent-action-lrt-track-mass-evict-neighbourhood-during-covid-19>
- 4) Leaving a message on the Mayor and your city councillor's voicemail asking them to vote in favour of a future knoxdale LRT station that doesn't demolish Manor Village

**GET INVOLVED BY CONTACTING ACORN:
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