

THE DEMOVICTION REPORT: OTTAWA

HOW TO STOP MASS DISPLACEMENT
AND PROTECT AFFORDABLE HOUSING



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ACORN

What is ACORN?

ACORN (Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now) Canada is a multi-issue, membership-based community union of low- and moderate-income people. We have over 140,000+ members organized into twenty-four neighbourhood chapters in nine cities across Canada. We believe that social and economic justice can best be achieved by building community power for change.

We have a long and deep history of organizing in low- and moderate-income neighbourhoods, fighting and winning change through a variety of means - including doorknocking; petitioning; local, regional, and national meetings (both internal and public forums); and last but not least, peaceful direct actions - all building power in the process.

Ottawa ACORN:

Ottawa and Gatineau ACORN has 32,000+ members organized throughout four chapters in Ottawa (Ottawa -Vanier, Central Ottawa, South Ottawa, and Ottawa West-Nepean) as well as one chapter over the bridge in Gatineau, Quebec.

We work on a lot of issues such as housing, predatory lending and fair banking, social assistance, internet for all and more.

Through local, neighbourhood organizing, Ottawa ACORN has been able to secure tons of victories:

- \$15 million in the City's 2019 budget towards affordable housing that has since been matched in the 2020, 2021 & 2022 budgets
- New by-laws on pest control and rental management
- Municipal distancing and licensing of payday lenders
- Increased the City's targets for affordable housing and changed the definition to better reflect the incomes of working class tenants
- And much more!

OTTAWA HOUSING CRISIS

With the continuous loss of affordable housing, on January 29th 2020, Ottawa became the first city in the country to declare a **housing and homelessness emergency**. Today is its second anniversary.

According to the City of Ottawa's 2019 Rental Market Analysis(1):

- Between 2016 and 2018, the city's population living in rental accommodation grew by 2.9%, much faster than the growth in the number of rental units which was only 1%.
- Since 1999 in Ottawa, only 1,760 affordable rental units have been completed, compared to 8,000 market rental units and 87,456 ownership units completed in the same time period. In fact, in the last decade, **less than 3% of all developments were affordable rental units**.
- Ottawa has seen a major skyrocketing in rental costs in recent years. In 2016, over 42% of all renter households were paying over 30% of their income on rent. This has very likely worsened as market rents have increased by ⅓ in the last decade but incomes haven't come close to keeping pace.

According to Carolyn Whitzman, a professor at the University of Ottawa, from 2011 to 2016, **15 affordable homes were lost for every social housing unit built(2)**. By 2020, Ottawa's wait-list for affordable housing had increased 14.8% since 2017.

As per the January 2022 Rent Report by Rentals.ca(3), in Ottawa, the cost to rent a one-bedroom apartment was \$1,618 in December, up 2.21 per cent from December 2020. The average two-bedroom apartment in Ottawa cost \$2,023, up 1.3 per cent from December 2020.

If these current rates continue, the City of Ottawa's 2019 Rental Market Analysis forecasts that **average apartment rents will increase by 41% by 2031**, resulting in almost 25,000 more households living in unaffordable dwellings.

One of the main contributing factors to the housing crisis is Renovictions and Demovictions.

According to Hannah Brais from the Homeless Hub(4):

“Renoviction is when a landlord evicts the tenant through renovations. This can be through displacing the tenant to perform the renovations, or after the tenant cannot control the rent increase that follows the renovations.”

“A demoviction is when a tenant is displaced as a result of their home being demolished.”

Housing is a human right. Yet demovictions are forcing tenants out of their affordable homes to leave space for luxury rentals and condos. In Ontario, when tenants move out, landlords are free to increase rents by as much as they want, **creating incentive for landlords to push out long-term tenants.** Hence, once demovicted, tenants are thrown into a housing market where they are not able to afford the rent or are forced to cut back on spending for essential services just to be able to pay their high rent. Moreover, the current regulations at the provincial level are extremely weak when it comes to tenant protections in case of demolition. Therefore, it is critical for cities to use their powers to ensure that tenants’ rights are protected.



ANTI-DEMOVICTION CAMPAIGN HISTORY

Ottawa ACORN members launched the citywide campaign for an **Anti-Displacement Policy** on March 4th, 2021, but before that, we have had a long-standing history of fighting demovictions in Ottawa.

In 2015/2016 and 2018, ACORN members fought hard to protect tenants when Timbercreek/Hazelview **mass evicted 180+ families in Herongate to make way for luxury rentals**. Since then, members have continued the fight in Herongate in order to protect tenants from further demovictions. Thanks in large part to ACORN members' persistent organizing, in September 2021, the City signed a legally binding agreement with Hazelview in Herongate which prevents homes from being demolished until tenants secure new units at the same rent and type of unit. While this guaranteed rental replacement is a big first for Ottawa, the legal agreement or 'social contract' doesn't extend to tenants who were previously demovicted. Moreover, the demovictions still resulted in a net loss of affordable housing and ACORN continues to organize against the gentrification of the neighbourhood.

In 2020, ACORN members began their **fight to stop the demovictions of 300+ people in Manor Village** when Ottawa City Council voted to put Stage 3 of the LRT through the neighbourhood. We were able to secure the formation of a working group tasked with assisting tenants, including consideration of replacement units, however, much more work is still needed to be done to protect tenants from mass displacement as no assurances from the City have been made.

Herongate and Manor Village are only a few of the many instances of demovictions which are occurring throughout the city of Ottawa. For example, tenants at **249 & 253 Des Peres Blanc in Vanier formed an ACORN Tenant Union** after new building owners took control of the two six unit buildings and started telling tenants they had to move because they wanted to do massive renovations or demolish to jack up the rent. The new ACORN Tenant Union immediately took action and were able to win an agreement with management to withdraw their eviction notices. In addition, we've also formed a new tenant union to fight against the **demoviction of tenants at 142 Nepean Street** whose apartments are going to be demolished for a parking lot.

THE SCALE OF THE PROBLEM

In order to understand the scale of the demoviction issue in Ottawa, Ottawa ACORN went through the applications for redevelopment on the City of Ottawa website: <https://devapps.ottawa.ca/en/>. We went through the applications under Demolition Control, Official Plan Amendment, Site Plan Control and Zoning By-law amendment.

After detailed reading of the applications, it turns out that there are a total of 23-29 applications across the city that will lead to demovictions. When we looked at who is applying for redevelopment of private rentals – the information about this is hard to find which itself raises questions. Many are numbered companies, some are financialized landlords and others are large-private/family-owned.

Most importantly, a rough estimate shows that more than 5,500 tenants will be impacted if these applications were to proceed!



DEV APPS LEADING TO DEMOVICTION

Application number	Type of application	Address	Ward	Owner
D07-05-17-0004	Demolition control	151 METCALFE	Ward 14 - Catherine Mckenney	Morguard Investments Limited
D01-01-20-0020	Official Plan Amendment	26 ARMSTRONG 36 ARMSTRONG 40 ARMSTRONG 961 WELLINGTON 967 WELLINGTON 969 WELLINGTON 979 WELLINGTON	Ward 15 - Jeff Leiper	ML DEVCO. Inc. <input type="checkbox"/>
D01-01-21-0003	Official Plan Amendment	1032 BLASDELL 61 BRAEMAR 231 BRITTANY 425 BRITTANY 459 BRITTANY 496 BRITTANY 411 CARPENTER 869 HEMLOCK 206 ST-LAURENT, BOULEVARD 244 ST-LAURENT, BOULEVARD	Ward 13 - Rawlson King	Manor Park Group

D01-01-21-0002	Official Plan Amendment	641 RIDEAU	Ward 12 - Mathieu Fleury	Theberge Homes
D02-02-20-0030	Zoning by-law Amendment	1995 CARLING	Ward 7 - Theresa Kavanagh	Claridge Homes (Bromley) Inc.
D02-02-21-0108	Zoning by-law Amendment	949 NORTH RIVER	Ward 13 - Rawlson King	Gemstone (River Road) GP Inc.
D02-02-21-0125	Zoning by-law Amendment	448 BRONSON 450 BRONSON 456 BRONSON 460 BRONSON	Ward 14 - Catherine Mckenney	Mike Kang
D01-01-19-0010	Official Plan Amendment	2848 BAYCREST 2851 BAYCREST 2881 BAYCREST 2898 BAYCREST 2820 CEDARWOOD 2831 CEDARWOOD 2816 SANDALWOOD	Ward 18 - Jean Cloutier	Mustang Equities & TC Core LP, Hazelview Properties
D07-12-20-0124	Site Plan	890 BYRON 534 REDWOOD 542 REDWOOD 550 REDWOOD 560 REDWOOD 568 REDWOOD 455 SHERBOURNE 463 SHERBOURNE 471 SHERBOURNE 483 SHERBOURNE	Ward 15 - Jeff Leiper	Byron Rental Properties Ltd.
D07-12-21-0063	Site Plan	13 BALSAM	Ward 14 - Catherine Mckenney	Magnolia Properties Inc.
D07-12-21-0064	Site Plan	248 MAIN	Ward 17 - Shawn Menard	Andrea and Alan Ibrahim
D07-12-21-0126	Site Plan	1291 SUMMERVILLE	Ward 16 - Riley Brockington	Jordan Tannis

D07-12-21-0129	Site Plan	174 ETHEL	Ward 12 - Mathieu Fleury	11858980 Canada Inc.
D07-12-20-0081	Site Plan	381 CHURCHILL 380 WINONA	Ward 15 - Jeff Leiper	Richmond Churchill Ltd. Partnership
D07-12-20-0106	Site Plan	52 GARLAND	Ward 15 - Jeff Leiper	YAR Capital Properties
D07-12-20-0142	Site Plan	161 HINCHEY	Ward 15 - Jeff Leiper	Praveen Mupalla
D02-02-21-0055	Zoning by-law Amendment	1592 TENTH LINE	Ward 1 - Matthew Luloff	Bidor Developments
D07-12-21-0196	Site Plan	260 ARMSTRONG	Ward 15 - Jeff Leiper	2665883 Ontario Inc.
D07-12-21-0076	Site Plan	142 NEPEAN 144 NEPEAN 146 NEPEAN 148 NEPEAN	Ward 14 - Catherine Mckenney	Ernesto Guerra, Pino Guerra, Rosangela Guerra, Marilena Guerra
D07-12-21-0037	Site Plan	295 ASHTON 299 ASHTON 301 ASHTON	Ward 15 - Jeff Leiper	
D07-12-21-0178	Site Plan	630 CHURCHILL	Ward 15 - Jeff Leiper	Keegan Gomes
D07-12-19-0140	Site Plan	339 GLOUCESTER 343 GLOUCESTER	Ward 14 - Catherine Mckenney	Issa Hamzo, Upscale Homes
D07-12-20-0018	Site Plan	77 HARVEY 81 HARVEY	Ward 17 - Shawn Menard	Concorde Properties

POTENTIAL DEMOVICTION SITES

***Could not confirm from development applications alone**

D07-12-18-0052	Site Plan	994 BRONSON	Ward 17 - Shawn Menard	2344407 Ontario Inc
D07-12-18-0112	Site Plan	170 PRETORIA	Ward 17 - Shawn Menard	Greg and Beata Campbell
D07-12-19-0101	Site Plan	208 SLATER 212 SLATER	Ward 14 - Catherine Mckenney	208 Slater Street Realty Inc.
D07-12-20-0140	Site Plan	349 DANFORTH	Ward 15 - Jeff Leiper	Frank Porcari
D07-12-20-0186	Site Plan	69 BARRETTE 70 BARRETTE 71 BARRETTE 72 BARRETTE 73 BARRETTE 74 BARRETTE 76 BARRETTE	Ward 13 - Rawlson King	Barwood Limited Partnership
D07-12-20-0069	Site Plan	455 MCARTHUR	Ward 13 - Rawlson King	1496250 Ontario Inc.

OBSERVATIONS & FINDINGS

- 23 applications are currently on the City's website seeking council approval to redevelop private rentals that will eventually require demolishing tenants' housing. There are an additional 6 applications that could lead to demovictions but couldn't be confirmed from the applications alone.
- 23 out of the 29 applications were filed with the City in the past 2 years with 80% being filed last year in 2021.
- The wards with the most confirmed demovictions are: Ward 15 (8), Ward 14 (5), and Ward 13 (3)
- Recently, due to persistent tenant organizing and community pressure by ACORN members and allies, a small number of developers have announced commitments to financial compensation, relocation assistance for tenants or rental replacements in the new builds. However, only in Herongate have those commitments become legally binding and it only came after hundreds of tenants had already been displaced.

Based on the number of units impacted by each application, more than 5,500 tenants will be displaced by redevelopment if approved.

TESTIMONIES

Many ACORN members across Ottawa have first hand experience with renovations and demovictions that are destroying their homes.

Grace lyobosa - Demovicted in Herongate in 2016 AND 2018

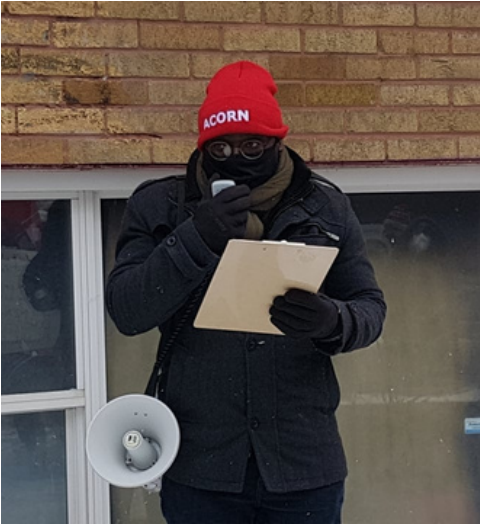


In 2016 I was evicted in Herongate because they said the houses were beyond repair. But they purposely let them fall apart. I had mice, there were big holes in the wall, bedbugs, the toilet was broken and they wouldn't fix anything for years. I wasn't compensated - they instead moved me across the street to Baycrest where my family was evicted again in 2018.

I have a lot of pain because of what happened. I was depressed, my kids were depressed - they had to change schools, they're being bullied. Every day they now have to travel farther to go to a different school and I now live in Gloucester where I don't know anyone. My kids lost their friends. It was completely disruptive. I

came to Canada because I wanted a better life but things have been so tough. It was so stressful, I was scared. I couldn't find anything close to what I was paying in Herongate - when I was evicted I was paying \$1,300/month and now I'm paying \$1,700/month. Politicians must do something - My rent is \$1,700/month and I'm not working anymore because of COVID. I only have \$300/month to pay Embridge, groceries, bus pass and support my kids. I wish I could get back to Herongate - I liked my neighbours, there are other immigrants and people of colour like me, I feel like I'm home there.

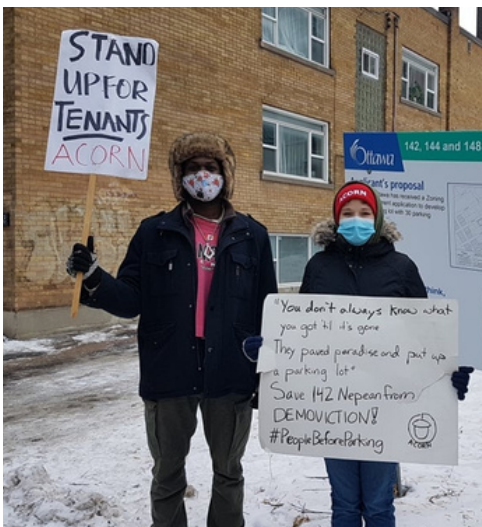
Lionel Njeukam - Home at 142 Nepean to be Demolished for a Parking Lot



I am a tenant at 142 Nepean street and I am a new ACORN member. I moved to Centretown right at the beginning of the pandemic back in March/April 2020 to get closer to my work. I would then be able to save on transportation and make my humble contribution to protecting the environment by commuting less between Vanier, where I used to live, and Ottawa Centre. This old building was a blessing for my baby who was to be born a few months later. Our little family of three has been close to everything i.e., at walking distance from work, grocery stores, pharmacies and clinics, cultural centres, etc. and on top of that, we had a fair deal in terms of rent, just what we could afford - \$1,200/month for a

two bedroom. And suddenly, barely one year after moving to this incredible place, we heard about a demoviction project. The landlord has been selling this very old building and a developer has been interested to buy it in order to tear it down and build a parking garage! This is having an impact on our family - the emotional and financial stress is overwhelming. The developer offered to match our rent in a different building close to ours... but guess what, for only two years - and even that we had to fight for. Then what is going to happen with us? Our rent would skyrocket and we'd be out looking for another home. This is how gentrification happens in daylight. If some people are wondering how some people are getting poorer while others are getting richer, this is a clear-cut case study. This is why I joined ACORN.

Anna Meurot - Home at 142 Nepean to be Demolished for a Parking Lot



I'm 23 years old and I live with my partner. I'm originally from France and I'm here on a work permit, working towards getting my permanent residence. Every year for the past 5 years that I've been in Canada I've had to move. Sometimes for personal reasons but mostly because of bad landlords or rents I simply couldn't afford. Constantly having to look for a place is exhausting and draining. We moved into this place in May and the project proposal was submitted in July. My partner and I didn't even learn about the developer's plan to demolish our building for a parking lot until we saw a big "Applicants Proposal" sign outside our place! We wanted to stay here for at least 2-3 years so we could be more stable and

get out of our precarious situation job-wise. I'm trying to afford immigration, applying for permanent residency is expensive, plus struggling with student loan debt is very stressful. Our rent is currently

\$1,300/month which is what we can afford with my new job, but other apartments in the neighbourhood are much more expensive. The developer wants to move us to another building but after we insisted on visiting the units they simply didn't work for us - one had bedbug reviews and the other was almost half the size. Their original plan was to have us pay \$1,500/month plus utilities then give us almost two months of free rent. After two months we'd be paying more than \$200/month extra in rent - we just can't afford this and would much rather stay in our home.

Dustin Munro - Renovictions/Demovictions at 249 & 253 Des Peres Blanc



I pay \$661/month for a bachelor because I've lived there for the past 8 years. Meanwhile bachelors nowadays are going for \$1000/month! On ODSP, I definitely can't afford that. Now this all started when two men came looking at the buildings in February 2021. They came back March 24th to hand out N11 eviction notices saying that they bought the building and wanted everyone out. This was a lie - they didn't take possession until July 12th. I reached out to ACORN and joined as a member. A few members of the tenant union met with OPG on zoom where they refused to identify themselves or even turn on their cameras. They refused to let tenants stay in the buildings and said that they planned to

renovate and wouldn't allow people to come back. It wasn't until we planned a protest at the buildings that then they said they'd let some people stay (not everyone! Just some). And they told us this at 9:12pm the night before while the protest was at 11am. They've already started renovations - which shows that we don't have to leave so they can do renos! A new listing online shows that the renovated units are going for nearly \$1,500/month. That's more than DOUBLE what I pay right now! Recently, myself and another tenant were offered \$10,000 to leave - I told them it's not enough - that will only last so long when rents just keep going up. All we want is our homes.

Alison Trowbridge - Manor Village Tenant where Townhouses are Set to be Demolished by Stage 3 LRT



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 neighbourhood 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. It's heartbreaking.

Peggy Rafter - Manor Village Tenant where Townhouses are Set to be Demolished by Stage 3 LRT



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 - where are we supposed to go? They'd be destroying a community. But it's not just the City that wants to put us out, our landlord Smart Living is also trying to push us out - they've stopped maintenance and are offering tenants money to leave. Just so they can paint and raise the rent. I won't take the money because it won't last long. And this is my home. I have roots here. It would hurt to leave.

Margaret Alluker - Demovicted from Herongate in 2018

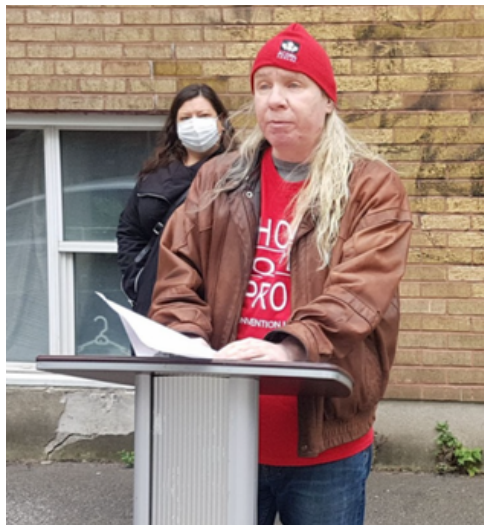


I have lived here since 2012 after moving from Sudan, first in the Cedarwood high-rises where I had a lot of problems with cockroaches and the water supply. I moved to one of the townhouses on Baycrest in 2015 with my two kids and nephew. I couldn't really afford the rent - \$1,300/month - but I can't find cheaper housing anywhere else. I've been on the waitlist for social housing for 6 years. In May they told us we needed to be out by September 30th. I was in school full time and am taking care of these kids by myself - it was very hard to find anything else. That's why I fought with ACORN to stop the demovictions. We got a better deal than the first group of tenants Timbercreek evicted but

still it was very hard - my daughter cried a lot about leaving friends in the neighbourhood and I was very

stressed. I kept calling the Social Housing Registry but they told me I needed to keep waiting for housing. Many people wait for 10 years. So now I live back in the Cedarwood high-rises. It's much smaller, there's no yard for the kids, again there are problems with cockroaches and I'm paying almost \$400/month more each month for rent. This means budgeting is very tight - I can't get things for the kids, we cut down on groceries, it's only the bare necessities.

Darin Loewy - Living in Slum-like Conditions Before Pushed out for Redevelopment at 641-649 Rideau St



For 18 years I had been living in slum-like conditions, roaches everywhere, extreme water damage to my living room wall, my front door was hanging off its hinges, holes in the bathroom ceiling, and a stove that since 2015 had only one functioning burner and an oven that didn't function at all. I had reported all of these issues but to no avail, I even got desperate and called Property Standards at the City. It took 15 months and an ultimatum from the Property Standards Inspector to replace my stove in February 2020. Their motive for stopping repairs was very simple. It's so obvious that of course they wouldn't want to maintain their property when they had plans to tear the whole place down. In

January 2021 I took a small settlement to move out because I was tired of their neglect and harassment. Just two months later they filed an application with the City to rezone the property so they could replace the buildings with a luxury 25 storey high-rise. I was a good, clean tenant for nearly two decades and now even in non-profit housing, I'm paying an extra \$400/month in rent. My case isn't an isolated incident and I feel for my old neighbours still living there - where are we supposed to go when all the City's affordable housing keeps getting torn down?

DEMANDS

In 2015, based on our work in Herongate, we began calling on the City for a Rental Replacement Bylaw. While essential to protecting affordable housing, a Rental Replacement Bylaw on its own has gaps. Without further protections tenants are still displaced during the time it takes to demolish and build the new development. This is why in 2021, Ottawa ACORN members launched our campaign for an Anti-Displacement Policy. This is largely based on the City of Burnaby's Tenant Assistance Policy, which was implemented thanks to BC ACORN's organizing against demovictions in Metrotown(5).

An Ottawa Anti Displacement Policy should include:

- In the case of the demolition and redevelopment of affordable housing, ensures rental replacements so that if the developer eliminates affordable market rental units or subsidized units, they are included in the new development for the same price and number of bedrooms.
- Units lost to redevelopment must be replaced at a ratio of 1:1 or 25% of the total number of proposed units, whichever is greater.
- Tenants who are evicted should have the first right of refusal to move back into the units created in the new development.
- Rent Stabilization: Tenants can choose between accepting temporary accommodation (must be given 3 options) of comparable size and location at the same rent they were paying before OR a rental top up should the tenant choose to find their own temporary accommodation. A rental top up should cover the difference between their current rent and median market rent for the area + 30%.
- Tenants must be given 4 months notice
- Moving costs assistance up to \$1,400 dollars depending on the size of the unit for when you relocate and again when you return
- Special considerations be used for tenants with disabilities
- Continued maintenance of units while units are still occupied
- This should apply for all tenants at risk of displacement living in privately owned buildings with 3+ units (including townhomes) and any properties acquired by the City for the purposes of redevelopment and/or major infrastructure projects

To tackle renovictions, Ottawa ACORN members are calling on the City to implement an Anti Renovation Bylaw similar to the one established in New Westminster, BC:

- Once all permits are obtained, and it is proven that tenants must vacate in order for the renovations to take place, the landlord must do either of the following steps: 1) Enter into a new lease with the tenant that is identical or more favourable to the tenant, with provision of a comparable rental unit in the same building OR; 2) Agree that tenants can move back under the terms of the existing lease AND find temporary accommodation for the tenant during the renovation period. If a landlord violates these rules, they will be fined by the City and lose their business license
- Stronger property standards bylaws and enforcement to prevent landlords from neglecting their units in the lead up to redevelopment

It should be noted that in New Westminster, as per an article published by the Toronto Star, prior to the bylaw, **the city had 333 known renovictions and has had none since 2019**(6).

We are also calling for a proactive education program to inform tenants about their rights and resources when:

- A building changes ownership (the City would be notified by the change in license)
- Reports from community members or tenant groups of “buy outs” or N13 notices
- When the City receives a development or building permit application for a multi-residential property

More information on Ottawa ACORN's housing campaigns can be found here:

<https://acorncanada.org/resource/ottawa-acorns-healthy-homes-platform>



TAKE ACTION!

While this list of development applications provides a snapshot of demovictions currently before City Council, there are many that are not captured simply because landlords and developers haven't made their applications to the City yet. For example, Manor Village and 249 & 253 Des Peres Blanc are not pictured, yet in both cases tenants are experiencing harassment from management, aggressive buyout offers, negligence of maintenance and N11/N13 eviction notices all in an effort to push out tenants. **We can expect the number of tenants impacted by demovictions and renovictions in Ottawa to be much higher than these applications represent.**

This is why tenants desperately need Ottawa City Council to follow the lead of other municipalities and take an aggressive stance on displacement to end our housing emergency.



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