

ANNUAL

REPORT



2022





FOREWORD

**By ACORN National President,
Marva Burnett**

The year 2022 had to be different and exciting as it marked the comeback of in-person actions and meetings and most importantly, ACORN resuming door-knocking to reach out to and engage more and more low- and moderate-income people ready to fight back!

After more than two years of zoom zaps, more than 200 ACORN members from coast to coast got together for the 6th bi-annual National Convention in Montreal and made noise outside PSP Headquarters in Montreal - one of Canada's biggest Pension Funds - and did a sit-in to demand that they stop the financialization of housing. We also produced a first of its kind report highlighting the impacts of the financialization of housing on low- and moderate-income tenants which was released with a series of reports by the Office of the Federal Housing Advocate. It is the first ever issue referred to the Review Panel which will begin its public hearings soon.

The federal government finally launched the consultation to fight predatory lending - ACORN has fought for this for years. And we saw the expansion of the Federal Government Connecting Families program to some low-income seniors.

New Brunswick ACORN won a temporary rent cap and are continuing to fight to make it permanent. Hamilton, Ottawa and Toronto moved forward in their anti-renoviction and demoviction campaigns. The rent grant program in Toronto became permanent.

The year also saw new chapters in Calgary - in Calgary East and the City Centre Chapter and a new Nepean Chapter in Ottawa.

We saw new campaigns launched and many ongoing campaigns leading to significant victories. The Stand Up for Surrey Campaign in BC saw a forward momentum with a very well attended housing forum and a province-wide campaign in BC demanding vacancy control. Hamilton launched its max heat bylaw campaign and municipal broadband campaign.

Tons of building actions opposing unsafe and unhealthy housing conditions and illegal rent increases all through the year building more power for tenants and new ACORN leaders!

All this came with new challenges such as the Bill 23 in Ontario - a highly regressive legislation that threatens tenants' rights and powers of cities to protect and build affordable housing and push back on rent control, but this also meant allies across different sectors come together to fight for affordable housing.

Big shout out to all ACORN members and thank you to all our allies and supporters to keep up the good fight!

ACORN 2022 BY THE NUMBERS

610
EVENTS

7,839
TURNED OUT

244
PRESS HITS

70,000
DOORS KNOCKED



NATIONAL CONVENTION 2022

Close to 200 ACORN members from coast to coast gathered at the 6th bi-annual national event from June 18th – 20th at Concordia University in Montreal. The theme was “Making Housing our Right”.

This long-awaited convention was powerful: after three long pandemic years, members from across the country could finally meet in person, and the two-and-a-half-day convention was filled with action.

The Convention kicked off with a series of workshops conducted by ACORN leaders on issues ranging from vigorous campaign planning, to stopping financialized housing and predatory lending, to members learning new skills from their peers including how to run a workshop, how to speak to the media, and how to use social media to get the message out in the virtual world.

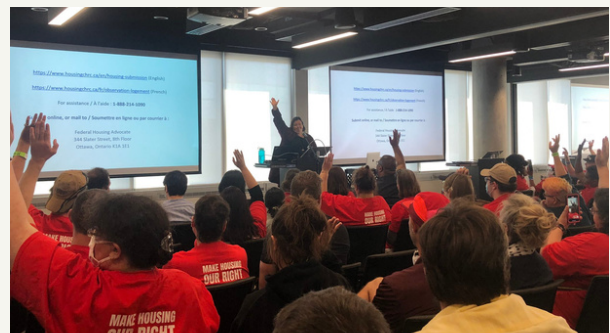
Members also enjoyed a gala dinner, an impromptu fashion show and a beautiful message from ACORN's International President Marva Burnett. Alejandra Ruiz-Vergas, leader from Toronto ACORN, kept the members engaged with her jokes and unwavering energy

.On Sunday, a plenary was held featuring a mix of great speakers including Senator Pierrette Ringuette, MP; Jenny Kwan, NDP Housing Critic; Marie-Josée Houle, Federal Housing Advocate; and labour allies such as Larry Rousseau of the CLC and Marc-Edouard Houle of the FTQ Montreal Regional Council.

After an outreach workshop, members headed out to door knock in Montreal where leaders carried out role plays on how to engage new members with ACORN.

The Convention ended with members marching through Montreal's downtown streets to the Public Sector Pension Fund (PSP) Headquarters, where they held a sit-in until the CEO's office agreed to meet with ACORN.

The issue in question was the PSP's investment of millions of dollars in housing owned by financialized landlords such as Starlight Investments, Killam and many others, that are destroying affordable housing and forcing tenants to live with pests and lack of necessary repair and maintenance.



NATIONAL CAMPAIGNS

HOUSING

FAIR BANKING

MODERNIZE EI

INTERNET FOR ALL

Stop the Financialization of Housing

Canada is in a housing crisis, and financialized landlords are making it worse. Financialized landlords treat people's homes as a commodity. Apartment buildings that were once affordable have been turned into investment products. Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs), Asset Management Companies, Private Equity Funds, Pension Funds, Hedge Funds, etc. are gobbling up affordable housing by flipping units, renovicting tenants, driving out tenants by refusing to do repairs and more to maximise profit at the expense of affordable rents.

National Day of Action

ACORN held a national day of action targeting Canada's biggest REITs including Killam Headquarters in Nova Scotia and a series of buildings owned by Canada's richest financialized landlords - Starlight Investments, among others.



New Report - The Impact of Financialization on Tenants

ACORN conducted a national survey which saw 600 responses from members across the country. The survey clearly demonstrates that tenants living in housing owned by financialized landlords are more likely to live with pest issues, lack of necessary repair and maintenance and above-guideline rent increases. The research contributed to the efforts of the Office of the Federal Housing Advocate (OFHA), an independent agency formed at the national level after the ratification of the Right to Housing by Canada.



Victories

The federal government is currently reviewing the tax treatment for REITs, as they get preferential tax treatment from the federal government but do nothing to create or protect affordable housing - ACORN won this in 2021.

As a result of the study on financialization of housing by ACORN and allies, the Review Panel (another important accountability mechanism set up as part of the National Housing Strategy Act) will conduct public hearings to hear from tenants directly about their experiences of living in financialized housing.

Further, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities (HUMA) will be examining the reports produced by the OFHA on financialization of housing. These reports have been written by ACORN and allies.



Campaign Demands

- Mandate a moratorium on acquisition of properties by financialized landlords and disclosure of property owners;
- Create a non-profit acquisition strategy;
- Stop tax exemptions to REITs and any public benefit to corporate landlords that is not conditional on creation/maintenance of deep affordable housing and the ensuring of maintenance standards;
- Regulate banks to stop financing corporate landlords who purchase with the intent to increase rents and displace people.

Affordable for Whom?

The federal government started a series of programmes under the National Housing Strategy to deliver new housing supply. Delivered by the federal housing agency, CMHC, the two main programmes include the Rental Construction Financing Initiative (RCFI) and the National Housing Co-Investment Fund. Although one of the key objectives of these programmes is to create affordable housing, it was clear that the feds were pouring billions of dollars into the pockets of wealthy developers to create more luxury condos. A negligible proportion of this new housing can be considered affordable, and furthermore, the so-called affordable units are to be kept affordable for only 10-21 years.

Support for Low-Income Renters

ACORN has been asking the federal government to support low-income renters, who have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. ACORN released a State of Renters report at the start of the pandemic in 2020 to highlight the issues low-income renters were facing. Now, coupled with high inflation, low-income renters are in desperate need of support.

After ACORN's persistent campaigning, the federal government finally announced a one-time \$500 benefit for low-income renters. But a range of structural issues such as lack of full rent control in many provinces, financialized housing and more continue to put low-to-moderate-income tenants in extremely vulnerable situations.

Policy Brief - Affordable for Who?

ACORN prepared a policy brief and carried out a series of online actions across the country highlighting these concerns in 2021.

Victories

The federal government changed the definition of affordability in the RCFI programme to 80% or below 80% Average Market Rent.



Canada's largest installment lenders are taking advantage of low-income people who have been failed by our two-tier banking system. Predatory lenders can legally charge up to 60% interest rates on loans – plus hidden fees, loan insurance, late fees and more!

High-interest lenders like Easy Financial, Fairstone and Money Mart set up in low-income neighbourhoods and prey on people who have been turned away by the big banks. These companies continue to make billions of dollars in profit from low-income borrowers. ACORN has been demanding action from the federal government to criminalize high interest rates.

National Day of Action

ACORN members held a national day of action to call on the federal government to keep its commitment to crack down on predatory lending. The actions were held at the storefronts of predatory lenders including Money Mart, Cash4You and several others.

Victories

ACORN won a commitment from the federal government to end predatory lending, in Budget 2021 as well in its election platform. Subsequently, it launched a consultation to “fight back predatory lending” in August 2022, which ended in October 2022.

A new report: Pandemic & High-Cost Loans - Impact on low- and moderate-income people

To study the impact of the pandemic on the usage of high-cost loans, ACORN undertook a survey and produced a new report: Pandemic & High-Cost Loans - Impact on low- and moderate-income people. Wide media attention was received.

ACORN also provided detailed input to the federal consultation to lower the interest rate for installment loans. In addition to a detailed written submission and a discussion with the Director of the Department of Finance, more than 600 submissions were sent by ACORN members.



Campaign Demands

- Lower the criminal rate of interest from 60% to 30%;
- Require all fees and costs associated with a loan to be included in the interest rate;
- Make enforcing violations accessible to borrowers;
- Create a federally funded Fair Credit Benefit so that all low-income people have access to low-cost credit options in case of emergency;
- Support fair lending alternatives like postal banking in all cities.

The failure of the Employment Insurance (EI) program as it currently exists forced the federal government to introduce new benefits during the pandemic. In addition to the new benefits, the government introduced a slew of changes to make EI work better for precarious workers. Unfortunately, those changes were temporary and were discontinued in September 2022. To put things in perspective, only about 40% of unemployed people get access to EI at any given time.

Victories

Due to the pressure of worker's movements and community unions like ACORN, the federal government committed to reforming EI to make it suitable for the 21st century. The EI reforms were initiated in 2022.



Campaign Demands

- Full access to EI after 300 hours worked or 12 weeks of insurable work;
- Establishing eligibility for precarious workers and independent contractors;
- Raising benefit rates for low-wage workers to 100%;
- Extending benefits to 50 weeks;
- Ending discriminatory eligibility requirements (including temporary, precarious, self-employed workers and more);
- Restoring funding to EI through government revenues.

INTERNET FOR ALL

The pandemic exposed many societal inequities, in particular, the need for high speed internet. While nearly all households in the highest income group have access to home internet, 31% of those in the lowest income bracket still don't.

ACORN's Internet for All campaign won funding from the Federal Government Connecting Families Program in 2018 – a \$10-per-month federal internet program that targets families who receive the maximum national child care benefit. This provided \$80 million to low-income parents.

However, the program is available to only *some* individuals as there is a limit of 220,000. ACORN continued its fight to demand affordable, high-speed internet for ALL low-income people and fixed-income seniors.

Given the shortfalls in the federal program, ACORN launched municipal broadband campaigns in three cities in Ontario to push them to provide publicly controlled affordable internet for all low-income people.

ACORN members got three Opinion pieces published on the issue - two in the *Hill Times* and one in the *Toronto Star*.



Victories

The federal government announced the expansion of the Connecting Families program to seniors who receive the Maximum Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS). Earlier the program was accessible to only some families that receive the maximum Canada Child Benefit. But the overall limit of 220,000 remains. Moreover, not all telecoms have opted in for the Connecting Families program.

The list of internet service providers that have opted in are:

- Access Communications Co-operative Limited
- Beanfield Technologies Inc.
- Bell Canada (including Bell Aliant and Bell MTS)
- Cogeco
- Coopérative de câblodistribution de l'arrière-pays (CCAP)
- Hay Communications
- Mornington
- Novus Entertainment Inc.
- Quadro
- Rogers
- Rural Net
- SaskTel
- Shaw
- Tbaytel
- TELUS
- Urbanfibre
- Vidéotron
- Westman Media Cooperative Limited

In addition to opting in for the Federal Government Connecting Families Program, some of the big telecoms have initiated programs that offer affordable internet to other vulnerable groups.

Through its Connected for Success program, Rogers offers internet plans starting \$9.99 per month to rent-geared-to-income tenants of a non-profit housing partner organization, eligible individuals receiving provincial income or disability support, and seniors receiving the Federal GIS in three provinces - Ontario, New Brunswick and Newfoundland & Labrador.

TELUS's Internet for Good program offers Internet plans starting \$9.99 per month to seniors receiving at least \$6500 per year of GIS, youth ageing out of care and people with disabilities who receive disability benefits from the province. This program is only available in B.C., Alberta and some regions of Quebec.

However, this is still a patchwork of programs. ACORN is pushing for low-cost, high-speed internet for all low-income people and fixed-income seniors.



Campaign Demands

- The federal government should provide affordable, high speed internet access by making the Connecting Families Program universal to include all low-income people and fixed-income seniors at \$10/month and 50/10 Mbps speed.
- Make the program mandatory for all telecoms. Telecoms such as Eastlink currently do not opt-in!

LOCAL & PROVINCIAL CHAPTERS



OTTAWA



TORONTO



HAMILTON



BRITISH COLUMBIA



ALBERTA



NOVA SCOTIA



MONTREAL



NEW BRUNSWICK



PEEL



LONDON

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Tenant Rights Laws and Rent Control Now!

The big campaign launched by ACORN's newest chapter in 2022 was Rent Control. Calgary recently has seen some of the largest rent increases in the country, with average rental prices rising 27% over the past year.

ACORN members rallied outside Boardwalk's head office in Calgary, using that REIT landlord office as a backdrop to demand Rent Control in the province of Alberta. Members spoke about their own recent rent increases and the consequences for low income families in Alberta. Boardwalk has no doubt been a major contributor to this average, with tenants reporting rent increases of as much as \$500.

Demands

ACORN is calling for the province to introduce a 2% rent cap, eviction protections, and a registry of the rental rates of every unit in the province. While getting the United Conservative government to take notice may be difficult, ACORN is working hard to ensure tenant rights reform is a ballot box issue in the May 2023 provincial election.

Housing Justice is Environmental Justice

In October of 2022, ACORN embarked on a project that aims to link Alberta ACORN's campaigns for tenant rights with the lack of energy retrofits happening in affordable market rental housing in Calgary. ACORN staff are going door to door getting surveys completed by tenants. The preliminary results of this crucial data collection is a connection between shockingly high energy bills, poor heating and insulation and substandard housing conditions. ACORN will be set to launch the next phase of this project in 2023.

Launch of Calgary East Chapter

Calgary East ACORN officially formed a chapter the launching of their Safe Parks campaign! Members spoke passionately about fighting for what the Forest Lawn community deserves, with power in numbers, starting with Safe Parks. Parks and community spaces in Forest Lawn are seriously lacking and sometimes outright dangerous. East-End members then held their first "Safe Parks Action" in Fonda Park. Members spoke about the issues in the parks, gathered petition signatures and presented demands to one of our targets who was in attendance.



Organizing Calgary City Centre Chapter

Calgary ACORN's second chapter was organized in late summer of 2022, culminating in the election of four dynamic and youthful leaders in Calgary's tenant-heavy Beltline neighbourhood.

The organizing drive focused around Alberta ACORN's province-wide tenant campaign, which launched in September with a very successful press conference outside of then premier Jason Kenney's Calgary office at the McDougall Centre.



Stand up for Surrey Housing Campaign

BC ACORN continued its forward momentum on the “Stand Up for Surrey” campaign by having a big Housing Forum.

More than 70 ACORN members and allies got together at SFU Surrey for a forum about the campaign. Members shared stories about renting in Surrey, brainstormed ideas for the future direction of the campaign and blitzed dozens of calls to newly elected Surrey Mayor Brenda Locke demanding an immediate review of the Standards of Maintenance bylaws. Members also planned future delegations to City Council and developed outreach strategies, as well as identifying new key tenant issues to add to the existing campaign.

Demands

- Immediate review and updates to the Standards of Maintenance bylaws;
- Implementation of a Landlord Licensing system;
- One to One Rental Replacement and Rent Stabilization, following in the lead of Burnaby.



Vacancy Control

In January, 100 supporters came out across the province to picket their MLAs for Vacancy Rent Control. In total, ACORN members and allies hit 22 MLA offices across the province in a large-scale coordinated action calling for Vacancy Control Now! Leading up to new Premier David Eby taking office, BC ACORN held online and in-person Vacancy Control Now campaign workshops, with the goal of mobilizing tenants across the province to join this important fight.

ACORN’s message to the BC government is clear: if they are going to stop the housing crisis, unlimited increases to rents on vacant units must end.



Full Rent Control

With rents continuing to skyrocket across the province, Ontario is in dire need of vacancy control. In addition, even the yearly rent-increase limits for rental units first occupied after November 2018 were scrapped in 2018. As well, landlords use Above Guideline Increases (AGIs) to raise rents higher than the yearly limit.

Around 100 ACORN members came out to actions across Ontario for ACORN's Provincial Day of Action for Real Rent Control! Actions were held in Ottawa, Toronto, Hamilton and London to make rent control a defining issue of the 2022 Ontario provincial election.

Demands

- Establish a vacancy control to ensure that rents are not being raised substantially between tenants;
- Apply rent control to all buildings, specifically buildings first occupied after November 2018 which currently have no yearly limit for rent increases;
- End AGIs, as they have become a tool to avoid rent controls.



Scrap Bill 23

The Ontario Government introduced the More Homes Built Faster 2022 Act (Bill 23), claiming that it will provide a new solution to the housing crisis in Ontario. However, the Bill is simply a way to line the pockets of the government's developer friends and will take away years of gains that ACORN members and allies have painstakingly won in achieving stronger affordable housing policies and tenant protections in case of demolitions in various cities.

The Bill will intensify the housing crisis by accelerating evictions and homelessness, as it takes away the powers and resources cities have to build and protect affordable housing.

- Hundreds of ACORN members carried out a series of actions to highlight the problems with this Bill;
- More than 160 ACORN members and allies attended a Virtual Townhall. Speakers included City Councillors and NDP MPPs;
- Members presented deputations in Toronto and Brampton at the Standing Committee;
- A report was released on "Save Rental Replacement Bylaws". Actions took place in seven cities across Ontario. Members ambushed Premier Doug Ford, delivered demands to the Housing Minister Steve Clark's office in Brockville and also to offices of PC MPPs in London, Hamilton, Brampton and Mississauga;
- Op-Eds by supporters were published by Toronto.com, the *Hamilton Spectator* and the *Brampton Guardian*;
- More than 2,000 online submissions were made by ACORN members to Premier Doug Ford, Housing Minister Steve Clark and Local MPPs.



Revise ODSP/OW rates

People on ODSP and Ontario Works have been forced to live in extreme poverty. The ODSP/OW rates have remained grossly low and have not been linked to inflation.

Demands:

- Raise the ODSP and OW rates to \$2000/month and make it permanent;
- Tie ODSP and OW rates to inflation;
- Raise the employment income threshold from \$200 to \$800 before clawbacks;
- Increase the housing allowance to match market rent (based on the city that the recipient lives in);
- Stop clawbacks on spousal income and benefits;
- Stop the downloading of ODSP to the municipalities.

In its Fall Economic Statement, the Ontario government announced the following changes:

- A person on ODSP will be allowed to keep more of the money they earn with an increase in the monthly earnings exemption from \$200 to \$1,000 per month. For each dollar earned above \$1,000, the person with a disability would keep 25 cents of income support.
- Beginning in July 2023, the government plans to adjust core allowances under the ODSP annually to the rate of inflation.

ACORN members held a provincial day of action that saw over 100 ACORN members rallying on a virtual zoom, and at ODSP offices in Ottawa, Hamilton, London, Toronto, Brampton and Sudbury.

Affordable Child Care

The federal government announced the \$10-per-day childcare program in 2021, and all provinces and territories signed a deal with the feds to provide \$10-per-day childcare, except Ontario. ACORN members from across Southern Ontario came together to call on Premier Ford to Act NOW for Affordable, \$10-per-day childcare. ACORN members flooded the offices of Premier Doug Ford, Conservative MPP Donna Skelly and Ontario Minister of Education Stephen Lecce with phone calls to demand Ontario sign the deal.



Landlord Licensing - Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM)

The Halifax area ACORN chapters are leading the charge for landlord licensing/registration from the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) council. Landlords are flouting the long-standing M-200 property standards bylaw, and the city has been delaying the decision to license landlords for two years.

ACORN held a successful License Landlords Now Councilor Phone Blitz. Tenants from across the HRM got together to discuss the campaign and call councillors and Mayor Mike Savage en masse saying No More Delays, License Landlords Today! Nova Scotia ACORN held a rally outside of an apartment building on Highfield Park in Dartmouth. The building is plagued by systemic housing issues and was the winner of the infamous ACORN Slumlord Smackdown in 2021. Lisa Hayrust, NS ACORN leader, has diligently filed complaints at HRTM bylaw with little success in getting repairs done. Hayhurst was joined by ACORN leaders across the region, including Halifax Peninsula Chair and even Pat Donovan, who brought his guitar to play some rousing folk songs about lousy landlords!

Demands

- Proactive annual inspections by the city to ensure that units are up to code;
- An anonymous system of reporting bylaw violations in buildings;
- Online postings of landlords who pass or fail their inspections, so new tenants know what they're getting themselves into before they rent.



Rent Control

On the heels of its Fall 2021 rent cap extension victory - which saw the hard fought rent cap victory extended until 2023 - Nova Scotia ACORN continued its campaign for a permanent rent cap in the province.

Internet for All

NS ACORN continued its fight against Eastlink, the only major telecom provider that opted out of the Federal Connecting Families Program. In September, ACORN leaders descended upon an Eastlink retail outlet to highlight their failure in stopping the digital divide that is adversely affecting low-income Nova Scotians.

Renoviction Ban

ACORN's short lived COVID renoviction ban in the province was halted in 2022, with weaker regulations replacing the ban. In December of 2022, ACORN members brought this issue to the forefront once again.

ACORN activists on Frederick Street in Bedford - a community in the HRM - held an action at the offices of their landlord in North Dartmouth. Little more than a year after fighting back a 100% rent increase, tenants were served bogus renoviction notices. Working with our allies at Dalhousie Legal Clinic to ensure the case at the Residential Tenancy Branch would be dealt with professionally, ACORN was able to focus on bringing attention to the fact that the new renoviction regulations are not working, and therefore, a full renoviction ban needs to be put back in place.

Rent Cap Victory

In its provincial budget, New Brunswick included a one-year rent cap of 3.8%, retroactive to January 1, 2022. The announcement of the temporary rent cap and eviction protections for New Brunswick tenants is a result of relentless campaigning by NB ACORN and our allies to End the NB Housing Crisis.

Through organizing tenant power and taking action, NB ACORN succeeded in forcing the Conservative government to provide a break for tenants from massive rent hikes and a constant fear of losing their home.

Make the Rent Cap Permanent

NB ACORN started the campaign for permanent rent control, as without action from the Progressive Conservative government, the rent cap was set to expire on December 31, 2021. Pickets and petitioning took place in Bathurst, Saint John, Fredericton and Moncton.

NB ACORN and allies held a rally outside of the legislature in Fredericton. NB ACORN was joined by the New Brunswick Tenant Rights Coalition, CUPE NB, New Brunswick Coalition of Persons with Disabilities and BIPOC Pride Fredericton. Together with these allies, NB ACORN took a stand for all tenants.

The rally was a clear signal to the Higgs government that tenants are not going to be silenced and are not going away.

The Higgs government chose massive rent increases for hard-working tenants to ensure large profits for the few. The government introduced Bill 25, which only ensures that rents are going to skyrocket towards even more unaffordable levels in New Brunswick.

At the rally, NB ACORN was joined by sitting MLA Kevin Arseneault from the NB Green Party, which has come out in favour of all ACORN's End the NB Housing Crisis demands. Allies from the Common Front for Social Justice and other labour leaders also joined the rally.

After this rent-increase setback, NB ACORN is ever more determined to keep up the fight.

Renoviction Ban

Tenants at 91 Main Street in Fredericton took a stand against their landlord who was attempting to renovict them. Led by now NB ACORN Chair Nichola Taylor, tenants took to the cold streets to say, "We are not moving without a fight." While unsuccessful in stopping the renovations, the tenants made waves throughout the province and helped usher in the first changes to the Residential Tenancy Act in over 45 years. While there is not a clear renoviction ban in place in New Brunswick yet, some much needed eviction protections were won.



Numerous Actions to Fight Against AGIs and Get Repairs Done

ACORN members held tenant speakouts at a number of buildings including 45 Barlake and 2520 Barton in Riverdale and 125 Wellington Street North in downtown Hamilton to demand healthy homes and to lower AGIs.

Actions to stop renovations

Mountain ACORN members living at 1132 Upper Wellington Street held an action to speak out against the landlord's attempts to renovict long-term tenants. 999 Cannon Street East received N13 notices to vacate their homes for renovation. The tenants joined ACORN and formed a tenant union for their building. Tenants held frequent meetings and were approved for funding to hire a paralegal from the Tenant Defense Fund. ACORN learned in November that the landlord withdrew their application.

Slumlord March

Tenants from across Hamilton organized a march to raise awareness of slumlord-like behaviour in the downtown core: the Slumlord March. The march passed by a few apartments known to be poorly managed in the Corktown area, and tenants spoke out at 150 Hughson, 100 Forest and 170 Charlton.

Since 2017, ACORN has been demanding a city-wide landlord licensing program to ensure that landlords are keeping their properties in good repair and protecting tenants from renoviction. While there has been some progress with the passing of a landlord licensing pilot last year, it only covers some rentals (low density) and only in Wards 1, 8 and part of 14.

Renoviction tour

ACORN Hamilton hosted a 3.3 KM renoviction walking tour during the municipal election to bring attention to the housing crisis. During the tour, six apartments were visited where ACORN members and tenants have been renovicted or are currently fighting to keep their home.

ACORN members and tenants spoke about their experience. Members were joined by Councillor Nrinder Nann, City Councillor candidates and our allies, the Social Planning and Research Council, Hamilton Community Benefits Network and the Hamilton Community Legal Clinic.

Demand for Inclusionary Zoning

ACORN, the Hamilton Community Benefits Network and Environment Hamilton held a press conference in front of City Hall to urge the City of Hamilton to pass a bold inclusionary zoning bylaw before 2023.



Max Heat Campaign

Hamilton ACORN launched our full-temperature-control-for-tenants campaign. For years, tenants have been raising the alarm about unsafe conditions in rental housing during the hot summer months. Currently, there are no laws provincially or municipally requiring air conditioning or that indoor temperatures do not exceed a maximum temperature.

At the launch, Hamilton members gave testimonials. ACORN was joined by allies including Environment Hamilton, Disability Justice Network of Ontario, Hamilton Community Benefits Network and Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction.

ACORN's Demands to the City:

- Develop and implement a maximum heat bylaw for rental housing;
- Develop a municipal program to support retrofits at market rental housing;
- Expand measures in community and public spaces for Hamilton residents to keep cool when outside the home;
- Track heat-related deaths and illness.

ACORN will be working with its allies to urge the city to move quickly to develop and pass a maximum heat bylaw.



Municipal Internet Campaign

ACORN Hamilton held a press conference to release to members the results of a survey on the high cost of home internet as well as to demand that the City of Hamilton take action on the digital divide. ACORN Hamilton launched a survey in October 2021 to determine what problems exist in Hamilton regarding internet affordability and accessibility and how these issues can be addressed at the municipal level.

ACORN was joined by allies, the Hamilton Wentworth Elementary Teachers Local and Hamilton Centre for Civic Inclusion.

Demands:

- Create a city-owned and controlled municipal broadband program;
- Expand free public WiFi to more of Hamilton's parks;
- Set up free Wi-Fi access on HSR buses, bus terminals and the LRT.



London RentSafe

London members continued to push the City for a Rent Safe program. ACORN members held a series of rallies at the City Hall demanding that the City start a RentSafe program similar to the one ACORN members won in Toronto. Members also made deputations to the City.

The City staff came up with a report recommending against bringing a RentSafe program to London, saying it would be too “costly”. City Councillors also voted against considering the program. London members are looking forward to working with the new City Council to push the London RentSafe programme.

Demands

London is demanding a RentSafe bylaw similar to the one ACORN members won in Toronto and Mississauga. Members are demanding proactive inspections so that the onus of keeping buildings in good condition falls onto the landlords who are getting away with no accountability.



Banvest ACORN Organizing for Tenant Rights!

Some great organizing was done in the boroughs of Lasalle and Saint Laurent against a newer corporate landlord Banvest. Banvest is a private equity firm that has bought up large numbers of affordable market rental buildings throughout Montreal and then largely stopped repairs in the buildings. Whether Banvest sees profits down the road in redevelopment remains unclear. What is clear is that they are treating tenants as second-class citizens.

Tenants from the sprawling Renaissance Apartments, which Banvest recently purchased, on Rue Vezina, Place Stirling, and Saint-Patrick Street in the most western section of LaSalle were fed up with Banvest. They organized meetings and actions throughout the summer of 2022 through tireless door knocking and lobby petitioning, and gained some remedies for tenants with their maintenance issues.



LaSalle ACORN takes on the Borough city hall for stronger apartment standards enforcement

Dozens of tenants from the Renaissance Apartments in LaSalle were fed up with the lack of repairs in their buildings and descended upon a LaSalle Borough Council meeting with a simple demand - enforce the Montreal housing standards bylaw.

ACORN members took over the Council meeting, bringing proceedings to a halt. The Mayor and Council took the time to listen to ACORN members and gave them assurances and contacts to borough staff that would help with the bylaw violations taking place at the Renaissance buildings.

In the time since the actions, bylaw officers have inspected the buildings and given orders to Banvest to fix up the buildings. While not solving the core issue of lack of proactive enforcement of all apartments in LaSalle, ACORN forced the Borough to take notice of them and of tenant issues as a whole.



Stopped Mass Displacement in Manor Village

After a two-year-long campaign, Ottawa ACORN members stopped the City from running the Stage 3 LRT through the homes of 120 low- and moderate-income families in Manor Village.

Despite City Council voting in favour of mass eviction of tenants in November 2020, the Manor Village ACORN Tenant Union continued to organize, forcing City staff to reverse their decision. With the City now backing down, ACORN members continue to defend their homes from renoviction by their landlord Smart Living!

Actions to fight renovictions, demovictions and AGIs

Vanier ACORN members from 644-650-656 rue de L'église kicked off their fight against their potential new building owner, Nick Legault of Building Investments Inc, after he issued illegal N11 and N13 eviction notices to tenants for July 31st (before he even owned the buildings!). Thanks to members' tenant organizing, he withdrew his bid to purchase the buildings!

Ottawa ACORN tenant union in Capital Towers - two high-rise apartment buildings - won a payment plan for a retroactive \$3,000 Above the Guideline Increase. Tenants comprise mostly low-income families, working-class immigrants, newcomers, seniors and those on disability. Tenants continue to fight for more support and to address chronic disrepair in the buildings.



Forced the City to Act Against Renovictions and Demovictions

Ottawa ACORN has been campaigning to stop mass displacement as a result of redevelopment, renovictions and demovictions since 2015. The city-wide campaign was launched during the first round of mass evictions by Timbercreek (now Hazelview) in Herongate. Since then, ACORN has continued to organize against demovictions in Herongate and has formed tenant unions in neighbourhoods such as Vanier, Centretown, and Manor Village, where tenants are at risk of mass eviction.

Ottawa ACORN members led a 70+ person protest against renovictions and demovictions this past June at City Hall. Ottawa made history on January 29, 2020 by becoming the first city in the country to declare housing an emergency. While ACORN members supported this declaration wholeheartedly, not enough has been done to actually END the emergency!

To show the scale of the problem in the nation's capital, ACORN members also released a new report - The Demoviction Report - that studied the demoviction applications submitted by developers. Ottawa ACORN's campaign to end mass displacement due to redevelopment, renovictions and demovictions forced Council to direct City staff to conduct a feasibility study for a rental replacement bylaw to preserve existing affordable housing, the creation of a Tenant Defense Fund and a Proactive Tenant Education Program.



Fight for Inclusionary Zoning

ACORN members have been campaigning for Inclusionary Zoning since 2008 – a policy that would require affordable housing in new developments. 70+ Ottawa ACORN members demonstrated outside of City Hall with allies from Horizon Ottawa and CAWI. Members have been fighting for 25-35% affordable housing city-wide in perpetuity, COMMA targeting those in need of core housing. The city staff report originally came out with recommendations for ZERO affordable rental housing. Members were able to convince Council to send staff back to consider up to 10% affordable rental housing for a longer term. However, glaring gaps still remain.



Nepean Chapter Launch

ACORN members launched the brand new Nepean ACORN Chapter. ACORN members in Nepean had been holding weekly organizing committee meetings to decide what the issues, solutions and actions needed to be considered. The leaders went over Nepean ACORN's top three issues for the chapter to focus on: affordable housing, renovations (Manor Village) and the municipal election.

Nepean ACORN members elected their board to represent the chapter and kicked off the chapter with a block party and outreach event in Manor Village to fight back against the renovations that tenants are currently facing.



Brampton

Peel ACORN members spoke out against Pulis's attempts to renovict tenants at 143 Main Street South in Brampton. Tenants and ACORN members shared their experiences of living in the building and signed a petition demanding better conditions for tenants at that address. Tenants also held a march from the Brampton City Hall to the Pulis's main office building located in downtown Brampton.

The tenants were able to stop the eviction of an ACORN member who was being threatened for eviction.



Mississauga

Bold Inclusionary Zoning

As the city of Mississauga was moving ahead to finalize its Inclusionary Zoning policy, Peel ACORN conducted a survey to ask what kind of affordable housing people want. The survey findings were released at a press conference. Members also made deputations and finally pushed the City to extend the term for which units will be kept affordable to perpetuity, although this was only done for ownership units.

Actions to demand healthy homes

Tenants and ACORN members held demonstrations to demand action at a Starlight-owned building as well as at a townhome complex on Rathburn Road East where tenants are struggling with pests, mould, flooding etc.



Changes to the Renoviction Bylaw

Toronto ACORN has been fighting to get the city to create a renoviction bylaw, similar to the one BC ACORN won in New Westminster. The City of Toronto was forced to include many key provisions that ACORN members were demanding which were missing from the City's report: right-of-return provisions, rental top-up payments and payment for moving costs and other support to help tenants find a nearby unit.

More Money to Protect Tenants

ACORN members were fighting for money to protect tenants, build affordable housing, stop evictions, freeze childcare fees and provide affordable internet access. Hundreds of members sent letters and emails and made calls to the Mayor and their City Councillors. As a result, we were able to win \$500,000 in new funding to hire seven bylaw officers to investigate and crack down on bad landlords who violate property standards. We also won a motion by Mike Layton, which all but ONE Councillor supported, for a report on ways to increase RentSafe staffing and expand the program.



Improvements to RentSafe

Toronto ACORN members held a Healthy Homes Town Hall attended by 90 participants. RentSafe was going to the Council for a report back, so ACORN members wanted to keep the pressure on to win improvements for the program. We were joined by several Councillors and allies including the Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario (ACTO), the Low-Income Energy Network (LIEN) and the Canadian Environmental Law Association (CELA). The town hall ended with a phone action to Mayor John Tory's office to let him know our demands and ask for a meeting.

Toronto ACORN members delivered a giant RENTSAFE REPORT CARD to City Hall. Over 50% of Toronto's population are tenants, and many live in high-rise apartment buildings. In 2017, ACORN won the RentSafe landlord registration program, to great acclaim. Four years later, tenants are still waiting for Healthy Homes. We were joined by Councillor Mike Layton and Paula Fletcher in support of the tenants.

Demands:

- Use of colour-coded signs;
- An increase in the RentSafe budget;
- Hiring of more by-law officers;
- Financial penalties for bad landlords;
- Faster implementation of administrative monetary penalties;
- Licensing of landlords;
- A separate phone line for RentSafe;
- Improvement of the inspections system for evaluation;
- Ensuring that building scores reflect the issues in buildings;
- Greater transparency for RentSafe;
- Retrofits for ageing high rises.

Rent Grant Becomes Permanent

Toronto ACORN won a pilot Rent Grant program from the City in 2021. The Toronto City Council voted in favour of converting the program into a permanent grant-based program AND to continue to pause any further loan repayments from the old loan-based rent bank program.

1,744 households avoided eviction by receiving a grant since the pilot began. This is an increase of 52% or an additional 594 households who were able to avoid eviction as compared to 2020 when only 1,150 households received a loan.



Numerous Tenant Speakouts to Demand Healthy Homes and Lower AGIs

Toronto ACORN held several tenant speakouts to demand healthy homes, including at 2089 and 2099 Lawrence Avenue West against Hersz Properties; at a Medallion-owned building at 1755 Jane Street; a CAPREIT-owned building at 10 San Romanoway in Jane/Finch, 75 Cosburn and several others. Despite vital repairs not being done, these landlords are asking tenants to pay more through AGIs. ACORN was able to set up meetings between landlords and tenants to address repair issues and involve paralegals to fight AGIs.



BIG SHOUT OUT **TO ACORN MEMBERS COAST-TO-COAST** **KEEP FIGHTING!**

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