

AFFORDABLE CITY PLATFORM

Toronto ACORN

2023



INTRODUCTION

Toronto ACORN (Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now), is a membership based community union made up of low-to-moderate income people. ACORN was founded in 2004, with the first organized group in Canada being formed in Weston / Mt Dennis.

Since then, ACORN has spread to every part of the city with six organized chapters and over 60,000 members in Toronto.

ACORN believes that social and economic justice can best be achieved with a city-wide membership who are invested in their organization and focused on building community power for change. In Toronto, 46.8% of tenant households spend more than 30% of their pretax income on shelter costs or to live in unaffordable housing.

This document provides a summary of the local campaigns Toronto ACORN members need mayoral candidates to commit to champion if elected on June 26, 2023.

ACORN members need to see the following changes to make Toronto an affordable and livable city.

LANDLORD LICENSING

The city needs to strengthen RentsafeTO and migrate to a full Landlord Licensing program. ACORN members want to see:

- Implementation of a strong RentSafe program. More funding for RentSafe.
- In-unit inspections added to RentSafe. Too many tenants live in units in severe disrepair but this is not included in the building audit. Because of this, building scores do not reflect the actual conditions of the building.
- The City needs to step in to do repairs automatically when landlords ignore, through remedial action and bill the landlord on their property tax.
- More inspectors to protect existing affordable housing. In 2021, there were 33 full time staff for 3500 buildings. We want to see RentSafe move to a ratio similar to the proposed ratio for rooming houses. There should be 1 inspector per 12.5 buildings.
- A new fine system to issue major financial penalties to negligent landlords with automatic tickets by inspectors for any property standard violation.
- Create a rent escrow account at the city so tenants can pay their rent into the city when the landlord is not doing repairs. The city can then use this account to do the needed repairs themselves.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

- Mandate 100% of developments on public land, including Housing Now, are rental with 50% of the development as affordable housing.
- **Strong inclusionary zoning:** 20 to 30% of all new developments set aside as deeply affordable, permanent, rental housing. Implemented on a site by site basis.
- Aggressively target public surplus lands for new affordable housing built by a public or non profit developer to be managed by non profit, co-op or land trusts.
- Put more money into the MURA program - to ensure that small buildings in financial distress aren't scooped up by big corporate landlords.



FUND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

- Tax all vacant units with a 5% vacant unit tax
- Tax all luxury homes and increase property taxes on homes worth more than 2 million.
- Increase the Municipal Land Transfer Tax on high value homes.



NO TENANT DISPLACEMENT

The City of Toronto needs to create strong protections against renovations and strengthen demovictions protections by taking out the financial incentive landlords and developers have to displace tenants.

- Landlords/ developers need to get all permits (building, plumbing, development, special development, or heritage alteration) required by the City before they are able to renovate.
- Landlords/ developers must make arrangements for each tenant to continue their tenancy at the same rent during and after the renovation.
- **Tenant relocation policy** - if tenants have to move out, landlords must find them a new place close by, top up their rent so they don't pay more, and major financial penalties if the right to return is interfered with. This must be on top of any lump sum of money the tenant receives. This can be done as conditions on permits.
- Public register of tenant buyouts, building permits, home sales, and monitor sale of rental buildings and inform tenants of their rights.
- Landlord licensing and tenant registry to track displacement during renovation and enforce a no tenant displacement mandate.
- **No public funds, or permit approvals, to predatory landlords.**

RENT CONTROL

- Any developments getting municipal public funds (Housing Now, Open Door or other) must have rent control on all units (not just the affordable units).
- Vacancy control on all units in municipally funded developments – so when tenants leave, landlords can't double the rent.
- Rental replacement should require full rent control on replacement units, and extend the affordability period to 99 years.



RETROFITS

ACORN recognizes the urgent nature of the climate crisis and retrofitting Toronto's aging highrise communities from a resident-led perspective is an important step in achieving energy equity.

- Explore creating minimum efficiency standards and categories within Rentsafe and/or Landlord licensing system to ensure that costs of retrofits will not be passed on to low-income tenants.
- Ban rent increases and new rentals in substandard or lower energy efficiency buildings.
- Financing conditions required on retrofit funding to landlords, contingent on no costs passed onto tenants.



AFFORDABLE INTERNET

- Any infrastructure must be community controlled and publicly owned.
- City should create a municipal broadband network.
- Must provide \$10/month internet to all low- and moderate-income people.
- Free public wi-fi in all city owned buildings and facilities.



END PREDATORY LENDING

- Cap the number of payday and instalment lenders in the city.
- Create minimum distance separation between payday and instalment lenders to stop them from clustering in low income neighbourhoods.
- No advertising of payday or instalment lenders on City or TTC property.



COMMUNITY FUNDING

- Community programs should be affordable to low- and moderate-income people everywhere, not just affordable in NIA's.
- 10% of police budget to equity seeking groups, community programs in low -income communities.
- Support Community Benefits Agreements on large scale projects on both public and private developments, including: affordable housing, good jobs, and neighbourhood improvements (e.g. childcare centres)

