



WATERLOO REGION ACORN MUNICIPAL PLATFORM

ACORN'S ROADMAP FOR HOW THE REGION CAN BUILD AND PROTECT AFFORDABLE HOUSING WHILE STRENGTHENING TENANTS' RIGHTS.

JUNE 2026



INTRODUCTION

Improvements to housing supply on its own will not make a dent in Waterloo Region's housing crisis. If financialized landlords are enabled to abuse the loopholes in Ontario's rent control laws (lack of vacancy control, Above Guideline Increases (AGIs), and exemptions for new builds) to raise rents beyond what low income tenants can afford, the crisis will worsen.

In light of there being no desire from the Province to maintain affordability in rental housing and close these loopholes, Waterloo Region ACORN has been focusing on **municipal solutions to build, protect and maintain our region's affordable housing**. Though we continue to urge ALL levels of government to take action.

ACORN members have organized tirelessly through building and neighbourhood tenant meetings, actions, town halls, and workshops to ensure our members and tenants across the region know their rights and how to work with their neighbours to defend their homes. ACORN organizing forced both Kitchener and Waterloo to pass renoviction bylaws in 2026! Now, with municipal elections this Fall, Waterloo Region ACORN is calling on all candidates to support our local platform and make tenant issues a priority.



WHAT IS ACORN?

ACORN (the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now) Canada is an independent, grassroots community and tenant union that fights for social and economic justice. We are a membership-based organization of low-to-moderate income individuals and families that believe social justice can best be achieved by building community power for change. ACORN Canada has over 194,000 members organized democratically into 30 neighbourhood chapters across 23 cities.



LOCAL HOUSING FACTS

In 2025, Waterloo Region ACORN launched a State of Tenant Affairs survey to gather insight into the lived experience of renting in Waterloo Region. ACORN members distributed the survey through a number of channels including social media, flyering, ACORN's email list, and one-on-one interviews which were conducted by doorknocking in apartment buildings across the region.

Of the 160 responses, here are some of the key findings:

- 28% of respondents received one or more eviction notices from their landlord in the past 5 years.
- 54% of those eviction notices were N13s (notice to vacate for renovations or demolition).
- 80% of respondents who received eviction notices report their landlord using tactics to push tenants out of their homes such as frequent utility shut offs, hiking parking fees, and neglecting maintenance.
- 43% of respondents reported that when they moved into their unit, repairs were already needed.
- 77% of respondents disclosed having formally notified their landlord about repairs needed in their unit. Furthermore, 24% report that their maintenance has yet to be completed!



LOCAL HOUSING FACTS

- 30% of these respondents specifically reported their landlord intimidating or harassing tenants.
- 33% reported their landlord giving tenants misleading information about their rights.
- 28% of respondents report feeling threatened when making complaints about their building.

Other statistics:

- A study by housing researcher Steve Pomeroy found that 39 affordable rental units in Kitchener-Waterloo are lost on the private market for each 1 that is built.
- According to a 2023 investigation by CBC, Ontario's Rental Housing Enforcement Unit only investigates 13% of the complaints filed against landlords, and less than one per cent of cases end in a conviction at the Ontario Court of Justice.
- Tenants face double the wait times compared to landlords at the Landlord and Tenant Board (LTB) for applications regarding harassment, chronic disrepair and health/safety issues.



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BUILD AFFORDABLE HOUSING

1. Inclusionary Zoning

Inclusionary zoning policies require a portion of new residential developments to be permanently affordable for low- and moderate-income households. This tool helps create affordable housing in growing communities and promotes mixed-income neighbourhoods. ACORN is calling on cities within the region to pass strong inclusionary zoning policies that prioritize non-market rental housing that remains affordable for those in core-housing need in perpetuity.

2. Definition of Affordable Housing

Many affordable housing programs define affordability based on market rents, which does not reflect what low-income households can actually afford. ACORN supports affordability definitions that are tied to household incomes for those in core housing need (ie. are spending more than 30% of their income on housing).

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PROTECT AFFORDABLE HOUSING

3. Rental Replacement Bylaws

To protect tenants in the case of "demovictions" (ie. when landlords evict tenants, demolish their affordable homes and replace them with condos or luxury rentals), ACORN is urging all cities in Waterloo Region to implement rental replacement bylaws. The current rental replacement bylaw in Kitchener is a step in the right direction, but demoviction protections should extend across the region in its entirety. ACORN wants to see the following characteristics for rental replacement policies across the Region:

- Requiring landlords/developers to apply for a permit through the City to demolish rental properties.
- If affordable housing is being demolished, affordable units must be replaced in the new development at the same ratio or more.
- Replacement units to first be offered back to the landlord/developer's existing tenants at the same rate of rent (plus annual increases permitted by the province, if applicable).
- Requiring landlords/developers to provide either temporary accommodations comparable to tenants' original unit or compensation via rental top-ups during demolition process.
- Requiring landlords/developers to provide compensation covering moving expenses.

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4. Renoviction Bylaws

Some tenants are displaced through "renovictions," where landlords use renovations as a reason to evict tenants and raise rents unnecessarily. Municipal renoviction bylaws can establish permitting requirements and protections to ensure renovations legitimately require vacancy (most do not) and tenants' rights are respected. In 2026, ACORN successfully organized for bylaws in both Kitchener and Waterloo, with the latter being the strongest.

Strong bylaws must include:

- Proof from an engineer that the renovations are so extensive that the unit must be vacant
- Requirements for the landlord to provide temporary accommodations or a rent gap payment during renovations until the tenant can return to their unit at the same
- Moving costs to be covered by the landlord
- Tenants' right to return after renovations at the same rent is protected



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5. Proactive Tenant Education

Many tenants are unaware of their rights under housing laws and are often misled by corporate landlords. Pro-active tenant education programs can help residents access information, avoid housing instability, and navigate disputes.

ACORN is calling for a program to inform tenants about their rights/resources when:

- A building changes ownership (the City could be notified by the change in licence)
- Reports from community members or tenant groups of “buy outs” or N13 notices
- When the City receives a building permit application for a multi residential property
- Properties that trigger tenant education should also be visited by by-law staff to ensure property standards are being enforced, recognizing that landlords who are seeking to displace tenants are likely not maintaining units, common areas or grounds.

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6. Non-profit Acquisition Strategy

Non-profit housing providers often struggle to compete with private investors when affordable rental buildings are put up for sale. Municipal acquisition strategies can help preserve existing affordable housing by supporting non-profit organizations, social housing providers, co-ops and land trusts in purchasing rental properties.

7. Tenant Defense Fund

Tenant Defense Funds (TDFs) in Toronto and Hamilton were created to equip tenant groups with free legal/paralegal supports when they are facing the threat of renovictions and demovictions, disputing AGIs, challenging evictions and when making tenant applications to the Landlord Tenant Board (LTB). TDFs can also provide assistance with filing forms and rent abatement applications, creating a tenant hotline, and putting in place an outreach & education program so that tenants know where to go when they need assistance.

ACORN members are calling on cities in the region to support the creation of a TDF program run by an existing non-profit legal group with expertise in tenants rights, that would include:

- Assistance for tenant groups to dispute AGIs
- Assistance for tenant groups to challenge a demoviction/renoviction (N13)

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- Assistance for tenant groups to challenge N12s, N5s and N11s as they are increasingly being used as tactics to renovict tenants
- Assistance for tenant groups to do tenant outreach and education
- Assistance for tenant groups to file T6's and rent abatement applications over neglected maintenance.
- Assistance for tenant groups to file T2's over landlords' harassment
- Support for the creation of a tenant hotline

8. Rent Registry

A public rent registry collects information on rental housing and rents being charged. This improves transparency, helps identify trends in rental affordability, enforces existing rules around renovations and AGIs, and supports evidence-based housing policy.



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MAINTAIN AFFORDABLE HOUSING

9. Landlord Licensing or Registration

For far too long, landlords have been able to chronically neglect building repairs, maintenance, and/or pest treatment with little to no accountability. In many cases, this type of neglect is leveraged to drive tenants out of their homes so that their units can be rented out at a higher price. As a means of setting and maintaining a liveable standard in buildings across the region, ACORN recommends a landlord licensing program that will encourage transparency and ensure tenant safety. Taking some inspiration from Toronto's RentSafeTO program and Hamilton's Safe Apartments Bylaw, ACORN is calling on all city councils in the region to introduce a program that includes the following:

- Property owners to pay an annual per-unit fee (for cost recovery and administration of licensing program, annual inspection, enforcement of non-compliance, tenant outreach and communications).
- Buildings to undergo an initial inspection by the city where they are assigned a percentage/letter grade based on inspection results. Inspection grade to dictate frequency of following regular inspections (from every 1-3 years)
- Failing grade on inspection would trigger a full audit/assessment of the building and punitive fines
- Online and physical postings clearly showing inspection grade
- Tenant education and engagement program that is actively promoted by the City and includes tenant stakeholder groups such as ACORN

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- Continued/repeated non-compliance resulting in the city completing the repair or maintenance and billing the landlord (ie. remedial action - the City of Toronto is currently using this framework)
- Building owners/operators to maintain a capital plan for building repairs and keeping service/maintenance logs
- Maintain a process for receiving and tracking tenant service requests
- Urgent requests must be responded to within 24 hours, and others within 7 days.
- City-owned corporations and non-profits would not be subject to license fee, but would still need to comply with licensing program

10. Maximum Indoor Temperature Bylaw

Extreme heat poses serious health risks, particularly for seniors, children, and individuals with disabilities. As climate change impacts increase globally, extreme heat events, as well as day to day increases in average temperature are expected in our region. Maximum temperature bylaws protect tenants and vulnerable populations by establishing indoor temperature standards and can require landlords to take reasonable measures to prevent unsafe heat conditions. ACORN is urging city councils to establish a maximum indoor temperature bylaw that ensures landlords are required to keep their apartments below 26 degrees Celsius, similar to what BC ACORN won in New Westminster in April 2026.

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11. Public Registry of Rental Housing Enforcement

Public registries can provide information about rental properties that have outstanding property standards violations, enforcement actions, or other compliance issues. Increased transparency helps tenants make informed housing decisions and encourages accountability. The City of Toronto's RentSafeTO program was recently expanded to include colour coded signs in apartment buildings to showcase the building's evaluation score (also available on the [city's website](#)). While landlords often request credit checks, references, paystubs etc to screen prospective tenants, tenants have no way of evaluating how well a landlord maintains their building. A registry and colour coded signs would help level the playing field.



HOW TO GET INVOLVED



ACORN is an engine that runs on people power, so there are many ways to get involved in the fight to build, protect and maintain affordable housing!

- Became an ACORN member (low-moderate income tenant) or monthly donor (supportive middle class allies!)
- Volunteer - we need help with flyers, posters, phone calls, canvassing and more!
- Attend our monthly chapter meetings on the first Tuesday of every month at 6:30PM at the Civic Hub (23 Water St N, Kitchener) - open to all low-moderate income tenants!



TO GET INVOLVED OR FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

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