



Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation  
Centre pour les droits à l'égalité au logement

24 September 2020

## **Deputation – Subcommittee on the Protection of Affordable Rental Housing**

### **Item RH3.1 – Actions to Promote the Protection of Residential Rental Tenancies - Update**

Good evening councillors, staff, advocates and residents of Toronto:

I am here on behalf of the Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation. We began our Eviction Prevention work twenty years ago, when the concept of eviction prevention was not widely understood or discussed as it is today. As early adopters and long-time leaders in the eviction prevention space, CERA continues to provide free services to Toronto residents facing eviction or a human rights violation in their housing that may threaten their ability to stay in their home.

CERA is a proud member of the Advisory Committee on the Protection of Affordable Rental Housing and we are looking forward to fully participate in any future consultations and outreach efforts with the City.

The City's work on tenants' rights and eviction prevention is continuing to move in the right direction and we are thrilled that the City is stepping up in these areas. We commend City staff and members of this subcommittee on the work undertaken to date, especially in light of the challenges associated with COVID-19. We are in awe of the resilience they have demonstrated throughout the pandemic.

CERA strongly supports the call in the [Housing Secretariat's report](#) for increased resources for existing tenant services, information, and programs as well as its emphasis on exploring innovative and more comprehensive measures to protect affordable rental housing and prevent evictions.

On that note, CERA fully supports the report's recommendations to further invest in data collection and analysis to better inform efforts to achieve these goals. If, for example, the City was able to collect data on the average amount of rent paid through existing databases such as RentSafe, better information on exactly where affordable housing exists in Toronto would be readily available.

CERA welcomes the recent enhanced investments in emergency eviction prevention measures such as the EPIC program and the Rent Bank program. We support the Secretariat report's call to make these programs more widely available with open referral processes, broader eligibility criteria, and higher funding levels to meet the rapidly increasing demand for these measures.

#### **CERA HAS THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION**

Over the past decade, CERA has watched as the circumstances of people who call our eviction prevention hotline have become progressively complex, urgent, and desperate. The dramatic rise

in evictions during this time has resulted in an unprecedented demand on CERA's eviction prevention services. This demand is increasing due to COVID-19 and will continue to increase well past the end of the pandemic. The numbers speak for themselves. Each month, CERA typically fields between 80-90 inquiries from tenants facing eviction and requiring support. This month, CERA is on pace to double the number of inquiries and field over 160 requests for eviction prevention support from tenants. We are committed to helping any tenant who seeks our assistance, but we simply do not have the capacity to do so with our current resources.

CERA echoes the call in the Secretariat's report to provide more information, resources, and training for service providers on the frontlines of the eviction crisis and help them increase capacity to serve tenants. We need your help now more than ever.

The use of illegitimate eviction to remove tenants and dramatically raise the rent is a worrisome trend that threatens the further loss of affordable housing and disproportionately impacts low-income tenants. It stands to reason, then, that the most effective solutions for preventing the loss of affordable housing are to increase security of tenure, prevent evictions, and keep tenants in their homes.

CERA urges the City to continue to explore creative and expansive ways to combat illegitimate evictions, including those outlined in the Secretariat's report. CERA recommends the City continue to improve tenant communications to increase awareness among tenants of ways to protect themselves against evictions, illegitimate or otherwise, and the existing resources available to help enforce these protections.

The eviction of tenants during a global pandemic is unequivocally wrong, unacceptable and a violation of the Right to Housing. We look forward to working with every member of the subcommittee to protect affordable rental housing and strive towards the progressive realization of the Right to Housing.

Thank you,

On Behalf of the Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation.