

Scarborough Civic Action Network (SCAN) Affordable Housing Advisory Group

Tuesday April 6, 2021

12th floor, West Tower, City Hall
100 Queen Street West Toronto, ON M5H 2N2
Attention: Marilyn Toft, Secretariat

Re: EC20.3 Toronto Rent Bank and Eviction Prevention in the Community Programs - Update

Dear Mayor Tory and City Councillors:

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown measures, many low-to-moderate income tenants living in market rental housing in Scarborough have struggled to cope with rent payment. Housing advocates estimate about 10% of tenants may be in arrears.

We are writing to express our support for piloting the Rent Bank as a grants-based program and for expanding the eligibility criteria for access to this program to capture more low-income residents and families who truly need this support.

We also support ACORN's call to make these changes retroactive to the onset of the pandemic so that any tenant who took out a loan from the Rent Bank between March 2020 and the date of the implementation of the pilot grant program will have their loan converted to a grant, and their debt forgiven. In addition, we also support ACORN's call for increasing the funding for this program to \$6 million or more depending on need.

Furthermore, we request that City Council fund a proactive tenant engagement program for Scarborough in the poorest neighbourhoods (with and without NIA designation and using after shelter data) as soon as possible, one that would work at the grassroots, community-based level to actively connect with vulnerable tenants and support tenant education and connect tenants to resources provided by the City of Toronto and other levels of government.

Through community engagement, SCAN has learned that many tenants are not aware of their rights when it comes to eviction nor do many tenants know about programs like the Rent Bank and other resources that might help them during financial hardships. Proactive tenant engagement and education is an effective deterrent against landlord abuse which in turn would help to maintain our supply of affordable market rental housing in Scarborough.

We urge you to adopt these equity measures that will target those who are most vulnerable and most impacted during the pandemic.

Sincerely,

Arulini Vithiyatharan and Moosa Alloo

On behalf of the SCAN Affordable Housing Advisory Group