

Deputation to the Planning and Housing Committee – Renovictions Bylaw - February 28th 2024.

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Good afternoon, esteemed members of the council and the Planning and Housing Committee,

Today, I stand before you to discuss a matter of great importance and urgency: the plight of tenants facing renovictions and the need for effective legislative measures to protect them. The creation of the subcommittee for the protection of affordable rental housing during the 2018-2022 term of City Council was a commendable step towards addressing the challenges posed by renovictions. Unfortunately, the term ended without a concrete solution being advanced.

Renovictions, a distressing practice where landlords misuse N-13 eviction notices under the pretense of substantial renovations, have displaced countless tenants from their homes and communities. These actions not only undermine the security and stability of tenants but also contribute to the erosion of affordable housing stock in our city.

The heart-wrenching testimonies presented at the Subcommittee from tenants and advocates highlighted a glaring gap in our legal framework. They underscored the lack of understanding among tenants about their rights, the aggressive tactics employed by landlords to vacate units, and the subsequent rent hikes post-minimal renovations. It became evident that there needs to be a direct linkage between the issuance of an N-13 notice and the requirement for a building permit, ensuring that only genuine and substantial renovations lead to tenant displacement.

In this regard, the City of Hamilton has pioneered an innovative approach with the introduction of their Renovictions by-law in January 2024. This by-law mandates landlords to apply for a Renovations Permit within seven days of issuing an N-13 notice. This permit application must include a building permit, an engineer's report verifying the uninhabitability of the unit during renovations, and a copy of the N-13 notice. This process not only validates the necessity of the renovations but also safeguards the tenant's right to return post-renovation, coupled with suitable relocation assistance and comprehensive information on their rights and the process involved.

The Hamilton model presents a viable and effective framework that could be adapted and implemented in our city. It not only holds landlords accountable but also empowers tenants with knowledge and mechanisms to protect their rights. The requirement for a Renovation License, tied to the issuance of an N-13, introduces a much-needed layer of scrutiny and transparency to the renoviction process.

Furthermore, the emphasis on providing tenants displaced by renovictions with referrals and relocation assistance underlines our collective responsibility towards ensuring housing security for all citizens. The distress caused by renovictions and demovictions, fueled by the exploitative practices of issuing N-12 and N-13 notices for superficial renovations or unjustified demolitions, demands our immediate action.

Therefore, I urge the committee to consider the Hamilton by-law as a blueprint for our own city's efforts to combat renovictions. I request your support to direct staff to incorporate an analysis of this by-law into their upcoming report on the renoviction by-law. It is our duty to protect the vulnerable members of our community and preserve the integrity of our affordable housing stock.

In conclusion, the adoption of a renovictions by-law, inspired by Hamilton's example, is not just a policy measure—it's a moral imperative. Let us take a stand against renovictions and demovictions, and work towards a future where every resident has access to stable, affordable, and dignified housing.

Thank you for your time and consideration.