

## Deputation to Planning and Housing Committee, April 5, 2024

Revised version April 4, 2024. 3-4 min.

My name is Michael Whitehead, and I have lived at 25 St. Mary St. for 30 years. I have been advocating for fair treatment of tenants and protection of affordable housing in the Toronto since 2021. Later this year, I and 400 of my neighbours will lose our homes and face enormous challenges because City Planning and City Council have failed to do their jobs. You have purposely chosen to throw many hundreds of families on the street in an appalling, disrespectful, mean-spirited and underhanded way. How does this happen?

First, lack of transparency, where tenants repeatedly request working group meetings to advocate for fair treatment and where these meetings are actively avoided by City Councillors and City Planning staff alike. When these meetings do happen, they **are not** consultations because you decided in advance not to do anything tenants asked you to do. City Planning and City Councillors respond to every reasonable request with gaslighting: "it can't be done", "we have a process that we must follow" and "we can only mitigate your hardship". **You can do things differently. You purposely choose not to.**

Second, information meetings where information is not available in the language of the stakeholders who are affected, as happened at 48 Grenoble Drive last year. A second meeting with additional translators and printed materials in various languages was required so that residents could understand what had already been decided for them by City Council a month before.

Third, undemocratic Community Council Meetings. Instead of a venue where Councillors listen to stakeholders and agree to some of their requests or defer items to consult and consider amendments, outcomes are decided in advance and councillors and city staff pay little or no attention to deputants. They work on their computers, look at their phones, [as I see is happening right now] or offer mealy-mouthed statements of sympathy before unanimously voting to approve proposals harmful to stakeholders and the City.

Fourth, No enforcement. When landlords harass tenants to evict them, and breach their agreements, City planning does nothing to help, does not penalize the developer and blames the victims by calling them "difficult tenants", as happened at Lenmore Court recently.

Your actions lose hundreds of affordable housing units for 3-5 years, and keep them affordable for only 10-20 years after reconstruction. This will increase homelessness, housing precariousness, increase costs and reduce quality of life for tenants, and increase social costs for the City. The harms far outweigh the benefits. When tenants ask for reasons why you all continue to behave so badly, we are met with gaslighting, greenwashing, weasel words, bafflegab and **more** bad behaviour.

Should you vote against this amendment, you will be declaring war on tenants in Toronto, the very people it is your job to protect. You'll be planting seeds for the biggest rent strike the country has ever seen. Here's what you should be doing. Follow the letter and intent of Section 111 by fully compensating tenants for their relocation costs. Meet with Tenant advocates to craft better policies and make sure they are implemented. Collect more and better data and make it public. There can be no effective housing policy or protection of affordable housing unless tenants are in the room and have meaningful influence on those decisions.

I urge the Planning and Housing Committee to vote FOR this amendment to increase the number of affordable housing units in demoviction proposals and further, to direct City Planning to use real-world data to calculate tenant compensation as advocated by the No Demovictions Collective.