

# **Deputation to the City of Toronto Planning and Housing Committee**

## **Sean Gadon, Action Advisor - on behalf of the Beech Hall Housing Co-operative**

**June 13, 2024**

I am very pleased to be here today before the Planning and Housing Committee on behalf of the six person Board of Directors of the Beech Hall Housing Co-operative – Roger, George, Lazzar, Ephrem, Francine and Diane - who are democratically elected to represent the 134 co-operative members who live at the Beech Hall Housing Co-operative, located in the community of Mount Dennis.

I also want to draw to your attention the letter that has been submitted to the Committee by Roger Sauve, President of Beech Hall Housing Co-operative, where he thanks Councillor Nunziata for her ongoing advocacy and support, acknowledges the work of city staff, and requests the Committee approve the Community Housing Sector Modernization and Growth Strategy report and recommendations.

The residents of Beech Hall have been anxiously awaiting today – for close to 45 years they have successfully managed the 127 affordable homes at Beech Hall as co-operative housing.

Yet before today they were facing an uncertain future.

With their forty five year lease expiring on January 3, 2025 the Board and co-op residents feared a repeat of history where the public land and buildings leased to the co-op would be sold and they would be forced to move, or the city would be unreasonable in renewing the lease and they would be economically evicted, or they would not have the funds in the future to maintain their homes.

Here's a sample of interviews from the documentary "The Battle of Beech Hall" and some of the reaction of tenants and others when the tenants were being evicted by municipal government 45 years ago :

## **Tenant Voices**

*"There's nothing like it. Have you seen any other senior citizen arrangements in the city with these grounds around it – you can't find anything like it in Metro. You might find it in Grand Pre".*

The Borough of York decided to close down Beech Hall.

*"We had a sheet sent to us – we had to be out by the 1<sup>st</sup> of September. Isn't that right Edith. But she has to be out by the 1<sup>st</sup> of August."*

*"It's on this paper it said to vacate by the 1<sup>st</sup> of September".*

*We couldn't believe it."*

*We don't want to leave. What are you going to do when they tell you to get out."*

The news came without warning in February 1979.

*"Most of them (tenants) panicked and they figured, they had to move and there wasn't anything they could do, and you couldn't tell them anything different".*

## **Carol Hay, Tenant Organizer**

*I couldn't believe that the first the seniors knew about it was because they read about it in the Toronto Star".*

*One of the reasons they heard about it was they read about it in the Toronto Star, is when the Borough of York Housing Company made the decision to demolish, Nunziata who was alderman at the time, voted against it and he leaked it to the papers because they wanted him to take an oath of secrecy".*

## **John Nunziata, Alderman Borough of York, 1979**

*"It seems to me they wanted to keep it secret in order to move down the moving vans and cattle trucks to get the seniors out of here with the least amount of controversy, and it would make it easier for them. I think they anticipated some sort of controversy and feeling in the local community".*

Fortunately it is now 2024, and for everyone concerned, the city staff report recommendations before the Committee recognize the enormous and important value of public land in providing for the public good, and in maintaining and creating affordable housing.

The staff report before you also acknowledges the amazing value and importance in the Beech Hall Housing Co-operative continuing to provide deeply affordable homes for seniors, while celebrating and acknowledging the success and unique co-operative governance model of Beech Hall.

The Board has requested that the Committee swiftly approve the recommendations in the report so that tonight everyone can sleep better knowing that the long-term future of the Beech Hall Housing Co-operative as affordable housing for seniors' is safe, sound and secure.

As a symbol of good will, and to usher in a new era for affordable housing in Toronto, the Beech Hall Board has requested I present the Chair of the Committee, and Councillor Nunziata, with a ceremonial \$2 dollar deposit toward the first annual lease renewal payment to begin in January 2025.

I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.