

Report:

Community Meeting on Tenants Issues

On Sunday, March 31st, MPP Bhutila Karpoche hosted a community meeting on tenant issues, bringing together representatives from various community organizations and legal clinic experts in the High Park area to discuss what can be done to advocate for action on the affordable housing crisis.

Guest Speakers

The panel featured four speakers well-versed in tenant protection policies and from front-line advocacy groups to discuss next steps in organizing against the housing crisis.

Bahar Shadpour – Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario (ACTO)

- The government must be lobbied to serve the interest of low income tenants
- One of the major drivers of the affordability problem in Ontario is a lack of purpose-built rental housing (apartments)
- Affordable rentals are not going to be built out of moral obligation, the government must be called on to take action

Helle Hulgaard – West Toronto Community Legal Services (WTCLS)

- A single room in the city on average costs \$600-650 while a single person on social assistance receives \$731 a month
- Discrimination and cherry-picking of tenants has made it impossible for low-income people to find housing in the city
- Removal of rent control has made Toronto even less affordable

Ebony Menzies – Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN)

- Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) benefits have barely increased in the past decade, while rent prices have gone up by 25%
- 80% of the housing market is unaffordable and no one should have to pay more than 30% of their income on rent
- Affordability and rent costs should be defined based on income

Kathleen Burke – High Park Tenants' Association (HPTA)

- High Park Tenants' Association is a local tenant group that organizes to work on behalf of tenants to ensure the wellbeing and quality of life of its members
- HPTA has successfully negotiated with real estate companies like the Minto Group to significantly reduce above-guideline rent increases

What you said

Here are some of the concerns and questions raised:

“Broken elevators, bug infestations, unsafe water, closed laundry rooms are all very common”

“Vacancy decontrol does not protect tenants, there is direct financial incentive for landlords to drive out tenants”

“We need real rent control, one without all the loopholes”

“All tenants need to work together to push back against these landlords”

“All governments need to work together to solve the affordable housing crisis”

Key Issues

We need to close the loopholes in our current laws in order to protect tenants:

- End “renovictions”
- Limit the use of above-guideline rent increases
- End vacancy decontrol
- Create a rent registry
- Establish landlord licensing
- Determine a clear definition of “capital repair”