

Bylaws to combat 'renovictions' in the works at Town Hall

Measures to safeguard the rights of tenants in the face of 'renovictions' while also respecting the rights of property owners are now being considered in Aurora.

Council last week approved a motion brought forward by Ward 1 Councillor Ron Weese to have staff look at the 'feasibility' of implementing anti-renoviction measures in the first quarter of the new year.

'The Town of Aurora recognizes the importance of protecting tenants from unlawful or unnecessary evictions due to renovations, repairs, or demolitions, while balancing the rights of landlords to maintain safe, healthy, and habitable housing,' said Councillor Weese in his motion. 'Affordable housing is of great concern to the residents of Aurora and rental housing is a major component of the affordable housing stock. Based on the 2024 Aurora Affordable Housing Action Plan, approximately 19 per cent of private households are rented.

'Eviction by renovation (sometimes termed 'renoviction') is used by landlords to evict tenants under the guise of major renovations but, in reality, are used to remove low-rent-paying tenants to be able to do some cosmetic renovations with the goal of renting out the space at a higher level. The process of 'renoviction' has a negative effect on affordable housing stock.'

The Province, he added, allows annual rent increases of 2.1 per cent but applications to allow Above Guideline Rent Increases has tripled over the last 13 years.

While the motion passed without discussion at last week's Council meeting, it received a show of support from a Wellington Street resident who said she was concerned she would be impacted in a 'renoviction' herself.

Nada Ismail made a delegation to last week's meeting on behalf of herself and the residents of 14 and 18 Wellington Street East.

A zoning amendment recently in front of Council related to the Wellington Street properties, she said, leaves residents 'facing the very real threat of potential renoviction' should those amendments be approved. She upported Councillor Weese's motion in the face of this possibility.

'For us, this is not an abstract policy issue. It is the possibility of losing our homes, our community, our stability, our livelihood here in the community of Aurora,' said Ismail, noting that her unit will be eliminated in the property's redevelopment plans.

'What would you do if you were facing homelessness in a market where your income doesn't even cover rent, let alone food, transportation, or basic living expenses? You, our respected Mayor and Councillors, [are] our only hope to strengthen our voice and ensure fairness and compassion for the many families who will face hardship, homelessness...if this building permit is approved without protection.

'We want to thank Councillor Ron Weese for his leadership in bringing forward the renoviction motion and thank all Councillors who supported it on November 11 when it was passed unanimously at the first reading.'

Council approved a Zoning Bylaw amendment for 14 and 18 Wellington Street East on October 28.

It allows for two additional storeys fronting Wellington Street, increasing the total height to four storeys and increasing the total units therein from 20 to 33.

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter