

Preventing 'renovictions' could be tackled in future Aurora bylaw

Bylaws to prevent tenants from 'renovictions' could soon be in the works.

Council this week will consider a motion from Ward 1 Councillor Ron Weese which would, if formally adopted at the end of this month, task municipal staff with drafting bylaws to 'protect tenants from unlawful or necessary evictions due to renovations, repairs, or demolitions, while balancing the rights of landlords to maintain safe, healthy and habitable housing.'

'Affordable housing is of great concern to the residents of Aurora,' says Councillor Weese in his motion. 'Rental housing is a major component of the affordable housing stock, and 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 motion notes that 'renovictions' have a negative impact on affordable housing stock and points to similar 'Renovation License and Relocation Bylaws' being implemented in other Ontario municipalities.

Speaking to The Auroran ahead of this week's Committee of the Whole meeting, Councillor Weese says he's been 'concerned about affordable rents for a long time' both within Aurora and across Ontario.

There have been a couple of 'instances' of this taking place within Ward 1, he adds.

'There are bylaws that have been put together in other communities and these bylaws provide stronger safeguards for tenants who might otherwise face eviction under questionable circumstances,' he says. 'It ensures landlords can't exploit renovation provisions in the Residential Tenancy Act to raise rents or to remove long-term tenants without genuine renovation needs. I think the benefit overall is that it's going to reduce involuntary displacement of people, maintains community stability, and will protect affordable housing stock.'

Going forward with a bylaw such as this won't be without its challenges as he says it will be a matter of ensuring landlords are protected in the process as well.

'Landlords have property rights and they have a right to get a return on their investment, so maybe this will cause additional permit requirements and additional costs for landlords that will even increase the costs of rentals ' particularly for 'renovations that need to be done. It could delay building improvements or reduce investment in old rental housing, so I am concerned about that as well.'

'There are other issues around proof of the intent that a landlord has and some complexity of compliance as a bylaw. I've spoken to our Bylaw people about this [and] have been working on it for maybe six months or so with them to see about the legality and the opportunities ' and they're prepared to come forward with a report, and I was buoyed by that.'

'I think it's a municipal responsibility that could very well be implemented here and being implemented properly. I have great faith that our Legal department and our Bylaw department will give a comprehensive report. When that comprehensive report comes back to Council, then we're going to see whether there's a real appetite to create the Bylaw and enforcement.'

HAVE YOUR SAY ' Should Aurora pursue new bylaws to prevent 'renovictions'? Send your thoughts to brock@lpcmedia.ca.

By Brock Weir
Editor
Local Journalism Initiative Reporter