

Scope of renoviction problem in Aurora needs to be clear before scope of solution: Councillor

The Town needs to understand the scope of the renoviction problem within Aurora before identifying the scope of a potential solution at the municipal level, according to Ward 1 Councillor Ron Weese.

The issue of renovictions ? a situation when a landlord evicts a tenant ostensibly to perform renovations ? was before Council earlier this month following a motion from Councillor Weese. While municipal staff recommended against proceeding with a renoviction bylaw citing enforcement and administrative concerns, Councillor Weese hopes this spring could see Aurora-appropriate action on the file.

Councillor Weese anticipates a report on the feasibility of a renoviction bylaw coming before Council as early as the month ahead, including experiences in other, larger, municipalities, and how the work in these larger catchment areas can be scaled down for Aurora's needs.

?We have to identify the scope of the problem as it exists in Aurora and we have to identify the scope of the solution. Once we have all that, a choice can be made to do something,? says Councillor Weese. ?Since these bylaws [elsewhere] are so new, I think there's probably better solutions that have been proposed in other larger communities that are scaled down to our own circumstances.

?One of the most interesting [details] to me is, first of all, where should the responsibility of administering this program lie? Should it be within Bylaws, as it is in one of the larger municipalities, or should it be with the building department who receives the applications for these renovations? The other thing that is not really clear in any existing legislation is that they don't really cover renoviction in the existing legislation, and there's no province-wide renoviction bylaw. These municipalities are trying to create their own renovation bylaws because the provincial legislation doesn't regulate them. This creates a circumstance that we've got a province that doesn't seem to be doing much.?

The Province has an active file on renovictions, but it hasn't yet borne fruit, while the housing and affordability crises continue. Work done by the communities of Toronto, Hamilton, Kitchener, Waterloo, and Guelph, however, have laid some of the groundwork, says Councillor Weese.

These details include requiring landlords and property owners to obtain a licence before renovating and putting out an eviction notice, requiring proof that the renovation requires a vacancy and, in some cases, tenant relocation assistance and compensation.

?It's not just a matter of putting a bylaw together, it has to consider all the other circumstances and the Province right now hasn't announced a province-wide renoviction bylaw,? says Weese. ?One of the signals I'm getting from all the documentation is that it's been relatively mixed from a policy standpoint; some of the housing advocates are calling for a Provincial ban or some standardized rules and recently the Provincial housing legislation has been aimed at speeding up construction and actually may limit some of the authority to create additional licensing requirements.

?We've got these competing policy tensions around tenant protection and the reduction of barriers to housing construction, so what I'm saying here basically is there's really no provincial protections put in place, although they are thinking about it, and municipalities are being left to work on this because that's where the evictions and problems exist. They're looking at some amendments to the existing policies that are there, and municipalities are acting?. The fact for me is that our staff should be coming back with a report that makes a clear suggestion of how the renoviction bylaw would be administered, who would administer it, and what would be the cost of administering this bylaw. That's where we are right now.

?I think everybody on Council and any reasonable person would say that if tenants are not adequately protected from a renoviction, which is understood to be you're being evicted because the landlord wants to renovate your property? everybody believes tenants should have some protection against this, particularly in a situation where landlords and tenants have rental agreements that are

affordable, and then those rental agreements after renovations should become affordable. Now we're losing affordable housing stock and we shouldn't be doing that. That's a problem when you look at an Affordable Housing Action Plan ? you should be able to protect the lower rents that you have for people and not be evicting them.?

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