



302 – 895 Fort Street, Lekwungen Territories, Victoria, BC, Canada V8W 1H7
Tel: (250) 361-3521 Fax: (250) 361-3541 Web: www.tapsbc.ca

Mayor and Council
City of Victoria
1 Centennial Square
Victoria, BC V8W 1P6

January 12, 2016

Dear Mayor and Council,


I am writing in support of Councillors Isitt, Loveday and Madoff's motion that the City advocate for affordability and security of rental housing in respect to the threat of "renovictions" of hundreds of tenants in James Bay. Low vacancy rates and high rental costs have perpetuated a housing crisis that will create significant challenges for these tenants should they be displaced from their homes. It is therefore imperative that the City take action to address the tenants' concerns using the strategies proposed in this motion.

TAPS's past experience in navigating the complex tenancy system in cases concerning mass evictions motivates the drafting of this letter of support. Municipal leadership in opening a dialogue between the landlord and the tenants in this context is crucial to mitigating harms. Requesting a meeting to seek clarity on the Landlord's plans to refurbish their properties is crucial for establishing open lines of communication and transparency. Engaging in discussions will not only serve to provide clients with information regarding the Landlord's intentions, but it will also assist with informing the Landlord how their actions will affect the tenants.

With respect to section 2 of the motion, we not only support this action but believe there are specific actions that the government can take immediately to alleviate the housing crisis that is prevalent across the province. In particular, a "right to first refusal" policy, in which tenants are given the option of re-renting the unit after renovations, tying renovations to the ability of landlords to raise rents, and mandating landlords to assist tenants with finding new housing in the case of extensive renovations are just a few of the potential changes to residential tenancy provisions that would assist tenants both locally and provincially.

Finally, we welcome the proposed communication and requests to the Federal government to support the refurbishment and retention of affordable rental housing in the City of Victoria and nationally.

Sincerely,



Yuka Kurokawa,
Tenant Legal Advocate,
Together Against Poverty Society

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