

January 11, 2025

Good afternoon,

I stand before you today as a concerned tenant facing eviction due to alleged renovations at [REDACTED] a place I've called home for 10 years. It's more than just a building, it's a community where we care for each other. Now, I'm filled with anxiety about the future of my home. That's why I'm asking you to support a law that prevents wrongful evictions disguised as renovations.

If you search the name [REDACTED] online, you will find several articles and discussions about him. He is associated with 21 buildings across Ontario, including ours. Reports suggest that he purchases affordable housing, evicts long-term tenants, and increases rents for new occupants. Many feel his actions prioritize profit over people. Similarly, our building's property manager, Rahul, is perceived as supporting these practices and not offering adequate assistance to residents.

In 2019, New Westminster, BC, was the first city in Canada to pass a renoviction bylaw, upheld by the Supreme Court of Canada. Other cities like Vancouver, Toronto, and Hamilton have followed, and Kitchener should too.

The Waterloo Region is in a housing crisis. As one of the fastest growing regions in Canada, affordable housing is hard to find, and rents are rising. Right now, over 2,371 people in our region are homeless, more than double the number from three years ago.

For me, this fight is deeply personal. I came to Canada in 2006, fleeing political instability in the Balkans. During the war, my home was hit with bullets, grenades exploded nearby, and neighbors disappeared. My family and I moved from place to place, relying on humanitarian aid, never knowing if we'd make it through another day. We lost everything.

When we arrived in Kitchener, this city became our home. We had to start from the beginning. I was determined to learn English, support my family, and rebuild our lives. I was able to do this because we had a safe place to live. I never thought I would have to fight for housing again, especially in Canada, a country known for peace and safety. But now, I may lose my home, not because of war, or anything I've done, but because of a renoviction that prioritizes profit over people. Because there is no bylaw in place to protect people from those like [REDACTED]

The tenants in my building are suffering. The uncertainty and stress weigh heavily on us. Across Ontario, renovictions are displacing people from their homes, but not everyone has the chance to stand here and plead their case. Many are forced out quietly, without a voice and those who chose to stay are facing unethical consequences.

We lost access to our building's garage unless we pay over four times the original fee, from \$60 to \$250, yet \$60 is still being withdrawn from our account. The city helped with street parking during summer, but that has now ended, and with winter coming, we're forced to park blocks away, in city lots, which we have to pay for, although the amount is much less than what our landlord is asking. This action alone creates health and safety risks. This is just one example of the injustice and intimidation we face, with the property manager dismissively telling us, "see you in court" when approached.

This council has the power to change that. We need a bylaw to protect tenants from unfair evictions. Other cities have set the example, and Kitchener can too.

The right to housing is recognized as international human law. Without stable and secure housing, mental, physical, and financial toll is devastating. This isn't just about emotions, it's about justice and logic. By passing this bylaw, the city can help stabilize the rental market, prevent unjust evictions, and reduce the pressure on emergency shelters and social services. It's a solution that helps the entire community.

I urge you to think not only of us here today, but of the countless people this bylaw would protect in the future. Thank you for your time and consideration, and for ensuring that Kitchener remains a place where we can all continue to live safely and Thank you.

Sanja Sekulic