September 10, 2020

Dear Councillor [Name]

**Act Immediately to Protect Vulnerable Residents During a Global Pandemic**

As you know, Ontario’s Bill 184, *Protecting Tenants and Strengthening Community Housing Act, 2020* received Royal Assent on July 21, 2020, notwithstanding strong objections from tenants and tenant advocates across the province. The primary concern regarding this Bill is that it would create an additional pathway of eviction for landlords that would effectively circumvent the Landlord and Tenant Board (and also access to free tenant duty counsel services) and proceed directly to the Sheriff to change the lock.

The passing of this legislation in combination with the Landlord and Tenant Board having to process 590 eviction applications between March to June, as well as many still pending as far back as January, and the lifting of the suspension of enforcement of residential tenancy evictions last month is expected to add hundreds more, and create a tsunami of displaced families and individuals in the Region of Peel. The Region has limited means to support people who are precariously housed. Those resources include rent geared to housing (Peel has traditionally had the longest waiting list in the province), the shelter system and the Housing Stabilization Fund which provides financial support for tenants to preserve their tenancy. All of these resources were strained prior to the pandemic and are not equipped to address the forthcoming crisis.

It is also important to highlight that this crisis comes in the backdrop of a global pandemic where social distancing and staying home are key strategies to prevent the spread of COVID-19. This Region has consistently been in the top three health units of confirmed cases and the issue of displaced tenants should be of particular concern, especially since this crisis will only start to be felt in the Fall when a second wave of the pandemic is expected to appear.

There have been opinions that municipalities do not have a role to play in housing matters but that simply has not been the case when one considers the municipal role in subsidized housing, zoning, short term rental markets, planning or secondary suites.

Municipalities have several tools available to mitigate and contain the crisis:

1. The City of Toronto has brought forward a legal challenge to Bill 184 and the Region of Peel can add itself as a party.
2. The Region of Peel as the sole shareholder of the Peel Housing Corporation can direct it to refrain from using the new eviction pathway created by Bill 184. Specifically, it can refrain from seeking ex-parte evictions in both directly managed and privately managed buildings.
3. The Region of Peel as Service Manager can direct all housing providers to refrain from seeking ex-parte evictions using the new powers granted by Bill 184 for all households receiving RGI.
4. The Chief Medical Officer of Health can declare that the tenant crisis is a public health concern and presents a threat to the community.
5. A general landlord surcharge to recoup the costs associated with supporting displaced tenants and providing them with housing and homelessness services under the Municipal Act, 2001 s. 391(1)(b).
6. The Region can reiterate the request to the Province to establish a program to prevent evictions and compensate landlords in residential tenancies similar to the Federal Government’s Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance program, as suggested by the Peel Poverty Reduction Committee in its letter of May 8th, 2020, see attached.

We understand a staff report is currently being prepared and will be referred directly to Regional Council for prompt action at its October 8th meeting. **It is imperative that during this pandemic crisis, the Region and lower tier municipalities take a bold stance to ensure that people remain housed. Providing vulnerable residents with housing stability and security during these uncertain times is a vital matter of public safety and public health.** **We urge you to vote in favour of the first three measures and refer the last three to Regional Staff to report on the feasibility of their implementation.**

Please act on this before the wave of evictions takes place.

Sincerely,