

6585 SUSSEX: THE LAST REMAINING TENANTS

By Emily Luba

The last two remaining tenants of 6585 Sussex Ave. were evicted from their home of 10 years under harsh and manipulative circumstances, resulting in a detrimental loss. The Metrotown neighbourhood is ideal for these elderly renters: close to the skytrain, since they rely on public transportation; and near the Crystal Mall, which contains their doctors as well as shops and services in Cantonese and Mandarin.

Thind Development Properties Ltd. is replacing 62 units of low-end of market purpose-built rental housing with what will be a luxury tower for the rich. The “Tenant Assistance Package,” that Thind promised displaced tenants, was non-existent: renters never heard from the worker who was contracted out to provide information about other housing options, and didn’t receive the meagre \$100 moving fee until the day before the eviction date. Furthermore, 6511 Sussex Heights Development Ltd. was listed in most communication to tenants regarding the status of their building, despite Thind being the developer. There is no contact information listed making it glaringly clear that Thind wanted to prevent tenants from accessing information.

The new tower at 6585 Sussex will contain 327 market rental units and 125 non-market units, however, even if these non-profit units had been made more accessible they are a facade rather than any real disruption to the capitalist and colonialist market. Overall, there will still be a reduction in units at the low-end of or below market rates which currently

exist in Metrotown. 60 of the 125 non-profit units proposed will be at BC’s “Housing Income Limits (HIL)” rates. HIL limits guarantee that you must not spend more than a third of your income on rent, so to qualify for a one bedroom apartment, your income must be \$3775/month, making your rent \$1275/month: substantially more than the \$800-\$900 rates currently for these Sussex buildings.

What happened on Sussex Ave. is representative of the eviction crisis in Metrotown as a whole: renters falling through the cracks, as the city works with developers hiding that hide under a performance of false benevolence. The injustice occurring also demonstrates the anti-Asian racism seeped in the BC housing market. Rising housing prices are solely blamed on Asian people, as the struggles of Asian elderly and lower income renters, such as these remaining Sussex tenants, are erased. The foreign investment myth being propagated fails to recognize that Canadian landlords and development corporations are also responsible for exploiting tenants. There is no such thing as “foreign” investment because in today’s global capitalist economy no capital remains within one nation’s borders. All settlers are foreign to occupied Indigenous land and the current system is inherently based on multinational corporations making millions off of commodifying these unceded territories. Our current model of land relations based on property rights will always push the most at risk further towards the bottom, such as these remaining tenants. Therefore, the struggle in Metrotown must aim to destroy current conceptions of property by creating and fostering land-relations that exist outside of capitalism and colonialism.



BURNABY EMBRACES RENTAL ONLY ZONING BUT IT WON'T STOP DEMOVITIONS AND DISPLACEMENT

By Zoe Luba, Emily Luba, Cecile Revaux & Sean Phipps

On Monday, July 23rd, Burnaby City Council passed a motion to develop a rental only zoning bylaw. The focus of Burnaby’s new policy is the Metrotown neighbourhood, where Mayor Derek Corrigan’s “Downtown” Metrotown plan has targeted 3,000 units of affordable rental housing for demolition and redevelopment. The Burnaby Now promoted this as a “major shift” in Mayor Corrigan’s redevelopment policies. Far more likely is that a Mayoral competitor, Mike Hurley, was moving into the significant gap to the left of Mayor Corrigan on the question of demovictions and Burnaby City Council decided they could no longer afford to hold such an obstinate course in their Metrotown bulldozer.

This vacuum in the left field of Burnaby’s demoviction politics is defining the City’s fall municipal election, but it would be a mistake to see the election as the cause of the vacuum. This is a significant political shift that would not have happened without the organizing and resistance of the working class and Indigenous tenants of the Metrotown neighbourhood. Through taking back public space with marches and chants, the

disruption of City Council meetings, countless collective gatherings and analyzing the origins of demovictions, residents of Metrotown have stood up against the system looking to destroy their homes.

This is not to say that either of the Mayoral pretenders are proposing measures that would stop market-driven displacement-by-demoviction. Corrigan’s rental zoning model is designed to still attract and award predatory developers. A garnish on demovictions, Corrigan’s rentals will be a tiny proportion of units in a condo tower that will rent at three times the rates of existing rental housing, continuing to fuel the gentrification of Metrotown. As to what Hurley’s policies are, no one can say because he’s been even more vague than Corrigan.

Current residents refuse to be thrown out of their community, even temporarily. They are fighting to stay in their neighbourhood and a guarantee that Metrotown remains over 90% rentals, accessible at the rents residents are currently paying. Until then, Stop Demovictions Burnaby and residents of Metrotown will continue to build power outside of the capitalist and colonial system to fight for our communities. The next step for that movement will be to step up, confront, and overthrow the property laws that make demovictions and development corporation profits possible. In the words of one tenant, Linda, "We can’t give up hope. Not everything is easy but we need to keep fighting the fight because it is worth it."

ABOUT | CONTACT

If you have a story to tell about evictions and displacement in Metrotown, please call Sean at 604-365-9009, email us at burnabytedn@gmail.com

www.stopdisplacement.ca/stop-demovictions-burnaby/ | <https://www.facebook.com/stopdemovictions>

We Won't Go is affiliated with Stop Demovictions Burnaby, a grassroots community campaign to stop evictions and mass displacement in Metrotown, and is published on the occupied territory of the Qayqayt, Kwikwetlem, Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh and Musqueam nations.

TENANTS IN HAMILTON CHALLENGE THE INTERNATIONAL CAPITALIST CLASS

By Listen Chen

Since May 1st, International Workers Day, tenants in an apartment complex in Hamilton, Ontario, have been on rent strike to protest proposed rent hikes and long overdue building repairs. The complex, Stoney Creek Towers, is home to a mix of low-income, working class, and immigrant households, many of whom are living on disability or income assistance. Their demands are long overdue building repairs and the withdrawal of their landlord InterRent’s plan to increase rent by nearly 10% over two years.

In the case of Stoney Creek, InterRent purchased the towers a few years ago and has been neglecting interior repairs while making minor cosmetic changes to the exterior of the towers in order to push out older tenants so that they can drastically increase rent and make more profit. Only empty units have been

renovated, and only in order to charge higher rents. Before starting the rent strike, Stoney Creek tenants first filed complaints with Ontario’s Landlord Tenant Board (LTB) to protest InterRent’s application for a rent increase. Emily, from the Hamilton Tenants Solidarity Network (HTSN), explained to me that for many Stoney Creek tenants seeing how inadequate the LTB was in supporting their rights and how alienating the process of submitting a complaint to them was, made it clear why a rent strike was needed.

After almost than 4 months the tenants at Stony Creek are still on rent strike, withholding profits from InterRent until their demands for affordable, dignified housing are met. Their battle shows us that Canadian firms are no less rapacious than foreign firms, and that the core of the landlord-tenant relationship is the commodification of land, land stolen from Indigenous peoples. InterRent may extract rent from tenants at a larger scale than an individual landlord, but both their interests are produced by colonial and capitalist private property relations, relations which the Stony Creek tenants are working to disrupt.



Striking tenants in Hamilton, Ontario. Picture by John Rennison, The Hamilton Spectator



I'M (NOT) NATIVE

By Pauline Morris

To be native you need a Native name
To be native you **must** speak the language
To be native you need to live in your territory

I walk to the store I’m bumped
I go to work I'm glared at on my way
I go for a smoke people run from me

To be native you need a Native name
To be native you **must** speak the language
To be native you need to live in your territory

I have no name
I speak no words

I live in the city

To be native you need a Native name
To be native you **must** speak the language
To be native you need to live in your territory

I’m not Native
I’m not Native
I’m **not** Native

To be native you need a Native name
To be native you **must** speak the language
To be native you need to live in your territory

I go to school I’m Native
I go to work I’m Native
I go home I’m Native

UPCOMING STOP DEMOVICTIONS BURNABY EVENTS

- Organizing Meeting** - Tuesday **August 21st** at 6:30PM at the Marlborough Elementary School Portable at Royal Oak Ave and Sanders St.
- Organizing Meeting** - Tuesday **September 4th** at 6:30PM at the Marlborough Elementary School Portable at Royal Oak Ave and Sanders St.
- Monthly Townhall** - Wednesday **September 12th** at 6:30PM at the Burnaby Neighbourhood House at 4460 Beresford St.