



Tenant Organizing in Toronto: Empowering Communities for Housing Justice

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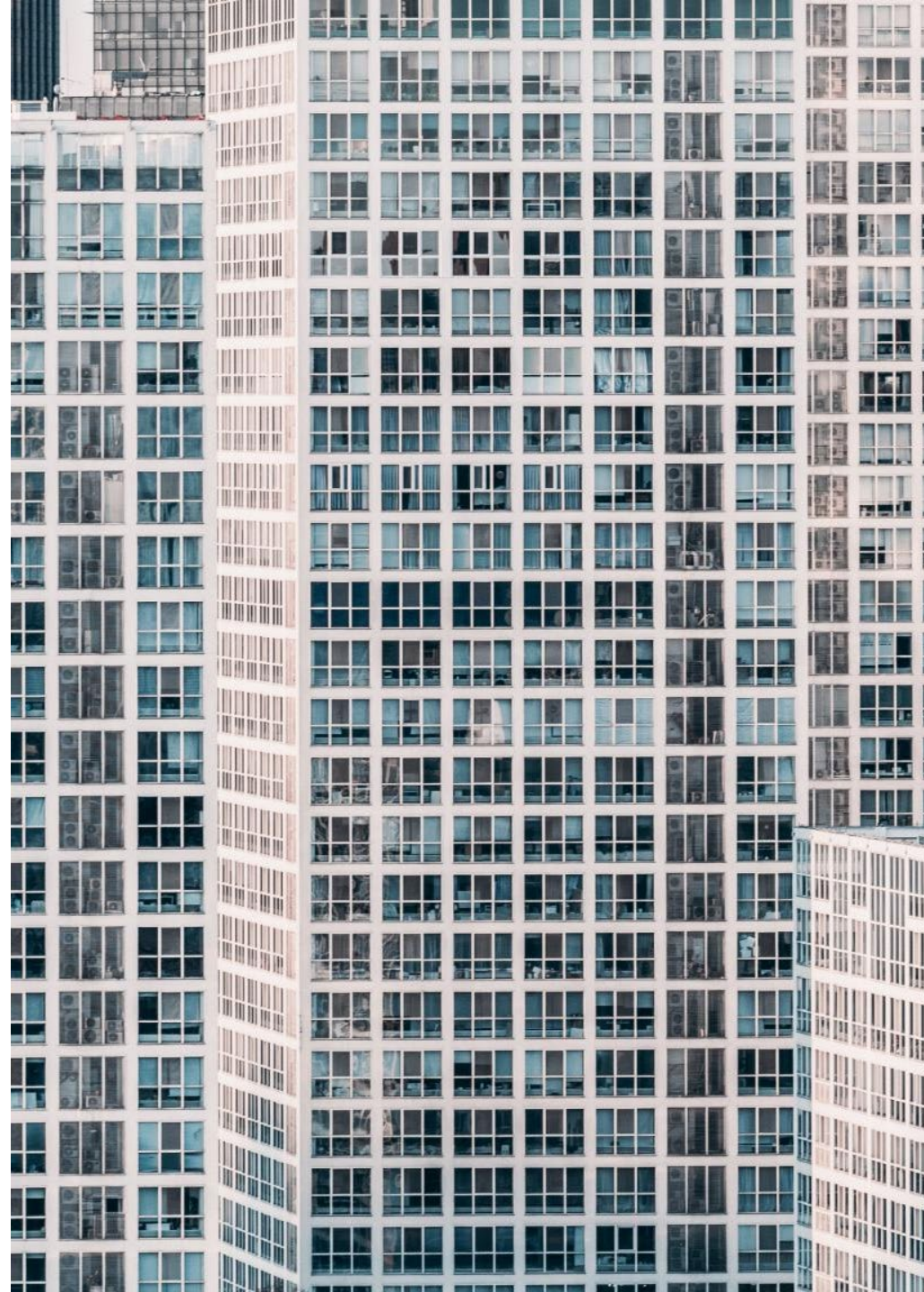
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**Why
Organize?**

Toronto's Rental Landscape

- **Tenant versus landlord's expectations**
- **Rising Rent Trends**
- **Tenant Vulnerability**





Key Challenges Faced by Tenants

Rent Increases

Uncontrolled rent hikes, Above Guideline Increases and the absence of vacancy control place financial strain on tenants. The 2018 provision is a cause of financial instability and a lack of security for tenants.

Poor Maintenance

Inadequate upkeep of rental properties is a reality in Toronto. Many tenants are forced to live in unsafe and unhealthy conditions, with poor recourse.

Risk of Eviction

The lack of tenant education leads tenants to believe they can be easily evicted, making them afraid to assert their rights.

Limited Affordable Housing

The scarcity of affordable housing options restricts tenants' ability to find suitable and stable homes.



Tenant Activism

Toronto towers and the FMTA

Tenant activism in Toronto began decades ago. The concentration of people in many towers and the creation of the FMTA helped create a landscape which is more advanced here than in the rest of Canada.

Advocacy for Tenant Rights

The main activists for tenant rights should be tenants, not institutions or agencies. The FMTA is here to educate, support and fight together with tenants. Our organizers, like you, live in rental homes.

Tools

We should use a multi-pronged approach in the fight for tenants' rights. In civic terms, we should demand the end of Above Guideline Increases and the creation of robust protections for tenants.

Organizing



Strategies for Building Tenant Associations

Outreach Initiatives and Contact Database Building

Effective tenant associations begin with proactive outreach to engage and connect with all tenants in the community.

The Power of Numbers

Alone, tenants do not have much power, but together with their neighbours, they are stronger and more creative in finding solutions.

Democratic Process

Open and inclusive communication ensures all voices are heard and promotes unity among diverse tenants. Leadership and legitimacy are achieved by the power of collective decisions and the vote.

Shared Goals

A tenant association should fight for shared goals while educating tenants to achieve their individual rights with the landlord.



Steps for Collective Action and Mobilization

Organizing Meetings

Gathering people to discuss issues and plan collective actions is essential for effective mobilization. However, too many meetings can empty an association. The steering committee should meet more than the rest of the tenants and keep everybody informed on decisions and important events.

Advocacy Campaigns

Campaigns raise awareness and pressure decision-makers for fair treatment and policy reforms. This can be done with your building, your tenant union or tenant network.

Petitions

Collecting signatures to support demands is a way to get to know your neighbours and the issues affecting the building.

Peaceful Demonstrations

Nonviolent protests are also an option for tenants. Every tenant association is different, and your actions should be decided by the majority of the tenants in your building.



Legal Rights and Protections for Tenants

Understanding Tenant Rights – Education

Tenants should be aware of local laws that protect them, helping them assert their rights confidently.

Rent Control Regulations – Organizing against rent hikes

Rent control laws limit rent increases to protect tenants from unfair rent hikes.

Eviction Protections – Education and Tools for Tenants

Eviction protections ensure tenants have legal procedures before eviction can occur.

The above are some of the subjects of the tenant school.

I want to create a tenants' association with my neighbours to enhance our quality of life, foster community, and help everyone understand their rights.

What Tenants Fight Against on a Daily Basis

Unjustified rent increases and AGIs

Renoviction

Construction noises

Privacy interference , unannounced visits

Eviction due to administrative errors

Faulty maintenance and pest infestations

Abusive staff

Pest infestations





Obstacles to Organizing and How They Are Overcome

Landlord Opposition

What you need to know.

Tenant Fear of Retaliation

Save yourself with your neighbours. They are your best friends in this fight.

Resource Limitations

How to overcome this. Fundraising, contacts with agencies and politicians.

Overcoming Challenges

Resilience, legal support (how to get), and solidarity empower tenants to successfully organize.



Partnerships with Advocacy Groups and Local Government

Collaborations with Nonprofits

FMTA, ACORN, Tenant Unions such as TTU, No Demovicton and other groups.

Engagement with Municipal Authorities

Pressing local government enhances policy advocacy, strengthening tenant rights and community impact.

Legal clinics

How to get them to help.

The Impact of Tenant Organizing on Housing Policy

Influence on Rent Control and Eviction Laws

Organized Tenant Efforts

Tenant groups have played a key role in advocating for stronger rent control and eviction protections. **(The case of the 1991 provision.)**

Strengthening Rent Control

Enhanced rent control measures help stabilize housing costs for vulnerable populations. **This is a constant tug of war with landlords and certain government representatives.**

Eviction Protections

Eviction protections safeguard tenants from unfair displacement and promote housing security. **This is another point of friction between tenant advocates and certain representatives who approve laws against tenants. Pay attention to your vote!**





Is it challenging to establish and manage a tenant association?

- What about legal papers?
- Will my landlord evict me if I start a T.A.?
- If not all my neighbours join the T.A., is it still valid?
- What if the landlord ignores us and refuses to talk to us?
- What if the landlord accuses us of harassing other neighbours just by inviting them to join?



Can the media help tenants to fight for their rights?

Create your own media database.

Learn what kinds of stories may be of media interest.

Learn how to address the media: forget the emotions and think of one sentence to resume your story.

Contact the FMTA if you have no access to the media. We may be able to help!

Tenant Unions and Tenant Networks

How unions and networks can help tenants in the fight for their rights.





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Part II

Key Organizing Tips

- Making plans and taking action together
- Collectively improve conditions in our buildings and address issues with our landlords
- Communication between tenants is key, establish and maintain communication between members of the group



Organizing as a Campaign



- We can think of lots of tenant association activity in terms of campaigns to achieve certain outcomes – for example, getting maintenance done
- A group of organized tenants will engage in successive campaigns over time – as well as do other things like share information, support each other in other ways, etc.

1. What is the issue?

- Your demand(s) will be related to the issues(s)

2. Who can fix the issue?

- Your landlord, i.e. your target

3. How can you get them to address the issue?

- Use your collective power to put pressure on your landlord, through actions



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Targets

Primary target is your landlord

Tenants put increased pressure on the target to meet your demands

There are different kinds of landlords

- Nonprofit
- Corporate
- REIT
- Family owned, etc.

Different landlords present different opportunities, possibilities for action and secondary targets

Targets

- Property management



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- Owner





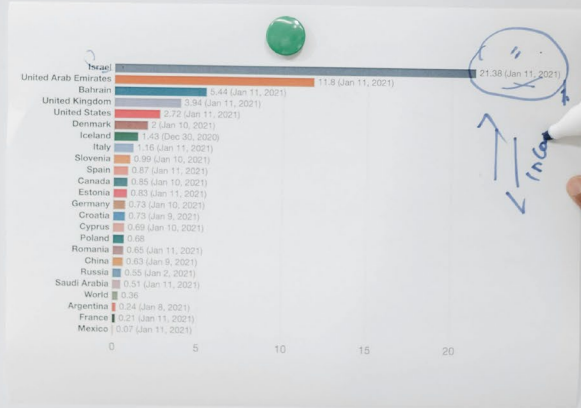
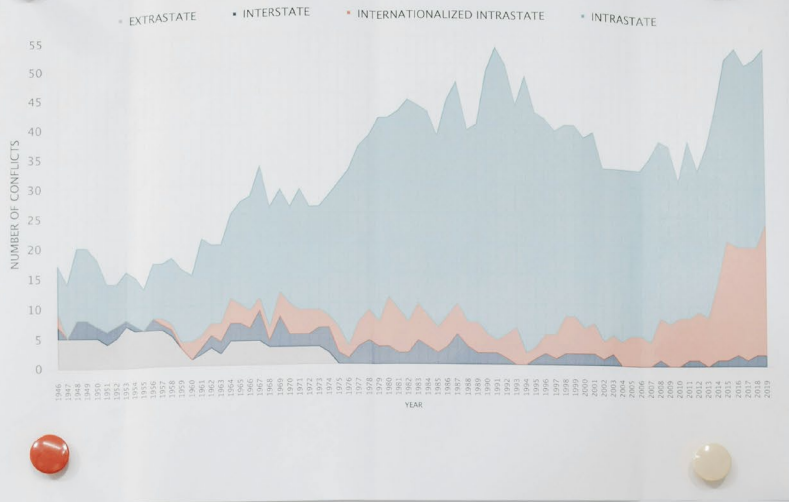
Even if it is a company

there are people behind these companies who own other buildings or businesses, who have homes, who care about their public reputations, who have investors to keep happy, etc.

Secondary targets
can put pressure
on the primary
target to meet your
demands

A close-up photograph of a middle-aged man with short, light brown hair, wearing brown-rimmed glasses and a light-colored checkered button-down shirt. He has a serious, slightly concerned expression on his face. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be the interior of a vehicle or a modern building with large windows. The lighting is bright and even.

Know Your Landlord



- Is your landlord an individual?
- Is your landlord a big company?
- Does your landlord have investors?
- Is it a pension fund?
- Does your landlord own other buildings?
- Does your landlord own other businesses?
- Does your landlord care about their public reputation?

- Does your landlord care about their reputation in their community?
- Does your landlord give to charity or sit on a board?
- Do you have a property manager separate from your landlord?
- Does your landlord have a board of directors?



**Information is
Valuable, Do
Your Research**

- If you don't know already, you can find out who owns your building from the City of Toronto assessment rolls (updated annually, not at sale) or the land registry (Teranet property search)





• If your landlord is a numbered company or other corporation, you can run a corporate profile search to find out the directors of the company (Service Ontario – Ontario Business Registry, other searches)



- Search individuals online and on social media to learn about other businesses they own, other interests, other roles, family and business connections, etc.

ACTION





Escalate



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- Collective demand letter delivery (to office or home)
- Action at landlord's office, other businesses, or home (e.g. flyers, posters, a rally)
- Reaching out to tenants in other buildings owned by same landlord and helping them organize
- Reaching out to other buildings in your neighbourhood (you support us, we'll support you)
- Phone/email zap
- Online actions/reviews
- Rally in your neighbourhood
- Rent strike or withhold a portion of rent
- What opportunities are available in your particular situation? Research is important here

- Media can sometimes be helpful, but you can't rely on them
- Media coverage alone will seldom resolve the issue or change the relationship with your landlord
- Tenants often have to make it a story worth covering/create the story through action
- The best actions are effective even without media attention (media helps amplify)



Social Media



Social media can be useful, but be strategic



Use social media to connect with other tenants, raise awareness about issues, and share actions to amplify



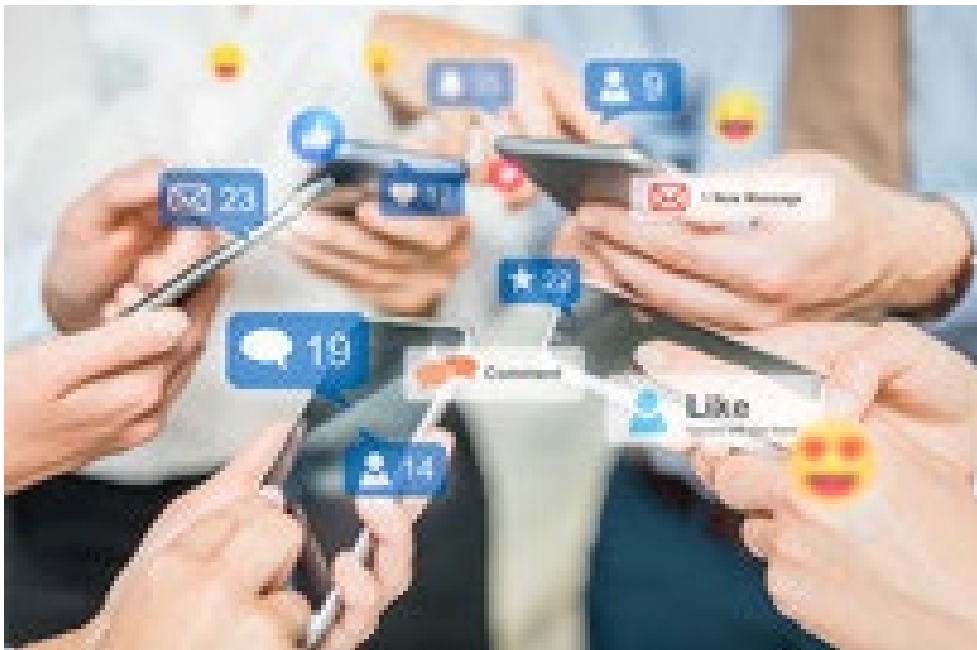
Lots of tenants use Facebook and Instagram, lots of groups and reporters use Twitter (even if less so now) and Instagram



Follow reporters and other tenant groups, post content/share to get more followers and attention



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Social Media Tips



Posting about actions is best



Don't expect results simply because you post about your landlord's neglect



Tagging people or tweeting at people isn't always helpful



Social media can complement your organizing but isn't a substitute for organizing or for collective direct action



Alone?



**Together, taking
care of each other.**

Education

**Organizing for
Rights**

**Building
Community**