

5 Questions Toronto voters should ask candidates running for Mayor or City Council about housing:

1 We are in a housing crisis. If elected, what will you do to protect affordable rental housing and tenants?

You do not want to hear an answer that only says we need to increase housing supply, and rents will magically come down. You do not want to hear that we need to balance the needs of landlords / developers AND tenants.” **This is code for the status quo, where tenants are not considered or protected.**

You want to hear something like this:

- We need to increase funding of non-market housing, housing based on a reasonable proportion of the resident’s income (e.g., 33%).
- I will work to expand the EPIC program and the MURA program.
- I will work to ensure that redevelopments will have to have at least 30% affordable units, and the percentage of affordable units required should be proportional to the increase in new units (e.g., if redevelopment would triple the number of units, the required percent of affordable units would increase to 40%). And these affordable housing units will have to remain rent-controlled for 50, 75 or 100 years.

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- You could also ask the candidate more questions to press for further clarity, like:
- What variety of housing is being proposed? In which neighborhoods? Who is the intended resident?
- What entity will hold ownership? At what cost to the tenant? And what are the governing structures?

Arguments centered purely on increasing supply typically neglect how the financialization of our homes has fundamentally warped the rental market throughout Toronto.

2 What will you do to ensure that affordable housing is not being eroded?

Since the last election, thousands of units of affordable, rent-controlled housing in midrise buildings have been approved to be demolished, redeveloped and replaced by high-rise buildings with 3 to 5 times the number of units.

You do not want to hear an incumbent candidate say: “We’re doing all we can. We are limited in how much we can protect tenants. We can’t prevent the loss of tenants’ homes. We can only mitigate the upheaval.” You also don’t want to hear that the City’s policies are working just fine– they could be much better. This is code for the status quo, where developers get everything they want and tenants are an afterthought. Large corporations mine tenants for profit instead of gold, with the support of governments, banks, accounting firms, and pension funds.

You want to hear something like this:

I will work hard to strengthen rental demolition requirements and protections over and above what the current bylaw says. I will work to make sure replacement units are rent-controlled, if not in perpetuity, then for at least 50, 75 or 100 years. I will put all these commitments in writing. This is the way to meaningfully protect affordable housing, and to support the tenants who make this City work.



3 When a developer applies to demolish and redevelop a building, over the last 3 years the process has involved minimal tenant consultation or input. What will you do to make sure that tenants are meaningfully consulted about the loss of their homes before City staff recommendations go to Council? How will you ensure that their concerns and needs are met?

You want to hear something like this:

I will commit, either myself or a competent member of my staff, to meeting with tenants more than twice prior to the Community Council Meeting, and to advocate and negotiate for their needs, which may include car parking, storage lockers, and hydro and

water costs included in the rent for replacement units (if that was the case in the original building). I will meet monthly with tenant advocacy groups to collaboratively advance their issues and policy recommendations.

4 When a building with many units is demolished and the site redeveloped, existing communities of neighbours and support systems are uprooted and often destroyed. What will you do to support more vulnerable tenants facing demoviction?

You do not want to hear something like this:

"The City has Social Services to assist less fortunate people and vulnerable tenants. Social Services can help them adjust to their new reality." This is code for the status quo, where poor, marginalized, Indigenous and Racialized communities are disproportionately affected and harmed by displacement. Large corporations purposely seek out buildings with lower income, marginalized and racialized tenants as ideal for maximizing profit.

You want to hear something like this:

I acknowledge that vulnerable tenants are disproportionately affected and harmed by a demoviction. I will consult with Social Services, Tenant advocates, experts in naturally occurring retirement communities, and experts in housing to develop better policies to support and protect vulnerable tenants, and to make sure developers pay at least a portion of these additional costs. I will put these commitments in writing.

5 The city has not historically tracked demovictions to assess their impact on tenants and on the stock of affordable housing. What will you do to ensure that the city collects the data needed to develop better housing policies?

You do not want to hear something like this:

"Our staff regularly look at the data collected by the Province, the CMHC, and Statistics Canada to ensure we are meeting our targets to protect affordable housing. We're doing a pretty good job, really."

You want to hear something like this:

I recognize that we are in a housing crisis as a result of decades of housing policy which maximized the interests of landlords over tenants. Recent financialization of housing by large corporate interests, Real Estate Investment Trusts, hedge funds and pension funds have further pushed tenant interests aside in order to generate outrageous profits. As governments, we need to push back with policies that protect tenants and affordable housing, because that's in everyone's best interests in the long run.

I commit to advocating for the City Planning Department to collect the following data for helping develop better housing policies and tenant protections:

- The number of units and unit types (bachelor, 1 bedroom, 2 bedroom, 3 bedroom) approved for demolition and redevelopment each month and every year
- The number of units proposed to be built on those sites, as well as how many of them are replacement units, additional affordable units, condos and/or market rent apartments. The period during which the replacement and affordable units will remain rent-controlled in the absence of provincial rent control legislation.
- The number & type of units of rent-controlled affordable housing demolished every month and every year.
- Where the displaced tenants ended up moving, the unit type and rent they were paying, how far from their building they moved.
- The number of demolished buildings which completed redevelopment every month and every year, how long the redevelopment took from approval to demolition to reconstruction, and the number of eligible or post-application tenants who returned to replacement units, and the rent those tenants are paying compared to their previous rent.
- The number of eligible tenants who agreed to give up their right of return and what they were paid to give up this right. The number of units in the redeveloped building where tenants are paying similar rent, affordable rent, and market rent 6 months after occupancy
- I will put these commitments in writing.