

City's Budget Crisis Scapegoats Tenants

Toronto – Toronto Community Housing tenants are concerned they are the newest scapegoat for the City of Toronto's budget crisis. They are also worried the new Board will be forced to play along.

Yesterday, just days before the new TCHC Board is appointed by City Council, TCHC Managing Director Case Ootes recommended the sale of 900 homes. He suggested the sale would fund the backlog of capital repairs. But just hours after Ootes' announcement, Mayor Rob Ford told media that the revenue from the sale of Toronto Housing could be put towards next year's budget.

"We are very concerned the City is forgetting about the thousands of tenants living in TCHC and that they are more concerned about selling off our homes. These buildings are more than bricks and mortar. These are our homes and these are our neighbourhoods. We are here to tell the City that we are not for sale!" said Wallace Simpson, an elected tenant representative and member of *Tenants for Social Housing*.

The Mayor committed to restoring the public's confidence when he dismissed TCHC's Board this spring and appointed Ootes as the sole controller of the organization. He assured tenants that their homes would not be sold or privatized. "We're asking the Mayor if this is how he restores public confidence, by selling off our homes, displacing tenants and dealing a debt he created at our expense," continued Simpson.

Tenants for Social Housing questioned Ootes' claim that housing should be sold, because some of it hasn't been rented. "How is it that Ootes hasn't rented these homes when there are thousands of families on the waiting list for social housing?" said Karlene Steer, an elected tenant representative. "These homes have been left empty and unrepaired so the City has an excuse to sell them off."

Susan Gapka, an active tenant leader in TCHC and member of *Tenants for Social Housing* is defiant after Ootes' recommended a fire sale of her building yesterday and showcased her building for media. "Case Ootes came to our building and disrespected tenants living here. Not once did he ask us for ideas about how to improve our housing conditions or ask us about our everyday needs. I still feel violated!" said Gapka.

"The Mayor wants to use the money from the sale of our homes to deal with the City's budget," continued Gapka. "This is not the way to restore public confidence in TCHC. This does not respect tenants. Selling off public housing to resolve the millions of dollars in capital repairs depletes our housing stock and displaces tenants in need. The message is that tenants do not matter anymore."

Tenants For Social Housing is also concerned about the incoming appointed TCHC board. We are worried the board being picked by City Council will support the Mayor and outgoing Managing Director by selling off TCHC housing and not consider the best interests of tenants living in TCHC.

"We are not for sale and refuse to be the scapegoat for a budget crisis that the City created." Gapka concluded.

Tenants for Social Housing will be asking Councillors for their support to stop the sale of social housing in Toronto and will be approaching Provincial Parties to ensure that provincial legislation and safeguards are maintained to support social housing tenants in Toronto and elsewhere in the province.