



Eviction Prevention Tenant Support Overview: April 2023 to September 2023

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Eviction Prevention Waterloo Region (EPWR) is an ongoing, living, and evolving peer support program that is a response to Kitchener–Waterloo–Cambridge’s housing crisis. It was created to complement and support existing overburdened services in the community, offer peer support and advocacy to marginalized tenants struggling or in crisis. EPWR focuses advocacy both on an individual level and a system change level.

Our Responsibilities

We empower tenants to learn about their rights and responsibilities. Supporting tenants to document and address their difficult experiences with their landlords. We also provide peer assistance and advocacy for tenants navigating landlord–tenant conflict. Our ongoing responsibilities include the following:

- Sharing accurate information about landlord and tenant rights and responsibilities according to the Residential Tenancies Act.
- Facilitating healthy, productive relationships between landlords and tenants, legal intervention organizations and enforcement agencies.
- Empowering tenants to document their conflict experiences with their landlords and advocate for themselves.
- Assisting with Landlord and Tenant Board (LTB) issues and landlord–tenant conflict, including:
 - Explaining complex legislation and LTB forms, procedures, and hearings to tenants;
 - Helping draft written and documented tenant responses to landlords;
 - Providing safe spaces and technology for tenants to attend online LTB hearings; and
 - Referring tenants to legal services for legal advice as required and other community organizations for housing support needs.
- Offering in-person and in-home support to tenants experiencing mobility or

access barriers.

- Conflict mediation during in-person landlord–tenant interactions, such as during scheduled property maintenance.
- Identifying relevant legal, social, economic, or health problems experienced by tenants in consultation with tenants.
- Providing warm community referrals to partner community organizations and ensuring tenants have access to appropriate support services.
- Offering physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual support as tenants navigate the LTB and landlord–tenant conflict.
- Sharing information with an online following of community members through social media on Facebook and Twitter.

Community Connections and Public Engagement

There are a variety of ways in which EPWR engages partners in reciprocal relationships. Some examples of these include; use of physical space, direct tenant referrals, Bylaw enforcement support, summary legal advice, systems navigation, information exchanges, discretionary funding for tenants, systems change and individual advocacy.

Community partners and Collaborators:

- City of Waterloo Property Standards
- City of Kitchener Property Standards
- Waterloo Regional Police Service Community Engagement Unit
- Family and Children’s Services of Waterloo Region—continuing relationship with the Two Row Wampum Team and the Hammurabi Black and Racialized Peoples Team
- Waterloo Region Community Legal Services (WRCLS), including the Ahwenehaode Indigenous Justice Program
- Sex Workers Action Network Waterloo Region
- Adventure 4 Change
- Spectrum Rainbow Community Centre
- John Howard Society
- Lutherwood
- The Working Centre
- The Unsheltered Network
- House of Friendship
- Reception House
- Langs Community Hub
- Kitchener Ward 10 City Councillor Aislinn Clancy
- Kitchener Ward 3 City Councillor Jason Deneault
- Kitchener Ward 9 City Councilor Debbie Chapman
- Regional Councillor Rob Deutschmann
- MP Kitchener Centre Mike Morrice
- Region of Waterloo
- Community Justice Initiative (CJI)
- Women’s Crisis Services of Waterloo Region
- Waterloo Public Library
- ACORN Waterloo Region

New Partnerships and New initiatives

EPWR has developed a new partnership with Waterloo Public Library. In the goal of building Eviction Prevention’s profile and accessibility within the City of Waterloo one peer worker will be holding drop in hours at the Main location in Uptown Waterloo on a weekly basis. There are on-going logistical discussions about this initiative. Two peer workers attend WPL’s main branch and presented information about the current housing crisis and the work of EPWR to the Info Services team members.

EPWR is in discussion with the Family and Children Services Racialized Division (F&CS-RD) to make its services more accessible for families, youth and single parent

families experiencing unstable housing and facing eviction. EPWR is working alongside F&CS-RD to explore the possibility of EPWR Peer Workers presenting information to their staff and EPWR working on location at The Family Centre. This collaboration will expand EPWR's presence in the community and reach more people who may be experiencing eviction and hidden homelessness, both of which affect a families ability to thrive.

EPWR continues to work closely with Waterloo Region Community Legal Services. This partnership has expanded to include joint support to tenants in order to maximize their capacity. This collaboration assists tenants in understanding their tenant rights and to participate in the eviction process while accessing peer-support and legal support at the same time.

Media Attention and Raising Awareness

Eviction Prevention has had the opportunity to speak as a panelist at a recent [town hall on renovictions](#) organized by Regional Councillor Rob Deutschmann on September 21st, 2023. As panelist EPWR discussed how the renoviction epidemic has left people in crisis and with no other options for affordable and deeply affordable housing. The Townhall highlighted the tenants' need to understand their rights in these situations and the urgent requirement for landlords to be held accountable for illegal practices. EPWR as well as the other panels raised awareness within the community about the housing crisis, illegal evictions, the loss of affordable housing stock and to activate a call to action pushing for system change and tenant protections.

Eviction Prevention attended the [Poverty Reduction Forum](#) hosted by Waterloo Region Community Legal Services on October 17th, 2023. EPWR came together with the community to listen and deepen understanding of the challenges they are experiencing in combating poverty in the region. The lived experience of people living in poverty, living through poverty and living despite poverty is enormous and is invaluable. In recognizing that community connection and collaboration are vital to creating system change EPWR shared information with attendees and made new connections with individuals and organizations including; 100 Women For Change, Home Banx, YMCA Two Rivers Immigration Services, Cambridge Tech Collective.

On August 15, 2023 Jenaya Nixon (former EPWR Peer Worker for Kitchener and Waterloo) was interviewed by CKMS News for coverage on renovictions in the Waterloo Region. Jenaya discussed how landlords push tenants out, specifically long term tenants, in order to raise rental rates for the unit. She described the different strategies landlords use in bad faith to evict tenants, including targeting vulnerable tenants to sign N11 forms. She expressed the traumatic nature of eviction and how the chronic stress of the situation can deeply impact tenants mental health. Jenaya explains how a tenant might eventually give into the landlords eviction because they do not have the capacity to fight.

On Wednesday October 18th, Leah Connor (current EPWR Peer Worker for Kitchener and Waterloo) attended the Civic Hub Exchange lunch and presented to the group of community organizations about the work of EPWR.

Eviction Prevention

Success Stories

N5 Eviction Notice: The tenant approached the Eviction Prevention team seeking support in addressing money owed to the landlord to cover repair costs for damages to their unit. The tenant identified as living with a disability and a challengingly low income. This tenant reached out to different agencies and support providers in navigating the process of the Landlord and Tenant Board hearing to address the money owed. Ultimately through a collaborative approach facilitated by Eviction Prevention across multi-agencies the tenant was able to secure a payment plan agreement through mediation during the Landlord and Tenant Board Hearing and successfully prevent eviction.

N13 Eviction Notice: The family is made up of two parents and two kids and they arrived in Canada from a warzone. Since that time they have resided in the same home. They have established ties to the community and are thriving. They were delivered a notice that their home has been sold and that the new owner will be moving in. When they received this notice they were unfamiliar with the formal processes of the Landlord and Tenant Board. Through bullying behaviour and harassment they were led to believe that they would be facing homelessness. With the support of Eviction Prevention this family has come to understand their legal rights and the obligations of their landlords to move through the appropriate legal channels. This family was ready to move out until they became connected with Eviction Prevention and were provided information, they have asserted their rights and remain housed.

Tenant not on Lease: The tenant in this case had never been formally placed on the lease, but they had been living in the unit in a common law relationship with the person named on the lease for many years. The tenant identified as living with a disability on a low income. The tenant was facing eviction as a result of their partner withholding rent and damaging the unit in violent outbursts and subsequently being incarcerated for domestic violence of the tenant in focus. The intersecting challenges and vulnerabilities that the tenant was facing were navigated by many social service providers, one of which referred the tenant to Eviction Prevention. Eviction Prevention supported the tenant in gathering evidence which validated their tenancy and eventually they were named on a new lease with the same below market rental rate and remained housed.

N13 Eviction Notice: The tenant in this case identified as senior and previously incarcerated. After the landlord told the tenants that they would be moving into the property (N12 notice) the entire building had been served N13 notices to evict for renovations. One tenant, unaware of their full rights, vacated their unit within the timeframe of the notice. Other tenants remained and after connecting with Eviction Prevention learned about their First Right of Refusal and invoked it. At this time the tenant remains housed in the same unit.

N4 Eviction Notice: The tenant was behind on rental payments, and approached Eviction Prevention to support them through the process of Landlord and Tenant Board

Hearing. The tenant identified as LGBTQIA+, living with a disability and low income. Through the support of Eviction Prevention the tenant was able to work out a payment plan and quickly completed repayment ultimately preventing their eviction.

N13 Eviction Notice: Tenants were pressured to leave a multi-unit residency for more than a year by a landlord who wanted to renovate and scale up rental prices in the building. Tenants were largely elderly and/or disabled and the landlord and property management company had a demonstrated history of bullying and attempts to illegally evict tenants. With legal representation from WRCLS and support from EPWR, the case against all tenants was dismissed at the LTB hearing, setting a precedent and providing strategies for eviction prevention on renovations going forward.

N4 Eviction Notice: A tenant experiencing both mental and physical health barriers and receiving government assistance (ODSP) was being evicted due to rent arrears. This eviction included the eviction of two children who are part of an indigenous household. The tenant needed support connecting and advocating to other community agencies to prevent their own eviction. In partnership with Lutherwood upon summary advice from WRCLS, we were able to support the rent arrears being paid and prevented the eviction.

Snapshot of Capacity Building

<p>Tenant builds the skill-base necessary to organize their neighbours, including communication and community building by working alongside EP Tenant Organizing and other grassroots groups, like ACORN Waterloo Region.</p>	<p>Tenant came to recognize abusive behaviour and was empowered to leave a relationship in order to better themselves, gaining clear understanding of the ways they were being manipulated, coerced and which resulted in them facing eviction.</p>
<p>Tenant recognizing responsibilities of landlord and appropriate landlord and tenant boundaries and professional relationship. Tenant becomes empowered to place effective boundaries around inappropriate behaviour and illegal requests.</p>	<p>Newcomer tenant becomes familiar with their rights, understanding the landlord's obligations to follow legal channels and meet legal requirements in the process of eviction.</p>
<p>Tenant successfully remains housed by reaching out to appropriate supports and choosing a path forward which ensures secure tenancy and protects their home.</p>	<p>Tenant learns to navigate the LTB hearing process including attending hearings, etiquette during proceedings, portal evidence management.</p>

Quantitative Data: April - September

Households Supported:

- Total number of households support: 41
- Households that were supported closed during reported period: 17
- Current Households being actively supported: 24
- Total number of persons in households: 102
- Pending intakes: 7
- Intakes in progress: 6

Household Compositions and Priority Populations Served:

- Black households: 3
- Indigenous households: 3
- Persons of Colour: 11
- Low-income households: 36
- Individuals with disabilities: 24
- Individuals aged 60 and over: 14
- 2SLGBTQ households: 5
- Cisgender women: 29
- Cisgender men: 24
- Children(0-17): 34
- Youth/Young Adults(18–29): 7
- Households with immigrant tenants: 11
- Households with tenants who speak English as a second language: 9
- Households with previously incarcerated tenants or tenants in conflict with the law: 3

Referral Tracking:

- Referrals from EPWR to connect tenants with other services: 64
- Referrals from organizations to connect tenants with EPWR: 20
- Referrals from family, friends, and neighbours to connect tenants with EPWR: 5
- Files referred to other community organizations and closed: 4
- Information Requests from Community Agencies/Organizations: 28
- Tenants gaining capacity to represent themselves: 9

Eviction Information:

- Evictions Prevented: 16 (8 of which were in the same building and were supported by Eviction Prevention/Tenant Organizing Support to organize and fight their evictions together. This is a success for tenant organizing)
- Buildings and neighbourhoods with a high volume of eviction notices: 2

- Documenting of critical incidents to assist further eviction and displacement prevention: 4
- N4 rent arrears: 10
- N5 interfering with others, damage, or overcrowding: 7
- N7 causing serious problems in the rental unit or residential complex: 1
- N12 the landlord, a purchaser, or a family member requires the rental unit: 7
- N13 demolish, repair or renovate, or convert the unit: 25
- Threat of eviction with no notice: 6
- A2 application about a sublet or an assignment: 0
- L1 notice of hearing from the LTB, due to application to evict a tenant for non-payment of rent (N4) and to collect rent the tenant owes: 2
- L4 application to apply to the LTB for an order to end a tenancy and evict a tenant where the tenant has not met the conditions in a mediated settlement or order: 3
- L2 application to the LTB to end a tenancy and evict a tenant after you give the tenant one of the following Notices to End your Tenancy: N5, N6, N7, N8, N12 or N13: 8

*Note that some tenants who reached out for EPWR support do not have formal legal eviction notices or have informal eviction notices. Some tenants connected with us before the eviction process started or for information or matters that could lead to a forced eviction, such as neglected maintenance issues, abuse and harassment, and tenant–tenant conflict.

*Many cases are still open and pending LTB hearings

Internal Process and Team Development

Improved Documentation and Team Collaboration

Eviction Prevention Waterloo Region has been increasing team collaboration between Peer Workers supporting Cambridge, Kitchener–Waterloo, and EPWR Tenant Organizing Support. Specifically, EPWR team members have been active in supporting each other by filling in where necessary - because of the large number of individual cases and the limited capacity. While Tenant Organizing builds capacity and outreach, the team member has been stepping in and taking on individual cases in order to support EPWR Cambridge and Waterloo.

EPWR has improved data collection and tracking at the point of intake. Through a streamlined approach the process more effectively and efficiently captures and compiles data and essential information. We continue collecting and analyzing demographic information in order to better serve underrepresented populations within the Waterloo Region.

Renoviction Epidemic and Tenant Organizing Support

As of mid-August 2023, a third member joined Eviction Prevention to prototype a tenant organizing and, eventually, climate justice programme. Cases of two or more tenants in the same building or rental housing complex facing eviction were transferred to Tenant Organizing and Support and new cases are opened as they are identified. EPWR workers are able to identify evictions in multi-unit buildings through individuals who come for peer support but as of October, the Tenant Organizing Worker has expanded hours with which to conduct active outreach. Because of the isolated nature of evictions, even in buildings with many units, identifying where entire buildings are being displaced remains a challenge but one that can be solved with further funding for active community work and outreach.

In October alone, Tenant Organizing has been informed of at least two additional large buildings on Lancaster that are experiencing widespread no fault evictions for renovations with at least one tenant still unable to return to their unit. Through Tenant Organizing work, we are able to better see how many multi-unit buildings are being evicted, however we only have a fraction of the data. Many people who come to EPWR do so as individuals and it is the task of the EPWR Tenant Organizing worker to identify the groups of individuals who have capacity and the desire to organize collectively. Since beginning the EPWR Tenant Organizing as a program and prototype, we have been actively identifying larger cases where multi-unit buildings are being displaced, without this lens these cases might still be viewed in silos rather than part of an epidemic.

The current housing crisis demands further outreach to the public. Many tenants do not know they have the right of first refusal or the ability to resist eviction for renovation. The power imbalance between landlords and tenants means tenants most often acquiesce to the landlords demands immediately rather than organize for their rights. EPWR

Tenant Organizing plans more active outreach and public education to raise public awareness of the services we offer as well as collective resources and training opportunities for tenants that have the capacity.

As part of EPWR Tenant Organizing, working outside of our agency silos will be key in elucidating how widespread the eviction housing crisis is and how it is impacting resource allocation and capacity of other organizations and agencies. Interconnection between agencies will help fill in the gaps as individual agencies cannot get a full breadth of the housing crisis. Eviction Prevention and Tenant Organizing addresses tenants current needs but we also need systemic change. Systemic change requires organizing and partnering even further with community agencies. Further data will aid in identifying hotspots of mass eviction and the causes of those eviction.

It is the goal of EPWR Tenant organizing to create a responsible social infrastructure, not only responding to the immediate effects of the eviction crises in Waterloo Region, but also to create long-term systemic change through building community and capacity. The causes of the housing and eviction crisis are many and intersectional because the current rental market incentivizes landlords to evict tenants, the landlords actively rely on the vulnerabilities of their tenants to remove them for financial benefit. They will find fault in their tenants, leaving those experiencing intersecting vulnerabilities at highest risk of eviction. It is impossible to view the eviction crisis as anything other than a result of systemic failure across multiple vectors, thus eviction prevention continues to require not only a holistic approach to peer work but also active partnerships with community agencies.

The EPWR Tenant Organizing as a program and prototype, has been actively identifying larger cases where tenants in multi-unit buildings are being evicted, without this lens these cases might still be viewed as anecdotal evidence of individual evictions rather than part of a larger displacement and trend within the region.

Ongoing Challenges, Issues, and Trends

Housing Precarity and Power Imbalances

There continues to be a lack of queer-friendly, safe, affordable and accessible housing. Although many affordable housing projects have been slated for development, only a fraction of those have been completed. In the past six months the number of affordable units has not come close to meeting the growing needs of the Waterloo Region community.

The current rental rates in the Region of Waterloo has left those who are currently housed to maintain this under challenging circumstances. The precarity of this situation cannot be understated. According to a poll conducted between May 15 to July 3, 2023 by Waterloo Region Association of REALTORS® (WRAR), 38% of residents are living in housing which is unaffordable.

The fundamental power imbalance between landlords and tenants remains a challenge to collective organizing. The lack of money and resources that a tenant has plus the fear of displacement make some tenants hesitant to self advocate or even advocate in groups.

There is an intersecting and cyclical nature of housing precarity. If someone is unable to afford the current rental market, oftentimes units that fall within their budget are in substandard condition. These conditions increase tenant's vulnerability to crime (McDougall et al., 2022) and other life stressors or trauma. Tenants may accept rental units which do not meet the requirements for Property Standard to recognize them as legal. In these cases the tenant risks being evicted without recuperation if the unit is deemed illegal by municipal Property Standards. Ineffective or harmful intervention and enforcement by the police and Property Standards (McDougall et al., 2022; Diwan et al., 2021) intensify landlord–tenant conflict and negatively affect tenants' physical and mental health and their safety (McDougall et al., 2022). Further, when maintenance requests are not addressed or not being made in fear the units fall into disrepair, this is used as an intentional tactic in order to justify an N13 renoviction.

Most tenants facing landlord–tenant conflict and eviction are low-income and experience financial instability. Several tenants we support depend on government assistance to pay their rent, and poverty struggles have been exacerbated by extreme inflation, which has made paying rent harder than ever. Low-income tenants cannot afford to lose their units and move to new units, where they will likely have to pay exorbitant rent prices.

EPWR continues to see landlords target long term tenants who pay below-market rent and use no-fault evictions in bad faith to displace tenants and raise rent. No-fault evictions are the only way landlords can try to “legally” evict respectful tenants who pay their rent on time (Groleau, 2023).

What EPWR has witnessed on the ground validates findings in research (McDougall et al., 2022; Diwan et al., 2021). Examples of negative and harmful tenant experiences with landlords include but are not limited to;

- Incessant threats, harassment, bullying behaviour (such as name calling)
- Ignoring repeated requests for maintenance
- Illegal increase in rent
- Sending multiple evictions notices
- Entering units without notice
- Making false, but believable claims that tenants must vacate units immediately
- Refusing to provide lease agreements
- Avoidant strategies - refusing to provide landlord contact information or proper channels for communication
- Threatening to cause undue stress onto fellow tenants
- Unaddressed infestations of mice, cockroaches, and bedbugs
- Lack of heating or cooling to unit
- Lack of security including doors that do not lock
- Targeting racialized households

Barriers

Many of the households that EPWR supports identify as immigrants or newcomers who often speak English as a second, third or even fourth language. These households continue to face language barriers that prevent them from self-advocating (McDougall et al., 2022). On the ground we are witnessing the intersecting challenges of these households. Oftentimes tenants who identify as newcomers are completely unfamiliar with legal processes and their rights as tenants. EPWR team often works with tenants who are fearful of landlords and want to avoid repercussions of enacting their rights. This fear is not unfounded as many tenants report being targeted by landlords in the form of harassment, extra fees being charged and eviction notices being given to them when they have tried to self advocate. Newcomers to the community are unaware of resources available to them as they do not have an established social network and community knowledge. Consequently, they become vulnerable to illegal evictions and landlord abuses.

Several tenants facing landlord–tenant conflict and eviction have disclosed visible or invisible disabilities. Sometimes these disabilities create barriers for tenants and their families. Sometimes, these disabilities make it difficult for them to fight their evictions, show up at a Landlord and Tenant Board (LTB) eviction hearing and landlords take advantage of this.

The current online approach to LTB hearings is inaccessible for seniors, elders, and low-income folks who do not have access to technology or do not understand how to use technology. Tenants often experience difficulty accessing their LTB hearing or the hearing portal in a timely manner. In these situations some have found themselves facing an eviction order by the LTB because in their absence an order

has been granted. Further, tenants are not able to upload their evidence or file tenant forms against their landlord. This adds an extra strain on the tenants and on the system, as many hours are spent seeking support in requesting a review of the order from the LTB, often with the support of WRCLS.

There is a lack of funding for rental arrears and emergency utility support. There are further barriers in the eligibility requirements for these emergency funds. One such criteria includes assessing the sustainability of rental units - if someone loses their employment, their rental unit can be determined to be unsustainable. With the current unaffordable rental market, the tenant faces rental rates which are even more unaffordable if they lose their current housing, again, this reveals another facet of the cyclical nature of housing precarity. Other barriers in eligibility include the type of N notice that is served and the time period between accessing emergency rent funds. The eligibility barriers create obstacles and often affect those in deepest need.

Legal evictions happen via the LTB, but most evictions occur by force. Forced evictions result from landlord coercion, harassment, and abuse; landlord neglect of responsibilities; tenants not understanding their rights and lacking the capacity or ability to advocate for themselves; and tenants experiencing unsafe living conditions that put their mental and physical health—and potentially the health of their families—in danger. These issues regularly cause tenants to flee their units without fighting back, and their inability to fight back is usually related to their marginalized identities, their lack of power, and their lack of access to appropriate longer-term services and eviction prevention support. Tenants who flee often do not understand the eviction process, the Residential Tenancies Act, who in the community they can get help from, and how to advocate for themselves and hold their landlords accountable.

Many tenants we support live in poverty and regularly experience systemic oppression. They are also often living with mental and physical illnesses and past and current trauma. It is common for our tenants to struggle with verbal and written communication, often because English is not their mother tongue or they are living with disabilities. These are not just barriers to effective self-advocacy during landlord–tenant conflict and the eviction process, rather, they act as complete roadblocks for tenants to secure and maintain safe, accessible, and affordable housing. Therefore, the work of EPWR is extremely important as we help tenants push through these roadblocks and remain housed.

Looking Forward

Evolving Goals

- ❖ Continuing to make reciprocal connections and building relationships with community partners, specifically those who are point of contact for underserved populations.
- ❖ Facilitating training opportunities for community organizations, tenants, and landlords regarding harm reduction, anti-oppression from a housing perspective, and eviction prevention.
- ❖ Increasing in-person community outreach to share information.
- ❖ Increasing our online engagement on social media, including Facebook and Twitter.
- ❖ Continuing to engage with media outlets to raise awareness of Kitchener–Waterloo–Cambridge’s housing crisis and ongoing eviction trends.
- ❖ Exploring data collection through collaboration from service providers to investigate resources and funds used to address housing issues for their clients.
- ❖ Facilitating data collection on rental rate increases tethered to rental units.

Conclusion

EPWR is a response to Kitchener-Waterloo-Cambridge’s housing crisis. It continues to fill the gaps in housing services by offering longer-term, in-person peer support for marginalized and underserved tenants. It provides invaluable support to marginalized tenants in crisis. Low-income, ESL, LGBTQ2IA+, BIPOC, immigrant, disabled, and senior tenants and women with or without children are particularly targeted by both legal and forced evictions. It is vital that tenants—especially marginalized tenants who face many barriers and are routinely targeted—understand their rights and responsibilities and have access to the support they need to self-advocate and connect with the right services. Eviction Prevention offers this exact kind of support, and it helps keep people safe and housed. It needs funding to continue addressing the high need for tenant peer support and assistance preventing, navigating, and resolving landlord–tenant conflict and evictions.

References

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Appendices: Case Studies Documenting Critical Incidents to Assist Further Eviction and Displacement Prevention

Case Study One: N13 Renovictions in Kitchener, Part One

Eviction Prevention Waterloo Region (EPWR) has been supporting a Kitchener townhouse complex with fourteen multi-bedroom units that house over two dozen residents, many of whom have marginalized identities. The tenants pay what would be considered a “low” amount of rent in the current unaffordable market. Most people who live in these units are low-income. Many tenants are also BIPOC and/or persons with disability and several units include families with children. One tenant recently gave birth to twins. Tenants suffered from disrepair and maintenance in addition to illegal eviction.

In November 2022, every unit received a letter from the landlord’s paralegal regarding the landlord’s plan to demolish their homes and turn them into condominiums. The letter stated that the landlord would acquire permits for the renovations “fairly soon.” However, as of April 25, 2023, no demolition or conversion to condominium permits have been issued. The letter also shared the following: “The landlord wishes to avoid any unilateral notices of termination ... and would prefer to avoid any proceedings at the Landlord Tenant Board”; the landlord “is willing to compensate [the tenant] beyond what is mandated by law to help [the tenant] transition out of the property”; and the landlord is “taking a cooperative stance ... and is willing to work together to help with the transition.” The tenants received informal communication that they would receive eviction notices if they did not negotiate with the landlord and their paralegal.

Based on observed trends in Kitchener, the above “cash for keys” tactic is common practice that landlords employ when they are pursuing renovations or demolitions. The tenants received this offer weeks before the landlord issued N13s to the units that had not negotiated compensation to permanently vacate their homes. Permits are rarely obtained and indeed were never applied for in this particular case.

City councilors worked in partnership to organize an in-person N13 workshop at a local community centre. The purpose of this workshop was for the tenants to have the opportunity to ask questions and learn about WRCLS and Eviction Prevention, their rights regarding the likely incoming N13s, and how to challenge an N13 if they decided to do so. Tenants from seven homes attended, which included approximately fifteen people.

The tenants expressed anger and frustration about the landlord’s intentions and the idea of losing their homes. They discussed the hypocrisy of a landlord who evicts tenants for renovations who also refuses to upkeep their homes while they are living there. They stressed concerns about displacement due to the high cost of living in Kitchener and unaffordable, inaccessible rent prices. The tenants said they did not want to lose their homes because they knew they would never get another home at that price; as a result, many tenants discussed their intent to challenge the eviction.

We learned that since the workshop, all the tenants who did not agree to a buyout had

received N13s. We also learned that WRCLS had intervened and helped the non-English speaking tenant who signed the N11. We found out that three units had negotiated buyouts that were thousands more than the mandated three months' rent compensation. They chose this route because it seemed

easier than fighting the eviction and potentially losing. We shared this information with the other tenants and were told that the landlord had filed for eviction hearings, but some units still intended to challenge the eviction.

The City Councillor reached out to CBC News and arranged an interview regarding this situation. A CBC reporter interviewed the Eviction Prevention team, the City Councillor, and tenants from the townhouse complex. The information was published in CBC News Kitchener–Waterloo and received immense media attention. Both CTV News and the Mike Farwell Show on CityNews Kitchener 570 reached out to Eviction Prevention to follow up and also do stories on the townhouse complex and N13 renovictions. Eviction Prevention has therefore completed three media interviews to raise awareness about the N13 epidemic in our region and has assisted tenants by helping the public understand the severity of the epidemic and how it largely affects marginalized communities.

As of October 2023, the case against the tenants of this building was dismissed by the Landlord Tenant Board as the landlord still had not obtained permits for the renovations he told tenants for which he was evicting them. EP Tenant Organizing is now working with WRCLS to strategize and build precedence for other multi-unit buildings based on this specific case.

Case Study Two: Immigrant Family with Multiple Eviction Notices and an Extended Need for Eviction Prevention Support and a Multiple Agency Approach

A Black immigrant family of eight with adult tenants who do not speak English has been served many N4 rent arrears and N5 damage to the unit eviction notices in the past year. The family resides in a four-bedroom townhouse where rent is below market value. The property was sold in 2021, and the eviction notices and lack of repairs have been ongoing since the previous owner. They have been to the Landlord and Tenant Board (LTB) numerous times as well. Eviction Prevention Waterloo Region (EPWR) has been supporting the tenants over the past year and a half.

The latest notice was an N5 eviction notice for a lack of cleanliness in the unit with no return date for inspection. EPWR phoned the superintendent of the townhouse and explained that we were supporting the family and that the unit was mostly clean when we visited it. We explained that a large family unit could not be expected to be in pristine condition when unexpected inspections are conducted. We asked for a specific inspection date and that we be notified regarding the new date to attend it with the family. The landlord did not reinspect the home or file for an eviction with the LTB.

However, although the eviction was prevented, the family continues to experience trauma and stress while they await another anticipated eviction notice. The family and a few neighbours were also hit with a notice that they now needed to pay for parking, which they never did before. The Landlord added the monthly fee to the rent and

claimed it was to pursue rent arrears. The family was transferred to Waterloo Region Community Legal Services (WRCLS) as EPWR stands by to lend support as needed. This family has been supported jointly with Property Standards, WRCLS, and Adventure for Change on an ongoing basis.

This situation is ongoing and the family has since faced another eviction notice and will need to attend a hearing in 2024

Case Study Three: Rent Arrears/Facing Eviction and Requiring a Multi-Agency Approach

An Indigenous family having family members experiencing both mental and physical health barriers as well as receiving government assistance was being evicted due to rent arrears. The rent arrears were incurred due to medical issues and the breakdown of the family structure. The threat of eviction added more stress for the family and caused emotional and financial hardship for the whole family, including the children. The tenant needed support connecting and advocating to other community agencies to prevent their own eviction as their capacity to do so on their own was in a compromised state for the same reasons they were facing eviction. In partnership with Lutherwood, upon summary advice from WRCLS, we were able to support the rent arrears being paid and prevented the eviction. With EPWR support and correct information the tenant was able to gain capacity and begin to advocate for themselves, which led to them preventing their eviction.

Case Study Four: Multi-Agency Approach

A family of 9 was being evicted due to rent arrears. The family identified as immigrant people of colour. The family had experienced a financial hardship that had affected their ability to pay the rent for a few months. The family was connected to EPWR from a community organization that was supporting them. After speaking with the family, EPWR reached out to Waterloo Region Community Legal Services for assistance, as they were already working with the family. The family had already been connected to Lutherwood and at the time did not meet the criteria for rent arrears help. The family along with the help of EP, WRCLS and other community organizations helped to put a plan in place to support the family, allowing them time to get the funds together to pay off their arrears preventing their eviction.