

Bachelorette tenants assail official stance

Tenants in about 20 Parkdale bachelorette buildings have to live in deteriorating conditions despite City Hall's success in obtaining court orders for repairs, a group of tenants say.

The Parkdale Bachelorette Tenants Association says that on their incomes, its members can't find anywhere else to live.

Landlords of these tiny, illegally converted apartments are "getting off with little more than a slap on the wrist, while it is we who are suffering as a result," Dorothy Thompson, who lives at 133 Dunn Ave., told the city's housing committee yesterday.

"Instead of following court orders to repair their buildings, landlords are allowing them to become more run down and in many cases are actually depriving tenants of such important services as electricity, gas, heat, laundry facilities, garbage collection, security and general maintenance."

Fred Bever of Metro Tenants Legal Services and others active in the clean-up attempt put much of the blame for the situation on the city's special bachelorette prosecution team. "For them the bottom line is closing the buildings; for us the bottom line is housing the tenants in the area.

"We don't want the city to stop the convictions," Mr. Bever said.

"We want the city to supervise the buildings."

Mary Galimberti, a Metro social worker, said in an interview the team members "just seem to be steamrolling the (tenants)."

Although she agreed the buildings must be cleaned up, she added that "there have to be places for people to go."

Civil rights lawyer Clayton Ruby, who is heading the city's clean-up drive, said he has two people working full-time providing a list of low-price alternative housing for those who want to move.

One problem, Mr. Ruby said, is that some tenants want to move to publicly assisted housing but don't qualify.

Another problem is that his team can't legally approach tenants about moving until the current owner of a building has been convicted. This can take time because the city sometimes has to convict a string of owners until the present one is charged.

"As soon as we move in the guy stops making repairs," Mr. Ruby said. The owner will then often sell the property, and the next owner may in turn sell it again.

He urged tenants to seek out the clean-up team if they're looking for other housing. Tenants plan to raise the matter at council's executive meeting today.