

Press Release: January 24, 2025

## **Tenants In Three More Belmont-Owned Apartment Buildings Organize To Resist Mass Eviction, Form Belmont Tenant Alliance**

Tenants in three affordable apartment buildings in Victoria that are facing demolition and redevelopment have organized *in cooperation with the* Victoria Tenants Union *to fight for their homes*. A majority of tenants in the three buildings, known as Gordreau Apartments, have formed the [Gordreau Tenant Group](#), which demands recognition as a collective bargaining unit representing its members. The three buildings are home to a total of 141 families.

The Gordreau Tenant Group represents renters in 129, 131, and 135 Gorge Road East, which are owned and operated by Belmont Properties and have been slated for redevelopment by Intracorp Homes BC. With the formation of Gordreau Tenant Group, a total of five Belmont-owned apartment buildings in the Greater Victoria have now been organized in defense of tenant rights: Gordreau Apartments in Victoria, and Sussex Lodge at 1340 Sussex Street and Nelson Lodge at 1337 Saunders Street in Esquimalt. The latter two buildings were organized by the Nelson Street Tenant Association in September of 2024.

(Click here for the Times Colonist's coverage of that story.)

The Gordreau Tenant Group and Nelson Street Tenant Association are working together, forming the Alliance of Belmont Tenants. This alliance current represents a total of 209 families. It is also encouraging tenants in other Belmont-owned properties to organize and join.

Many of the residents currently represented by this alliance are elderly or have special needs, are on fixed incomes, and have occupied their homes for over a decade. All are facing the loss of their homes to a profit-driven wrecking ball in the midst of nation-wide housing and cost-of-living crises. Few, if any, of the current tenants expect to be able to afford to live in the buildings Belmont and Intracorp are planning to develop on these sites.

Victoria's [tenant assistance policy](#), which includes relocation assistance and a right of first refusal, is insufficient to address these concerns in the view of the Gordreau Tenant Group. Therefore, the group calls on BC Housing Minister Ravi Kahlon to consider purchasing the buildings through the Rental Protection Fund and converting them into non-market housing in accordance with commitments made under the Agreement in Principle reached by the BC NDP and Green Party on December 12, 2024 (see section 3.3). The Gordreau Tenant Group also calls on the City of Victoria to prevent the demolition of their homes. And its members look forward to negotiating with Belmont Properties and Intracorp Homes BC as a democratic collective rather than as individual tenants.

"My neighbors and I are standing together with our friends in Esquimalt to protect our perfectly good affordable homes," said Shannon Butt, Belmont tenant and Chair of the Gordreau Tenant Group.

"Belmont and Intracorp want to fill their pockets by destroying these buildings, but we are not going to accept this injustice quietly."

"This is a terrible time for over 200 families to be removed from their affordable housing. We're in the middle of a crisis. We expect the provincial and municipal governments to do whatever it takes to prevent this, or at least ensure we are suitably placed and compensated," said Christina Baker, a Belmont tenant and Organizing Committee member of the Gordreau Tenant Group.

"Corporate landlord Belmont Properties is stealing our homes from us. We are British Columbians that are being extracted from our homes because of corporate greed", said Dan McDonald, a Belmont tenant and Executive Director of the Nelson Street Tenant Association [Esquimalt].

"Companies like Belmont and Intracorp are using the housing crisis as an excuse to tear down perfectly good affordable housing and replace it with unaffordable housing," said Harland Bird of the Victoria Tenants Union. "They call it 'densification' but it's really a profit-grab, and it's hurting families."

The Victoria Tenants Union calls on the provincial government to recognize the right of BC tenants to recognize the right of BC tenants to collectively bargain with their landlords – who, increasingly, are corporations – to reduce displacement and protect tenant and human rights.



*Gordreau Tenant Group organizing committee members. From left to right: Ann, Shannon Butt, and Christina Baker. Photos by Harland Bird.*



*Gordreau Apartments (129 Gorge Road East). Photo by Harland Bird.*

## **Background:**

### **Victoria Tenants Union ([website](#))**

The Victoria Tenants Union (VicTU) is a democratic, grassroots organization of renters dedicated to organizing tenants and thus empowering them to protect themselves against landlord harassment, rent increases, and evictions. In the long term, the VicTU stands for the decommodification of housing, which is a human right under international law. Tenant unions seek to empower tenants through collective bargaining just as labour unions do for workers. The VicTU is just one of many tenant unions organizing across Canada and the US in defense of renter's rights.

### **Nelson Street Tenant Association ([website](#))**

Since organizing in September, the Nelson Street Tenants Association has, among other things, organized a mass letter writing campaign, orchestrated a counter-presentation outside of an Intracorp open house that was trying to sell the Esquimalt community on the new development, and established a powerful presence at a National Housing Day rally at the Legislature Building,

### **Gordreau Tenant Group ([website](#))**

## **Quick facts:**

- **Most rental units built in Canada in 2024 were too expensive for average renters according to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp.**

- For many years BC has been the “no fault” eviction capital of Canada.