

WE ARE PARKDALE!

OUR NEIGHBOURHOOD. OUR NEIGHBOURS. OUR FIGHT.

REPORT FROM OCTOBER LIBRARY MEETING

Last month more than one hundred Parkdale residents met at our local library. The meeting was titled *Our Buildings, our Neighbourhood*. It was hosted by Parkdale: Organize! The meeting began with speeches by three neighbours who live in Akelius buildings; 95 and 188 Jameson, and 77 Spencer. They spoke about how they organized with their neighbours and improved their lives together.

They knocked on doors, held meetings, and made plans with their neighbours. They occupied their landlord's office. They spoke out in the media. They took legal action. They had each others' backs when the landlord tried to intimidate them. They found strength in numbers.

They told us about the battles they won. They were able to beat back a big rent increase at 188 Jameson by half. They got better maintenance of units in four buildings. They pushed back against harassment by the landlord.

And they called on all of us, their neighbours in Parkdale, to do the same. To organize in our buildings so we can all become stronger together.

Community Bulletin

Join the Parkdale Women's Language Exchange.

Women speak many languages in Parkdale. Women have many experiences in Parkdale. The Parkdale Women's Language Exchange is where women can come together over tea or coffee, practice their English and learn about each other's languages and experiences.

For more information, email: parkdaletalks@gmail.com



**PARKDALE
ORGANIZE!
PARKDALEORGANIZE@GMAIL.COM**

WEST LODGE HEATS UP

Dozens of our neighbours from 103 and 105 West Lodge came out. Their landlord, Wynn Properties, is trying to get a big above guideline rent increase. There are problems with unit maintenance, lack of heat, and broken fridges and stoves. Roma tenants are dealing with harassment and discrimination from security guards. Tenants are fed up and want to organize.

In the coming months we will need to support our West Lodge neighbours. We will need to be at their sides when they stand up and confront their landlord. We will need to be there when Wynn tries to intimidate them.

When we're organized we're stronger.

When we're stronger we can protect each other.

Our buildings, our neighbourhood!

This is

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PARKDALE

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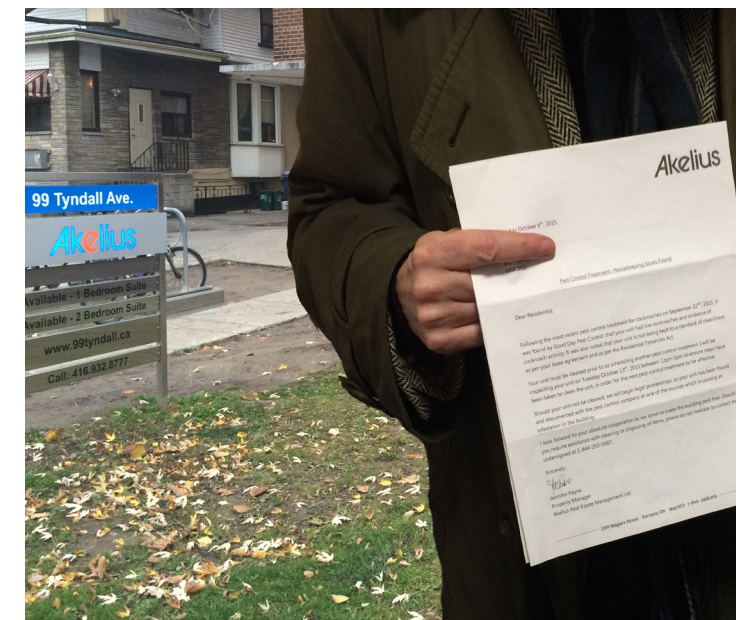
TYNDALL AVENUE TENANTS PUSH BACK

BY A MEMBER OF THE 99 TYNDALL BUILDING COMMITTEE

On October 13th, my neighbours and I at 99 Tyndall Avenue were facing unwelcome intrusions of our homes by our landlord, Akelius, under the guise of so-called "inspections for cleanliness." Significantly enough, those of us being targeted by Akelius are longer-term tenants with desirable two bedroom units and/or desirable views of the lake. Clearly, Akelius was up to their usual tricks of intimidation and harassment attempting to lay the tracks down for subsequently evicting us longer-term tenants and jacking the rent on our units for a tidy profit. Those of us being targeted could very well find ourselves forced out of our homes and looking at unaffordable rents elsewhere in the neighbourhood.

Fortunately, our neighbours at 99 Tyndall as well as other nearby buildings chose to come to our aid, organizing a rally to meet the Akelius people face to face in the lobby of 99 Tyndall as they came to do their so-called "cleanliness inspections." The Akelius people were very much surprised by the large turnout of concerned tenants from 99 Tyndall and other Parkdale properties. They realized that intimidation and harassment would no longer be tolerated by rent paying tenants. Neighbours would help neighbours. The community was visible and had to be reckoned with.

As a direct result of our organizing and coming together for mutual protection, the Akelius minions reluctantly agreed to provide in writing what exactly they meant by "cleanliness" before any such invasive inspections would occur and that Akelius would pay to remedy any deficiencies found. More impor-



Tenants at 99 Tyndall fight back against harassment.

tantly, Akelius agreed not to use these inspections as grounds for eviction.

Wisely enough, these important promises from Akelius were recorded by those present using cameras and cell phones. Akelius realized that they could not simply ignore Parkdale tenants and that they would be held accountable for the promises that they made that day in the light of social media.

Our action on October 13 was possible because of our organizing over the past two years since Akelius bought our building. If you live in a building in Parkdale, and you're reading this, consider talking to your neighbours about getting organized and forming a building committee. Get in touch with Parkdale: Organize! if you need some help getting started.

PARKDALE PROFILE

“When the landlord found out we are Roma he wouldn’t rent to my friend.”

Interview with a Parkdale tenant

This interview was conducted in March 2015.

Parkdale Organize: Where are you from and when did you come to Canada?

LV: I am from Miskolc, Hungary. I came to Canada with my ten year old son in October 2014. My wife came with our two younger children to join us on December 10th. We moved to the Parkdale neighbourhood in Toronto because we have family here.

PO: Why did you leave Hungary?

LV: We fled Hungary because the city government of Miskolc decided to liquidate my neighbourhood, the so-called “Numbered Streets”. It is a Roma neighbourhood which the city government considers to be a slum, though I don’t see it that way. The government is not allowing residents to extend their leases and they are not accepting repayment from residents who owe small debts of rent. They have already evicted more than half the residents and they are demolishing the houses. At the same time the city government discontinued a public works program which employed Roma people from the neighbourhood.

Families from the neighbourhood are fleeing. Like us, many families have already come to Toronto or are planning to come here. But some cannot afford to get here. My mother still lives in the neighbourhood but she has an eviction notice from the city and must leave by March 16. She doesn’t want to leave Hungary. She doesn’t know what she will do.

PO: Can you tell us more about the Numbered Streets neighbourhood?

LV: You need to know that the Numbered Streets neighbourhood is near downtown close to the soccer stadium and the main tourist attraction, Castle Diosgyor. The houses were originally built by factory owners who rented them to their workers. When the factories closed the city government took over the houses.

Rent is inexpensive compared to the rest of Miskolc but keep in mind the houses do not have indoor plumbing. There are shared wa-

ter pumps on the street and outhouses behind the houses. Until about a year ago the rent included collection and disposal of garbage and sewage. Now the City makes residents pay extra for these services.

Most households do not have electricity and so they burn coal or wood for heat and for cooking. If you can afford it you can have electricity connected and a Hydro meter installed in your house. Then you have to buy a pre-paid Hydro card each month.

There is a strong sense of community in the neighbourhood. I am thirty years old and lived in the neighbourhood my whole life and so have my parents. We were neighbours with the same families for generations. There were very few problems between neighbours.

People help each other by sharing electricity. The houses are built so that four houses share a backyard. If one house has a Hydro meter installed in it but the others do not the neighbours all contribute and share the electricity.

PO: Do Roma people face discrimination here in Parkdale?

LV: Yes, I’ve already experienced discrimination here. A friend of mine from home came to Canada three weeks ago. I helped him look for a place to live. He called about an apartment that was available for rent on Jameson Avenue. We went to see the apartment but when the landlord found out we are Roma he wouldn’t rent to my friend.

One of the few places that will rent to Roma people is the West Lodge towers. But it’s well known among Roma people here that you have to bribe the property manager there to move in. That’s why we won’t move there.

Families we know who recently arrived from Hungary moved into the high rise building on Triller Avenue. The superintendent told them that the apartment was too crowded and they couldn’t all be there. Some of them ended up in a shelter because they had nowhere else to go.

PO: Do you think you will make Parkdale your long-term home?

LV: My wife and I are thinking about moving farther outside Toronto. It’s nice in Parkdale but in Brampton, for instance, you can rent a three bedroom house for \$800 a month. It would be nice to be able to let the kids go out and play in the yard, you know?

That said our friend rented a house in Brampton. She ended up moving back to Parkdale because her teenage son needed to be around his peers. He was too isolated out there.

The apartment we are in now is too small. We took it because we needed a place and it was available. Right now it is a temporary solution and we’ll see what summer brings.

PARKDALE PORTRÉ

“Amikor a háztulajdonos megtudta, hogy romák vagyunk, a lakást nem adta ki a barátunknak.”

Interjú egy Parkdale-ben lakó albérlővel

Ez a interjú március, 2015-ben készült

Parkdale Organize: Honnan, és mikor jöttél Kanadába?

V.L.: Miskolcra, Magyarországról származom. A 10 éves fiammal jöttem Kanadába, 2014 októberében. A feleségem R. és két kisebb gyermekem december 10-én jött utánunk. Azért költöztünk Torontóban a Parkdale-be, mert a családjuk itt él.

PO: Miért jöttél Kanadába?

V.L.: Magyarországról azért menekültünk el, mert a városi önkormányzat Miskolcon úgy döntött, hogy felszámolja azt a lakótelepet, ahol éltem, az úgynevezett Számozott utcákat. Ez egy Roma lakótelep, amit a városi önkormányzat nyomornegyednek tart, habár szerintem nem az. Az önkormányzat nem engedi meg a lakóknak, hogy az albérleti szerződésüket meghosszabbítsák, és nem fogadják el a kisebb tartozások visszafizetését sem. Már majdnem kilakoltatták a fél lakosságot, és a házak lebontása folyamatban van.

A családok menekülnek a lakótelepről. Hozzánk hasonlóan sok család érkezett már Torontóba vagy tervezi, hogy kijön. Vannak olyan családok is, akik nem tehetik meg anyagilag, hogy kijöjjenek. Az édesanyám még mindig a lakótelepen lakik, habár már kapott a kilakoltatásról felszólítást a várostól. Március 16-ig ki kell költöznie. Nem akarja Magyarországot elhagyni. Nem tudja, hogy mit fog csinálni.

PO: Mesélne nekünk egy kicsit a Számozott utcai lakótelepről?

V.L.: Tudnod kell, hogy a Számozott utcai lakótelep a belvárosban van, közel a foci stadionhoz és a város fő turista látványosságához, a Diósgyőri Várhoz. A házakat eredetileg a gyárakban dolgozók bérelték az államtól. Amikor a gyárakat bezárták, a városi önkormányzattól bérelték a lakásokat.

Az albérleti díj alacsonyabb Miskolc többi részéhez képest, habár fontos ésszben tartani, hogy víz nincs bevezetve a házakba. Közösen használt kutak vannak a utcákon, és a mellékhelységek a házak mögött találhatóak. Körülbelül egy évvel ezelőttig az albérleti díj magába foglalta a szemét és a szennyvíz eltávolítását is. Most a város a lakosok-

kal fizetetti ki ezeket a szolgáltatásokat.

A legtöbb lakásban nincs áram bevezetve, így fával vagy szénrel tüzelnek és főznek. Ha ki tudod fizetni, akkor bevezetheted az áramot, és egy feltöltős villanyórát szerelnék be a házadba. És akkor egy előre kifizetett kártyát kell vened minden hónapban.

A lakótelepen nagyon erős a közösségi szellem. Harminc éves vagyok és a teljes életemben a lakótelepen éltem, és a szüleim is. Ugyanazok a családok voltak a szomszédaink generációkon keresztül. Nagyon kevés probléma volt a szomszédok között.

Az emberek segítik egymást az áram megosztásával. A házakat úgy építették, hogy egy kertet négy ház oszt meg. Ha az egyik házba bevezetik az áramot, de a többibe nem, minden szomszéd beszáll a kifizetésébe és megosztják az áramot.

PO: Itt a Parkdale-ben szembesülnek a Romák diszkriminációval?

V.L.: Igen, már itt is tapasztaltam diszkriminációt. Az egyik otthoni barátom három héttel ezelőtt érkezett Kanadába. Segitettem neki lakást keresni. Telefonált egyik kiadó lakáson ügyében a Jameson Ave.-on. Elmentünk megnézni a lakást, de amikor a háztulajdonos rájött, hogy Romák vagyunk, nem adta ki a lakást a barátomnak.

Az egyik hely azok közül, ahol még mindig kiadnak lakásokat a Romáknak a West Lodge. De az köztudott volt az ember között, hogy kenőpénzt kellett adni az ingatlan menedzserének, hogy beköltözhessél. Ezért nem költöztünk oda.

Vannak olyan családok, akiket ismerünk, akik nemrég érkeztek Kanadába, a Triller Ave.-n álló emeletes házba költöztek. A házgondnok azt mondta nekik, hogy túl sokan vannak a lakásban és nem maradhat ott mindenki. Közülük néhányan menedékben kötöttek ki, mivel nem volt hova menniük.

PO: Szerinted a Parkdale-ben fogsz hosszú távon élni?

V.L.: A feleségemmel azon gondolkodunk, hogy Torontótól egy kicsit messzebbre költöznénk. Jó itt a Parkdale-ben, de Brampton például egy háromszobás házat ki tudsz bérelni \$800-ért. Jó lenne a gyerekeket a kertbe kiengedni játszani.

Mindezek mellett egy barátunk lakást bérelt Bramptonban. Végül visszaköltözött a Parkdale-be a tinédzser fia miatt, hogy a korabeliekkel többet lehessen együtt. Ott túlságosan el volt szigetelve.

A lakás ahol most élünk túl kicsi. Azért vettük ki, mert szükségünk volt egy lakásra, és ez kiadó volt. Jelenleg ez csak egy ideiglenes megoldás, majd meglátjuk mi lesz nyáron.