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## Media Release

### Renters speak up about housing insecurity in the Capital region

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VICTORIA – Survey reveals that Victoria’s tight housing market is meaning renovations, demovictions, discrimination, living in poor quality housing, and increased vulnerability for renters.

A new study by the Community Social Planning Council of Victoria and the Victoria Tenants Action Group, *Can’t Stay and Can’t Go: A participatory action research project on rental housing instability in Greater Victoria*, brings forward renter voices about lived experiences in today’s housing crisis. Nearly 500 renters participated in the online survey and in-person roundtables.

The survey reveals critical impacts of lack of affordability and lack of availability on renters, from high levels of discrimination to feeling trapped in poor conditions. Most (92%) of participants reported that high rents were a barrier to finding housing, while 55% cited increasing cost as a threat to remaining in their current home.

Renters consider Greater Victoria to be their home and want to continue living here, but fear that affordability issues will push them out of the region: 77% reported they would stay if they had the choice but 76% said it is somewhat to very likely that housing pressure will force them to leave.

“We called this report *Can’t Stay and Can’t Go* because of that tension we heard from renters,” states Gavin Torvik of the Victoria Tenant Action Group (VTAG), “the looming risk of being forced out of your home by renovation or rent increase combined with the real fear of having nowhere to go.”

The tight market affects not only renters’ future prospects but the power imbalance with their current landlords: 47% did not ask for repairs out of fear it would negatively impact their tenancy. One participant said that when they told their landlord they needed pest control called, the landlord called an appraiser.

“People feel that even if they have housing, their number will soon be up,” says Cameron Welch of VTAG, “And when it is, being forced out into this housing crisis is like being thrown to the wolves. So they’re stuck, they’re always stressed out, and they’re vulnerable to being exploited.”

Renters lack confidence that the Residential Tenancy Branch will protect them. Although nearly half of participants felt they had been in a living situation in which their rights were violated, only one eighth had chosen to go through dispute resolution. Renters cited impact on life, unpredictability of outcome, uncertainty about the law, and time as reasons for their reluctance.

“The CSPC did this study because the real experiences of renters are lost in policy dialogues, meaning well-intended policies are often misaligned,” says Diana Gibson, Senior Researcher with the Community Social Planning Council. “Anyone engaged in housing policy and planning will want to look at this data.”

The report includes policy priorities indicated by renters and a call for more action by the municipal and provincial governments.

This report was made possible by a grant from the Victoria Foundation.

For the full report see:

<http://www.communitycouncil.ca/Renter%20Survey%202018>

**Contact:**

Community Social Planning Council – Diana Gibson, Senior Researcher, 250-383-6166

Victoria Tenant Action Group – Cameron Welch, 250-859-9897