



## SEATTLE FOR GROWTH

November 25, 2019

Greetings,

Seattle For Growth is a non-profit organization that supports more housing of all kinds in all neighborhoods for people of all levels of income.

Recently the Renter's Commission (Commission) sent a letter to City officials asking for a moratorium on evictions in Seattle during the winter months. They have based their request on "La Trêve hivernale" or "Winter Truce" in France.

While this request by the Commission presents itself as compassionate, it is unnecessary. Let's look at some facts. First, landlords want successful tenancies and will seek other options.

It is important to note that very few removals occur in Seattle with only 558 completed in 2017, about 0.3 percent of the 168,000 rental properties in the City; about a third of the removals were completed by the Seattle Housing Authority and The Low Income Housing Institute, according to data collected by the City.<sup>1</sup>

### **Evictions in 2017 in Seattle**

Rental Households in Seattle*	168,295	
Number of eviction actions filed	1,218	0.7%
Actual evictions	585	0.3%

\*United States Census 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

In France the law limiting evictions in winter begins November 1 and runs through April 1 and it,

- Does not apply if the person has somewhere to go;
- Does not apply to squatters;
- Allows a deposit can be required and used to pay rent; and
- Lost rent insurance is available and used in France to cover lost rent, a cost likely passed to all renters.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Valdez, Roger, [Losing Perspective: A Response to the Losing Home Report](#), March 2019

<sup>2</sup> From Droit Finances website, [Trêve hivernale et expulsion - Dates et locataires protégés](#), November 2019

While some public housing authorities in cities with harsh winters like Chicago do limit removals during this period, no jurisdiction has mandated it for private rentals.<sup>3</sup>

Such a mandate could be a broad violation of the Fifth Amendment to the United States Constitution that provides that nobody be, “deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation.”

Therefore, if the City feels that it is imperative to implement this policy they could provide and pay for immediate housing for anyone legally removed through the eviction process. The City could also require non-profit housing projects with City funding to suspend removals during a designated period.

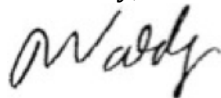
Based on the City’s own data from the Losing Home Report cited above, providing \$1,000 in housing assistance for 250 evicted households (about half of the total removals in 2017) would cost about \$1,250,000 for the 5 month period between November and April.

The cost would likely be less since many households would have alternatives and others would not need assistance for the full period designated.

This kind of program would be compassionate and legal, recognizing that there is already a process in place that requires a court order to remove a person from their housing even if the lease was violated or rent was not paid. That process now includes a longer period to complete thanks to legislative action, supported by the City.<sup>4</sup>

If the City is serious about being compassionate and upholding the law, it might consider this approach.

Sincerely,



Roger Valdez  
Director

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<sup>3</sup> Pressey, Debra, [\*Housing authority stopping evictions during cold-weather months\*](#), The News-Gazette, November 15, 2019

<sup>4</sup> Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 5600, Chapter 356, Laws of 2019