



230 FIGHTBACK

We Will Not Be Locked Out of Our Community

A vacant lot and an old abandoned Victorian rooming house located in one of Toronto's oldest working class neighbourhood remains a symbol of the failure of Toronto's housing policy. The site has now sat empty for 17 years. The four rooming houses that once stood on the site housed thousands of low-income people for decades before being shut down by the summer of 2008. Today, if one walks by 214-230 Sherbourne, one will find a chain link fence surrounding the properties essentially locking out anyone from entering the abandoned site.

On October 4th , 230 Fightback decorated the chain link fence with more than 100 colorful padlocks to highlight the fact that low-income people were being locked out of their community. People who attended the event wrote messages on the padlocks with names of people who had died on the streets and messages demanding that people be housed on the site again. Each padlock key was then deposited in a jar that would later be delivered to KingSett Capital, the owners of the properties. However, 3 days later, before we could deliver the keys to KingSett's head office on the 37th floor of the Scotia Plaza, the padlocks were shamelessly cut down by the private equity company. On that day a man driving an expensive black Mercedes SUV with tinted windows was seen parked by the abandoned properties cutting down the symbolic padlocks from the chain link fence.

On October 15th , fifteen members of 230 Fightback and a dog (Miles) managed to pack themselves into an elevator at the Scotia Plaza and make their way to KingSett's head office on the 37th floor. Armed with a jar full of padlock keys we asked to speak to Bill Logard who had become our main contact at KingSett since we had started our campaign against the private equity company three years earlier. Within a few minutes Bill Logard came out. We handed him the jar full of padlock keys used on October 4th and delivered him a letter which stated that we refused to be locked out of our community. We told him that we had no intention to stop our campaign calling on KingSett to sell the properties to the city so that social housing could be built on the site. Logard, when asked, confirmed that KingSett was still willing to sell 214-230 Sherbourne to the city. When asked if he was the one who had made the decision to cut down the padlocks Logard claimed that he did not know who made the decision. While we were having our discussion a half dozen well dressed security guards arrived making it clear that we were not welcomed. We ended our discussion with Bill Logard by stating that we understood that given the Toronto condo crash KingSett would not be able to go ahead with its plans to build a condo tower on the site for another three to five years. We explained that we intended to use this period to continue to expose KingSett's displacement of low-income people and we promised him that we would make KingSett the poster child representing developer's greed.

