

CHEYENNE APARTMENTS



Sam McLeod/The London Free Press

Public health inspector Thomas Partealas checks the water supply in Phalla Keang's Cheyenne Avenue apartment after complaints the building was without hot water. Public health nurse Linda Olson, at right, came to check on the condition of Keang who is expecting a baby next month.

Bill passed by legislature lets city redirect rents

Health officials investigated a complaint the building has been without hot water.

By Eric Bender
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The London Free Press

A bill allowing the City of London to direct rent deposits to a landlord's unpaid utility bills passed the provincial legislature Thursday as public health officials investigated the loss of hot water at 95 Cheyenne Avenue.

The private member's bill, sponsored by MPP Irene Mathysen (NDP — Middlesex) will clear the way for city council to pass a bylaw, a measure that will be handled at council's community and protective services committee on Monday.

The bill was sparked by continuing problems at Cheyenne Avenue apartment buildings 95 and 105 owned by Elijah Elieff who owes Union Gas Ltd. in excess of \$3,600 and the Middlesex-London health unit more than \$5,000 for gas bill arrears it

paid earlier to prevent a gas cut-off in February.

Health inspector Thomas Partealas and public health nurse Linda Olson were at 95 Cheyenne Ave. Thursday to investigate a complaint there has been no hot water for a week in the building occupied by 14 families. They interviewed tenant Phalla Keang, mother of two children, who is pregnant and expecting a third child in July.

SEEK ORDER: Partealas telephoned Elieff who said he would call Union Gas and attend to the problem. Parealas had said if Elieff failed to remedy the situation he would seek to have an order issued to enter the boiler room and have a plumber turn the heat on.

Hot water was restored Thursday afternoon, said Susan Eagle, a community outreach worker who has been assisting the Chey-

enne tenants.

Eagle said Union Gas had not cut off the gas. The problem had been in the building's locked boiler room. Union Gas previously said it would supply gas as long as the bill was progressing through the legislature and on to city council.

Despite the problems with Elieff which "will probably go on for some time," Eagle is pleased Mathysen's bill passed.

"The principle of this legislation, that tenants are entitled to basic services, especially when those services are covered by their rent, is very important. Under this legislation, this is now a social norm in London."

Mathysen was disappointed about the hot-water problem. Her office contacted Union Gas and was assured the utility had not shut off the gas to the unit.

"Just when you think you have them (delinquent landlords) cornered they find a way to slither out of the corner," said Mathysen. "You can't legislate a conscience."