

HEARING

Free Press criticized for stand on notes

The newspaper had been asked to turn over information in the Elijah Elieff case.

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The London Free Press

The refusal of The London Free Press to supply a reporter's notes for the Ontario Human Rights Commission investigation of alleged racism by a London landlord, raises questions about the credibility of the newspaper, says the landlord's representative.

"If anything, the whole credibility of the situation depends on the appearance (of those notes)," Rob Metz said in an interview Wednesday.

This week, Free Press lawyer Renato Gasparotto filed a motion to quash a summons requesting the paper to supply reporter Greg Van Moorsel's notes to the board of inquiry investigating alleged racist comments made by Elijah Elieff, who owns apartments on Cheyenne Avenue.

The board is investigating a complaint made to the Ontario Human Rights Commission that Elieff discriminated against Asians at the apartment buildings in northeast London.

Gasparotto said submitting the notes would hinder the ability of the press to do its job. "If a reporter's forced to take sides, then his neutral position is violated."

He also said the notes cannot be made an exhibit at the hearing because they are only hearsay. Van Moorsel testified before the board last November.

"They can only be used for Van Moorsel to refresh his memory. The evidence is his testimony, not the notes."

But Metz said since Elieff denies making the comments and Van Moorsel is the only witness who has testified he made them, the notes are necessary to add credence to Van Moorsel's statements.

Metz said the motion will be argued Aug. 26, before the board of inquiry resumes the hearing Aug. 31.