

**APARTMENTS**

# Cheyenne unit called 'time bomb'

A fire inspector's assessment suggests tenants are at risk, a city councillor says.

*By London Free Press staff*

The Cheyenne apartments should be condemned — and evacuated — if conditions are as bad as a city fire official says they are, Councillor Bernie MacDonald told The London Free Press.

Fire inspector Craig Stevens said Monday the building at 105 Cheyenne Ave. is "a time bomb waiting to go off."

Because the mortgage holder, the National Bank of Canada, has a power of sale action on the pair of buildings owned by Elijah Elieff, Stevens has been "very, very frustrated" in his attempts to have numerous violations of the fire code corrected.

When Elieff did not comply with conditions on a notice of violation issued by the fire inspector, Stevens said he contacted the crown attorney's office about court action. Stevens said he was told attempts at prosecution would be futile with a power of sale on the building.

"We don't know who's who and who looks after what," said MacDonald. "If things are not being repaired, what other choice do you have when people's lives are at stake?" he asked.

**UFledinCO-OP HOUSING:** Susan Eagle, a community worker who assists the tenants of the buildings at 95 and 105 Cheyenne, said the few remaining tenants have been hoping to gain provincial approval to buy the buildings and convert them to co-op housing.

They were told the ministry would make a decision by mid-October, said Eagle.

A ministry decision in three or four weeks makes the tenants "even more anxious to hold on," said Eagle.

Eagle said only about five of 20 units are occupied at 95 Cheyenne and about six units out of 20 at 105 Cheyenne. The tenants have been paying for some repairs, and items like light bulbs, themselves out of a tenant fund and their own pocket, she said.

**WORST EVER:** Stevens, who had been inspecting the buildings weekly for about four months, said the building at 105 Cheyenne Ave. is "in the worst condition ever ... from my point of view."

Few of the fire doors in the building close or latch properly. There is only one fire extinguish-



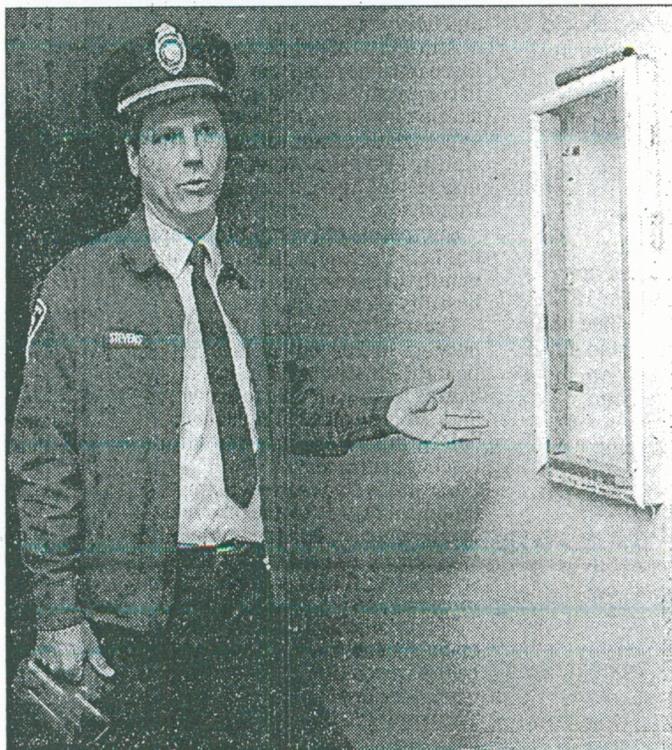
**Sue Reeve/The London Free Press**  
**London fire department Inspector Craig Stevens, above, stands outside 105 Cheyenne Ave. where conditions have continued to deteriorate in the last four months. Some of the hallways at 105 Cheyenne, right, are missing fire extinguishers.**

er in the three-storey walk-up. Some of the vacant, main-floor apartments are unsecured. Most of the hall lights and exit signs are without light bulbs.

**MATTRESSES A CONCERN:** Stevens' biggest concern is the pile of junk mail under the mailboxes in a stairwell, the mattress in the laundry room and the mattress and box spring in the third-floor hallway.

"The heat and smoke generated from these combustibles could easily overcome someone trying to escape," said Stevens, and fuel a bigger fire, uncontained by functioning fire doors. Escape would be even more difficult for tenants because the hallways and exits signs are unlit.

The paper in the stairwell "parallels" the situation before a fire in a Hamilton Road area boarding house that was up to fire code standards, said Stevens.



In that fire, combustibles in the hall under the stair ignited, blocking escape and one person was killed, he said.

The building at 95 Cheyenne is in better condition, said Stevens.

looking after things. I assume it is the tenants."

Fire doors are secure, halls are fully lit, fire extinguishers in place and the halls and stairwell free of paper and debris, he said.