

## HOUSING

# Ontario to support co-op's bid to buy Cheyenne buildings

But a councillor throws cold water on the idea.

By John Herbert  
*The London Free Press*

Middlesex MPP Irene Mathysen had barely announced the province would sponsor a housing co-operative's effort to buy the Cheyenne apartments when Ward 3 Councillor Bernie MacDonald wondered out loud if the help is too late.

Mathysen provided a much-needed shot in the arm in the view of the Cheyenne community when she announced at a news conference Friday that the province will kick in up to \$4,500 a unit to study the possibility of buying a privately owned 80-unit apartment house to convert it to co-operative housing.

She said it would be six months to a year before the Cheyenne Community Housing Co-operative will learn if it is feasible and worthwhile to make an offer to purchase a building.

"Isn't that kind of late?" MacDonald asked.

## BUILDINGS SOLD:

"There's a gentleman (Peter Sergautis) who's already bought the buildings at 95 and 105 and had them renamed (Huron Terrace Apartments). The name Cheyenne is vanishing. Why is the ministry coming down and trying to hold on to an old stigma?"

"This new owner is doing more than only cosmetic changes that Susan Eagle (a community outreach worker who is helping the group) talks about. This guy is revamping apartment by apartment. He's taking out all the washroom equipment. There are new showers. He's redone all the sewer system in the apartment. He's doing complete renovations."

Sergautis bought both buildings for \$420,000 from the National Bank on Nov. 22. They had been appraised at \$700,000 by the ministry. The bank took the buildings last July after owner Elijah Elieff

ing Friday's announcement and six months from now, at the earliest, the co-operative group won't be able to afford the reconstructed apartments.

"They're (the co-operative group) not going to get this for a song. This is what upsets me. The ministry is coming in after the fact and thinking about buying them."

MacDonald also said the new owner will start renting in January and expects to have the apartments fully rented by the end of March.

**NEW START:** Friday's announcement was exciting news for others.

"It's an opportunity for a new beginning," Mathysen said. "It's time for a bit of hope. It marks the first day in taking back this community. It will result in decent, affordable homes of individuals, families, seniors and people with special needs."

"Most of these people (at the Cheyenne apartments) come from Cambodia. When they got here to live, they found a big gap between their dream and reality."

Preap Touch, president of the co-op board, said the news of government support is something they've been waiting for for a long time.

"The goal of this group is to have a community surrounded by schools and services. For our children, we want a nicer place for them to play and a safer place for them to live."

"Today is significant for us," Eagle said. "We can now sit down and talk to the owners of the buildings."

## What is a co-op?

It's a non-profit alternative to home ownership and rental accommodation and allows a community to control the social and financial aspects of the project.

Each co-op member has a vote in the co-op's operation and in electing a board of directors annually.

Instead of rent, mem-