

Tenants rejoice at racism decision

Landlord Elijah Elieff had been absolved of a discrimination charge. An appeal tribunal reversed the ruling.

By Michelle Shephard
Free Press Reporter

It was a celebration of her dignity, rather than the \$3,500 award.

Chippeng Hom and supporters said Thursday night that they had finally won their seven-year battle with landlord Elijah Elieff.

The Ontario Human Rights Commission and Hom won an appeal of a board of inquiry decision that had absolved Elieff of discrimination against his Cambodian apartment tenants.

The controversial landlord was accused seven years ago of discriminatory treatment of the Asian tenants of his cockroach-infested apartments.

The board of inquiry said his actions weren't discriminatory and awarded Hom \$2,500 for general and punitive damages.

Three justices of Ontario court, general division, heard the appeal in October and released their decision Thursday. They said the action was

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discriminatory, creating "a poison environment" and awarded Hom \$6,000 — \$3,500 more than ordered by the board of inquiry.

"The racial slurs against the one group constitute the differential treatment," the decision said.

A board of inquiry had originally cleared Elieff of any discriminatory action since all tenants were subjected to the deplorable conditions of the buildings.

Elieff had blamed minister and community worker Susan Eagle and London Free Press reporters for organizing a campaign against him.

"This is an acknowledgement of the wrongdoing of the landlord and it shows that people cannot treat their tenants like that without legal action," Eagle said Thursday.

Elieff claims he has lost about \$90,000 since the complaints in 1992. He was out of town Thursday night and not available for comment.

Tenants had complained about remarks Elieff had made to a Free Press reporter. He was quoted as saying his tenants were, "like little pigs . . . they think they're still living in the jungle."

Cynthia Harper, representing Hom, said she was "pleasantly surprised" by the outcome.

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