

# Churches go to city hall in battle with landlord

## Apartment building repairs sought

By Dave Dauphinee  
of The Free Press

Four London United churches are squaring off with the owner of two east-end apartment buildings in such disrepair they will "soon be unfit for human habitation," a church spokesman said Monday.

The East London United Church Outreach Cluster (ELUCOC), representing Gethsemane, Richards Memorial, Siloam and Rowntree churches, has asked city hall to force owner Peter Elieff of London to make substantial repairs.

Elieff operates Elieff Investments Ltd., which owns apartment buildings at 95 Cheyenne Ave. and 105 Cheyenne Ave.

The buildings, Elieff said Monday, have been for sale about a month.

"It appears the two buildings are steadily falling into a state of complete disrepair and will, if deterioration is allowed to continue, soon be unfit for human habitation," said Marilyn Hart, chairman of ELUCOC, in a letter this month to city property standards officer Dick Cadwallader.

"We would encourage you to get involved now and would ask that a serious investigation be launched by your department. It is our intention to lobby on behalf of the tenants at 95 and 105 Cheyenne and others (in the area) living in these deplorable substandard housing conditions."

Hart said in a telephone interview that city officials have been slow to react to complaints from the church group and its community worker, Rev. Susan Eagle.

"We have run into a dead end with city (hall) people," Hart said.

adding that "this particular landlord has given us a lot of problems."

About 40 families live in the two three-storey walkups.

Elieff said Monday the church is making a mistake by siding with the tenants who, he says, are responsible for damage at the buildings. He accused the church of being one-sided and not talking to him before getting involved.

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— Peter Elieff  
building owner

"They don't (mention) all of the problems that I have from all those . . . living there. They (the churches) were thinking they should do something about those poor people there, but they never contacted me with what kind of poor . . . they are, that is the church's problem.

"They (the tenants) are wrecking things now and calling you guys with bad stories.

"As a Christian, I was always trying to shelter those welfare people and poor people . . . and then I get something like this."

Elieff is to appear at a hearing today at city hall under the Planning Act to hear complaints about the condition of Apartment 1 at 105 Cheyenne, said Cadwallader, who will preside over the hearing.

Cadwallader said Elieff has told him he won't appear, in which case Cadwallader said he would likely "regrettably" have to write a control order forcing compliance.

Last month, district Judge Joseph Winter ordered Elieff to undertake repairs at the same apartment by Dec. 1 or the tenant could withhold rent pending the repairs. The tenant said last week she was withholding December's rent because the repairs had not been done.

The tenant's complaints included a cold water tap which had been running constantly for months, bathroom floor tiles lifted, leaking toilet, ants, mildew and numerous paint, plaster and wallpaper problems.

Cadwallader, who said he has inspected two apartments in each building, said the church has overstated the problems at 95 and 105 Cheyenne. While landlord neglect is part of the problem, Cadwallader chalked up a portion of the problem to lack of cleanliness by some tenants.

In addition, Cadwallader said walkup apartments such as the Cheyenne apartments were poorly designed and the ground floor invariably has moisture problems which leads to mildew. Tenants in the building said they have had to clean up two sewer backups which inundated their apartments in the last few months.

Karen McDonald, who heads a tenants' association for the two buildings, said Monday problems have been chronic and repairs slow. McDonald said she welcomes church involvement in efforts to have repairs undertaken at the two buildings.