

CO-OP HOUSING

Cheyenne tenants face tough job

Plans to convert the Cheyenne Avenue apartments into co-ops have been complicated by federal budget cuts.

By Meg Milne
The London Free Press

A federal budget cut is going to make it tougher on tenants hoping to turn the Cheyenne Avenue apartments into co-ops, a London housing spokesperson said Thursday.

Tenants are hoping to take maintenance of the four buildings into their own hands by having them converted to co-op housing, said Marnie Coulson, chairperson of the city's community housing advisory committee.

But Ottawa's decision in Tuesday's budget to scrap federal support for new co-ops and reduce contributions to joint projects with the province "narrows the potential" for Cheyenne tenants getting grants, Coulson said.

CO-OP STATISTICS

□ There are 560 people on a waiting list for co-op housing in London, says Marnie Coulson, executive director of Community Homes of Southwestern Ontario.

□ By mid-1991, there were 1,559 co-op dwelling units at 27 sites around London, says Howard Pulver, the city's director of community improvement. Most were financed with federal help, either through federal programs or joint federal-provincial projects.

□ The Co-operative Housing Association of Ontario says the federal cuts will eliminate about 2,000 co-op units and 3,500 non-profit units across Canada, about 25 per cent of those usually built in a year. (Co-op housing projects are administered by tenants and non-profit housing is run by a board of directors).

The budget cut will save about \$6 million in 1992.

CONTROVERSY: The northeast London apartment buildings have been the centre of controversy over maintenance and living conditions for several years.

The Cheyenne Tenants' Association has applied through the province for co-op housing money — issued either by Ontario or jointly with the federal government. They hope to make the switch to co-op either by renovating the four buildings or tearing

them down and rebuilding.

Co-op tenants run their building. Some pay market value rent and others pay rent adjusted to income level.

Since 1989, there have been repeated efforts to force landlords to make required repairs at the Cheyenne Avenue apartments. A city hall committee recently urged that health improvements, including the extermination of cockroaches, be made again and that repairs be done.

Without extra help from the provincial government, co-op housing projects needed in the London region are in jeopardy, say two housing representatives.

Wayne Malo of MacKenzie-Malo, a company which assists groups setting up co-op housing, said his company submits about eight or 10 proposals annually seeking money from joint federal-provincial programs for co-op and non-profit housing.

The federal government announced Tuesday it will scale back its contribution to those programs and get out of the business of supporting any co-op projects on its own.

The future of another eight co-op housing proposals that likely would have been submitted by Community Homes of Southwestern Ontario this year are also at risk because of the federal decision, executive director Marnie Coulson said. Community Homes also helps groups set up co-op housing.

But there's no word from Queen's Park yet on whether the province will fill the gaps in co-op housing grants created by the federal government's plan.