

HOUSING

Hurdles cleared for Cheyenne co-ops

But the plan to replace the London apartment blocks with bigger co-op units still faces a major challenge — getting money from the province.

By Anne Murphy
The London Free Press

Supporters of a co-op housing complex planned to replace crumbling apartment buildings on Cheyenne Avenue in London leaped two hurdles Monday but the largest is yet to come.

London's committee of adjustment gave permission to increase density on property where apartment buildings now stand at 75, 85, 95 and 105 Cheyenne Ave. Those four buildings, with 80

units, would be demolished and replaced by seven buildings with 97 units in total. The new buildings would be managed by the tenants as a co-op.

The appeal period for a demolition permit expired Monday with no one opposing the move. That means the demolition can go ahead as scheduled on March 1 if — and it's a large if — financing from the provincial housing ministry is in place, community worker Susan Eagle said after the committee meeting.

On Monday, a senior housing ministry official toured the existing Cheyenne buildings for a "fact-finding session," said Marne Coulson, executive director of Community Homes of Southwestern Ontario.

The official will report to provincial Housing Minister Evelyn Gigantes, who is expected to make a decision by Oct. 31. If the project proponents don't hear by then, the deal to transfer the property from private hands to co-op management would fall through, Eagle said.

FINGERS CROSSED: Despite a cutback in federal support of co-op housing, Eagle said she's keeping her fingers crossed that the province will see the need to

support the Cheyenne project.

Overcrowding is a big problem in the existing apartments, Eagle said, so there is "real stress" to provide upgraded housing as soon as possible. In one building, there are 150 people living in 20 units.

Townhouses proposed for the co-op would be bigger than the existing one- and two-bedroom units to accommodate the larger families, she said.

Should the provincial financing come through, the first units could be ready within six months of demolition, Eagle said. Negotiations are now under way to house displaced tenants in nearby buildings during construction, expected to last a year.