

CHEYENNE APARTMENTS**Clean up sewage, landlord ordered**

If the work isn't done in 24 hours, the owner can be charged under the Health Protection and Promotion Act.

By Kelley Teahen/The London Free Press

Controversial apartment owner Elijah Elieff has 24 hours to clean up the excrement, toilet paper and sanitary napkins floating from the laundry room at his 105 Cheyenne Ave. apartment building.

The Middlesex-London district health unit, called to inspect the sewage backup Monday, ordered the cleanup after the London landlord refused a request to get the work done. He referred both the health unit and tenants to Reverend Susan Eagle, who is working with tenants on a proposal to convert the problem-plagued apartments into co-operative housing.

"We've had these (sewage) problems at previous times at that location and we've always had the owner clean them up immediately, no problem, until today," said Robert Carson, environmental health director for the health unit.

Both Carson and Eagle reported Elieff said Monday he doesn't believe the cleanup is his responsibility because of the tenants' efforts to have the properties converted. Elieff declined comment.

If Elieff fails to comply with the order, he can be charged under the Health Protection and Promotion Act, said Carson. The medical officer of health may also issue a directive to fix up the problem and the cost will be billed to the owner.

On Monday night, city council was urged by Councillor Bernie MacDonald to move quickly by sending in city works crews to clean up the mess and bill the cost of cleanup to Elieff.

Council decided to place the onus of cleanup on Elieff, but to send in city crews only if such action is deemed necessary by city engineer John Jardine and medical officer of health Douglas Pudden.

NO AGREEMENT: "I would be happy to take over responsibility if he handed over the deed and titles to the properties," said Eagle. "But we don't even have tentative agreement for purchase" after an application for government money to buy, demolish and then rebuild housing on Cheyenne Avenue fell through in September.

Jim Molineaux, of the London office of the housing ministry, said Monday the government is meeting with the Cheyenne Community Tenants Board to consider alternative, less expensive plans to purchase and renovate the apartments for co-operative housing.

On Monday, the stench of the sewer backup was stifling at the entrance to the three-storey building. The water at the entrance and down the corridor was high enough to slosh over thick-soled wading boots. The water had seeped into two apartments on that floor under the hallway doors.

"It started Sunday and it got bad again this



Morris Lamont/The London Free Press

Preap Touch carries kitchenware out of his Cheyenne Avenue apartment, which is ankle deep in sewage. Touch and his wife were moving to a higher floor and the building owner was ordered to clean it up with 24 hours.

morning" when people in the building used their toilets and showers, said Preap Touch, who lives in unit 7 on the main floor with his wife, Sarom, and their three small children. The superintendent installed a small pump on Sunday but then removed it. The same superintendent provided keys to the two families so they could occupy other units owned by Elieff.

CHILDREN GONE: The Touch's children are staying at a friend's apartment "because I don't want the children to come in here and play in this water," said Preap Touch, noting the remnants of excrement and toilet paper carried into the apartment by the flooding water.

Money is tight for the family as Sarom Touch was recently laid off from her job at Cuddy Foods and he is also out of work. The family is seeking welfare.

The water has damaged or dirtied many of their possessions and Preap Touch said the move to another apartment means spending money to move services such as the telephone.

The tenants called a plumber to fix the problem but couldn't guarantee payment, Eagle says, "because our tenants' association has absolutely no money."

If Elieff does not comply with the order, the tenants' association will be looking to the city "to enforce its own standards," said Eagle.