

HEARING

Landlord contends he 'loves' refugees from Asia

Elijah Elieff says he was moved by the plight of the 'boat people.'

By Hank Daniszewski
The London Free Press

Elijah Elieff portrayed himself as a compassionate landlord harassed by bureaucrats and the media before a provincial board of inquiry in London on Tuesday.

Elieff told the board he started taking Vietnamese and Cambodian refugees into his two Cheyenne Avenue buildings in 1985 because he was moved by the plight of the "boat people" refugees.

The board is hearing a complaint made to the Ontario Human Rights Commission that Elieff discriminated against Asians at the apartment buildings in northeast London.

"I was happy renting to people in need," said Elieff, saying he was motivated by his own experience as a poor refugee from Yugoslavia.

He said Canadian tenants swiftly moved out of the two buildings because of racial prejudice and then came back to vandalize the property.

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to vandalize the property.

Elieff said he still "loves" his Cambodian and Vietnamese tenants even though he blames them for an infestation of cockroaches in his buildings and for litter and overcrowding.

He vehemently denied a complaint filed with the commission that he discriminated against his Asian tenants and he repeatedly blamed United Church community worker Susan Eagle and The London Free Press for painting him as a racist and uncaring landlord.

Earlier in the day, Elieff was supported by one his tenants, John Pipe.

Pipe said he arranged with Elieff last summer to pick up garbage around the buildings in return for a reduced rent.

But Pipe said he quit the job after three months because he was unable to keep up with the "wholesale destruction of the property on a daily basis."

He said children living in the building were routinely littering and destroying the property with no restraint from parents.

"They don't treat it like a private apartment. They treat it like a tribal village," Pipe testified.

The hearing is expected to resume in early February when a lawyer for the human rights commission will summarize the case against Elieff.