

# Gas cut-off may ease Cheyenne woes

At least London council would then be forced to take a stand and help the tenants.

**J**UST DO IT. Come on Union Gas, do it. Cut off the service. Leave those tenants in the Cheyenne apartments shivering in the cold in the middle of winter.

Because if you cut off the service, then maybe someone will do something to rectify the problem once and for all.

It's going to take something shocking, something drastic to make London city council and the provincial government take action. Until something drastic does happen, governments will continue to drag their heels instead of digging their heels in, to solve the problems.

**PROBLEMS AROUND:** Most everyone in London knows about the two Cheyenne apartments and the continuing battle between the tenants and landlord of the cockroach-infested habitation. One day it's cockroaches, the next day it's sewage backup, then it's the non-payment of bills. Today, the Ontario Human Rights Commission will resume its hearing about the buildings and landlord Elijah Elieff.

I'm sick of writing about it. You're sick of reading about it. And both landlord and tenants are

probably sick of having to deal with it.

The latest ongoing problem is the non-payment of the PUC (now hydro-electric commission) bill by the landlord. Tenants have been forced to pay their rents to a fund, from which money will go to pay the bills. The bill is somewhere around \$15,000, \$8,000 of which has been collected toward payment.

**BUTTED HEADS:** Susan Eagle, a United Church minister and advocate for the tenants at the Cheyenne apartments, has run the gamut. She's butted heads with local and provincial governments. She wants the city to collect the rent money to pay the bills.

The city claims they want to help, without getting too involved, of course. They don't want to set the precedent of becoming rent collectors and paying a landlord's bill.

Did we say this was the latest problem?

Wrong. The latest problem involves Union Gas, which is owed about \$5,200 by Elieff.

"Notices were sent out that if the bill wasn't paid by Feb. 10, the gas was going to be cut off," said Eagle. "We don't have the money to pay it.

"We've made arrangements with

Chippewa Public School to house some of the people temporarily when the gas is turned off. Now, what we have to do is go to the individual tenants and explain to them what's going on. Some might not understand that even though they've paid their rent for the PUC, the gas is going to be turned off.

"Even if we could pay that bill, then what's to say that will be it? What goes next?"

That's just unbelievable.

How long before council throws out the manual and takes action? How long before council will seek special legislation that allows them to collect rents to ensure the bills are paid? While they're at it, why not ensure all the health unit orders are also carried out.

How long?

It should have been yesterday.

Local and provincial governments can only hide behind the "it's-not-our-department" excuse for so long.

Do something. Now.

**NOXIOUS WEEDS:** Council moved quickly to get provincial legislation to protect the Talbot streetscape when Cambridge Shopping Centres Ltd. wanted to tear it down. The city is em-



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powered to take matters into its own hands when a property owner won't cut noxious weeds. After a warning, the city comes in, cuts them down and bills the owner of the property.

Can someone please explain to me when buildings and noxious weeds began to take precedence over people?

Toronto has a bill in place that allows it to get involved in such landlord-tenant disputes.

London council asked its staff several weeks ago to devise the same sort of plan for the Cheyenne apartments, a plan that should have been implemented months ago.

Time may not be of the essence to London council but it's certainly of the essence to the mostly Cambodian and Vietnamese immigrants at Cheyenne. This travesty in northeast London has been going on for years.

So Union Gas, give that valve a strong twist. Turn off the gas — if that's what it will take to get some action.

If council isn't going to jump on its own, maybe it's time it was pushed.

**Morris Dalla Costa appears Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays.**