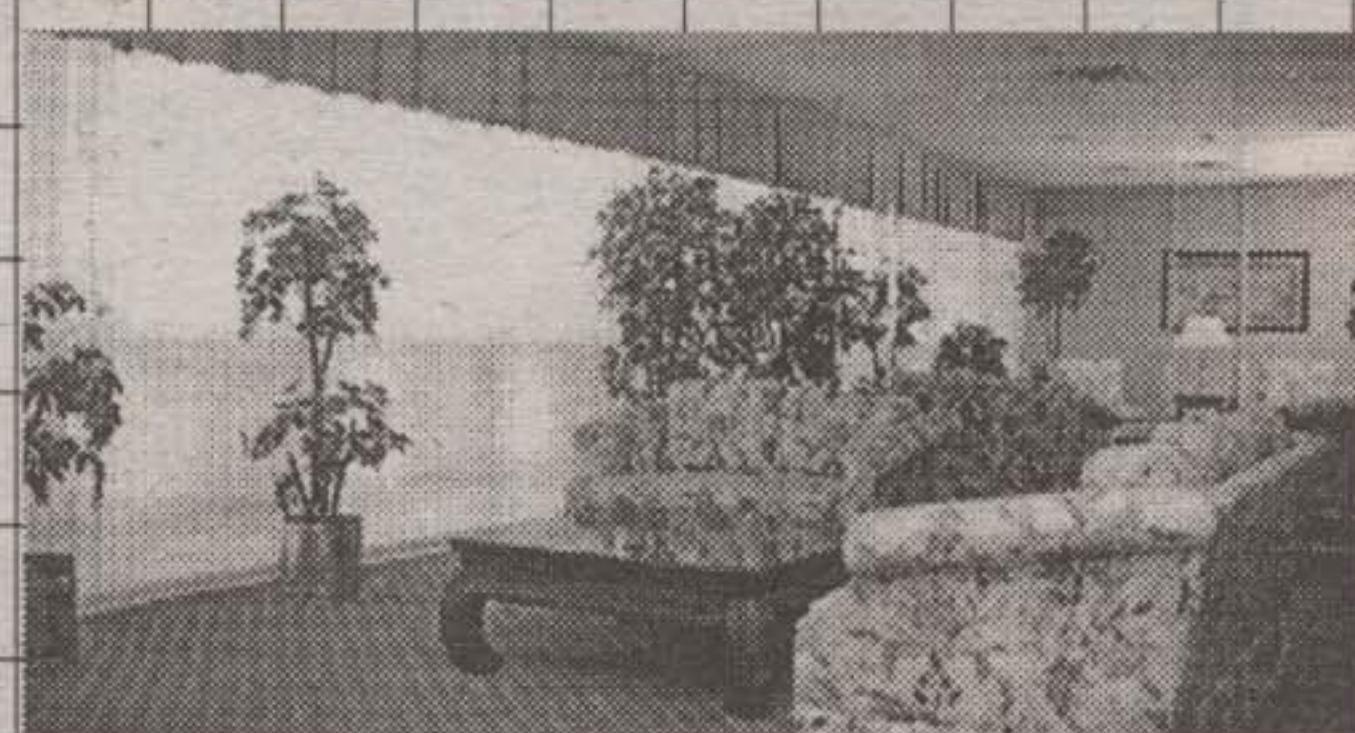
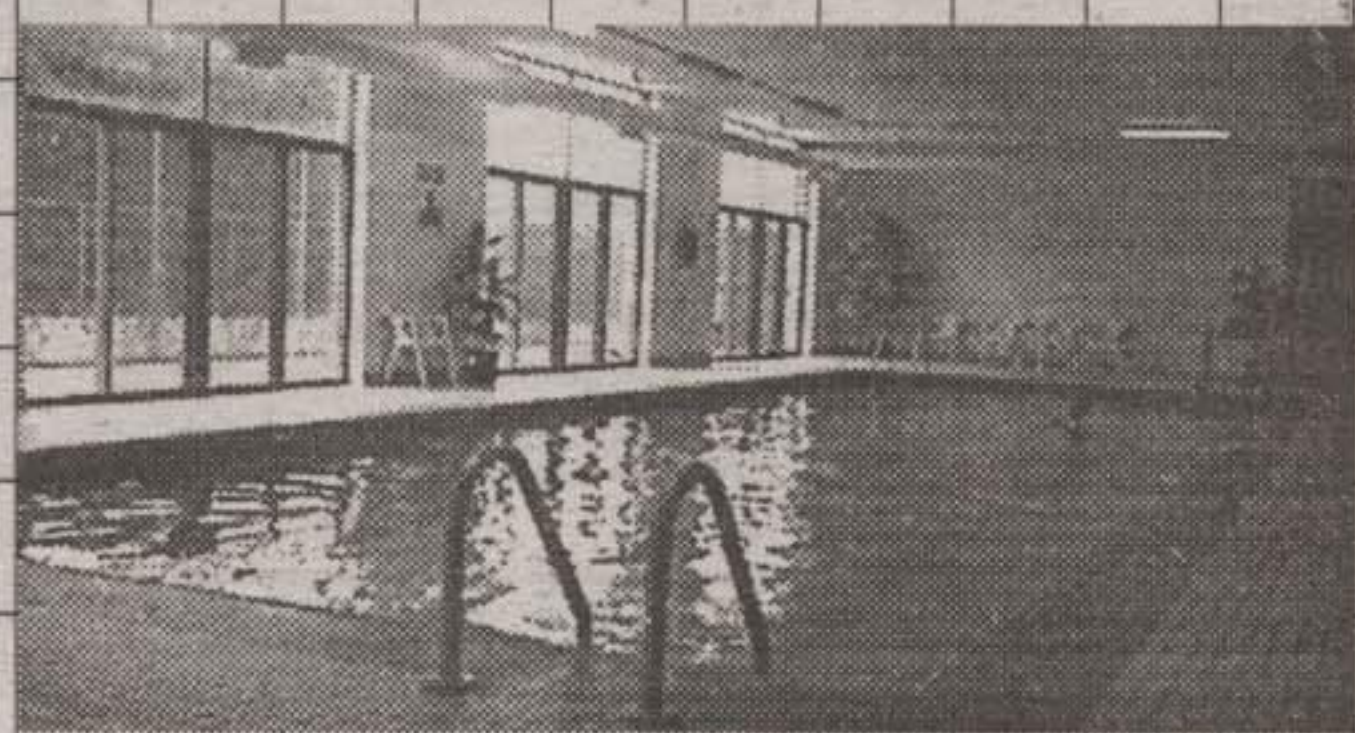


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The case of the burning bacon—or why tenants need insurance

Dear insurance agent:

I have been renting a house for about a year now. A few weeks ago, I was frying some bacon on the stove. The phone rang and I ran to answer it. I wasn't gone more than a few minutes, but when I returned to the kitchen, the grease had splattered and caught fire, and there was smoke all over the kitchen. Luckily, I managed to put out the fire myself, but the smoke made a terrible mess.

As if that wasn't bad enough, my landlord says I have to pay to repair the damage.

But it's his house, so he would have insurance, wouldn't he? I don't have any insurance, because I don't own the house. Now he expect me to pay out of pocket for the damage. Do I have to?

— *Hot under the collar*

Dear Hot:

Obviously, you're pretty burned up about all this. I hate to fan the flames even further but your landlord is right—you do have to pay for the damage. That's why you need to carry liability insurance.

Even though you don't own the house, you are still responsible for any damage that you may cause to the property while you are living there.

It doesn't matter whether your landlord has insurance on the house or not—you caused the fire. In other words, the perpetrator pays.

Here's why. Let's assume your landlord does have insurance, and he chooses to claim for the damage under that policy. His insurer would pay for the repairs, but would in turn make every effort to recov-

er the money from you. That's call "subrogation" —the process by which an insurance company—in this case your landlord's, seeks reimbursement from the responsible party (you) for a claim it has already paid.

Whether you are renting a house or an apartment, you need tenant's insurance. Not only would it have saved you from picking up the tab for the repairs, but it also would have covered any damage to your personal belongings.

But that won't get you off the hook this time, I'm afraid. You've learned the hard way that, as a tenant, you are responsible not only for damage to or loss of your own personal property, but also for any damage you may cause to your landlord's property.

The same goes for any harm you may cause to others who visit there. Unfortunately, you thought—as many other would—that the landlord's insurance company would foot the bill and save your bacon. When pigs fly!

Note: Remember, policies vary, so when in doubt, consult your insurance representative.

Understand your insurance. Make it your policy. Insurance Bureau of Canada (IBC) represents the private (non-government) insurance companies that protect your car, home and business.

For more information on these and other non-life insurance questions. Call IBC in Toronto at (416)362-9528 or from elsewhere in Ontario, 1-800-387-2880. Or, visit IBC on the Internet at <http://www.ibc.ca>.

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