

Don't pay illegal rent columnist explains

By Pilar Amaya-Torres
(Fifth in a series)

The common practice of charging illegal rents creates hardship, especially for tenants on low or fixed incomes.

Since 1976 it has been illegal for rents of rent controlled units to be raised over four per cent per year unless a rent review hearing has been held and an Order has been issued by the Residential Tenancy Commission. Units not covered by rent review may have the rent raised without limit. But for any

increase, 90 days written notice in proper form is required by law. (These rules will probably change under the new law.)

Some examples of illegal rent raising practices are: increasing the rent when another person joins the tenant's household; charges for services or facilities (such as hydro, parking, or laundry) even though it had been argued that these were included in the rent; charges for services or improvements added without an applica-

tion to rent review.

Some landlords request or demand cash payments of the illegal portion of the rent. Others may go as far as to threaten to evict the tenant(s) if they do not comply. *These practices are illegal.* Tenants do not have to pay illegal rent increases.

If you are already paying an illegal rent increase, you may be entitled to a rollback (having your rent rolled back to the amount you should legally be paying) and a rebate (a refund of the excess rent you have paid). You may need to prove that the rent you are now paying is illegal. Contact the Residential Tenancy Commission, a lawyer or legal clinic, or a tenants' association for information and assistance with the procedures.

If you suspect that you are paying an illegal rent but you do not have documentation, talk to previous tenants of your unit and other tenants in the building to gather the information and proof you need. (You cannot be evicted for doing this).

If you find out that you have been paying an illegal rent for more than two years, you may wish to make your application for a rebate *immediately* because the new legislation, when passed, may limit your rebate to only two years.

What if the landlord asks you to pay an illegal increase? You do not have to pay it. No landlord can evict you for failure to pay an illegal increase. Contact one of the above resources for help. Document your conversations with the landlord. Continue to pay the legal amount of your rent.

The government of Ontario will soon be starting a province wide rent registry. The maximum legal rent for every unit in Ontario will be registered (eventually). Any tenant will be able to telephone the registry to find out the maximum legal rent of any unit.

This will be an effective tool for stopping illegal rent increases. At the same time, some amnesties on "minor" illegal rents are proposed. It will be the job of the Rent Review Advisory Committee to make recommendations for the definitions of "minor" vs. "substantial" illegalities.

How will the rent registry work? That is the topic for next week



Best Driver

Laura M. Prill of Terrace Bay was recently presented with a Kimberly-Clark company jacket by Assistant Superintendent of the Number 2 mill, Bryan Webb, after Laura was named Best Lift Truck Driver at the Terrace Bay K-C mill. She placed first in a field of 12 drivers when she scored 363 out of a possible 375 points during an in-plant lift truck operation contest. (Photograph supplied by Gerry T. Withers)



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Free trade only answer: MP

When it comes to the free trade negotiations between Canada and the United States, Keith Penner, MP for the Terrace Bay and Schreiber area, feels the current mood south of the border is "very distressing" and that the entire world may suffer as a consequence.

"I don't think there is

any alternative to free trade now," he said on June 2 during a stop in Terrace Bay. "We can work out some sort of agreement... we have to, there's no longer any choice."

The real obstacle facing the Canadian negotiators is the "bunker mentality" in the States.

"They are getting very protectionistic," the Cochrane-Superior riding MP said of the US. "They're drawing back into themselves lately. I find this very, very distressing."

If and when the free trade talks get underway in earnest, Penner believes "we are going to have to give in order to get, and that's what the provinces are worrying about."

He admitted that no one, including himself, really knows what will come out of the agreement, if one is reached.

"But we need one because it's like buying an in-

urance policy," Penner noted. "It's the lesser of two evils, really."

One way northern Ontario can help itself economically is to tap "the tremendous potential" in tourism that it has.

"We've got something here, we should use it," Penner pointed out.

He cautioned, though, that it's not just a matter of luring visitors in from outside of the province. New skills have to be learned if tourists are expected to come back year after year.

"You have to gear yourself up for tourism here," he said. "These people coming in are not intruders... we have to stop thinking of them as such."

Penner admitted his riding is facing some severe economic difficulties, but added it is important to keep a positive outlook.

"I still think our region has a solid future," Penner said.

Campaign . . .

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The Ontario March of Dimes is only able to provide these important services through generous donations and grants. Watch your mail for an appeal, and please, give as generously as you are able. Donations can also be sent to Summer Campaign, Ontario March of Dimes, 60 Overlea Blvd., Toronto, Ontario, M4H 1B6.

Ontario March of Dimes

Hospital . . .

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beds, at a cost of \$25 million. As a comparison, the Central East district, which includes the Toronto area, will get 1,557 more chronic beds and 748 more acute beds at a total cost of \$400 million.

Another 207 beds are now being added to Northern Ontario communities under the Northern Ontario Extended Care (EldCap) program. The program is designed to assist small northern communities, where it is impractical to establish independent hospitals for elderly residents.

NOTICE OF MEETING

The North of Superior Community Mental Health Program Corp.

will hold its

ANNUAL MEETING

TUESDAY JUNE 17

7:30 P.M.

in the cafeteria of

THE GERALDTON DISTRICT HOSPITAL

Geraldton, Ontario

For further information please call **854-1321**

Nominations for Directors should be sent to:
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