

Application submitted

Tenants unite to protest 15.2 per cent rent hike

By DEB BODINE CHAMPION

An application to the Rent Review Board for rent increases of up to 15.2 per cent has some tenants in a Unionville housing development hopping mad and ready for a fight.

As a result of recent changes in rent review legislation, rental units built after 1975 are now eligible for rent restrictions, retroactive to 1985. Affected by this is a group of approximately 200 link homes located on the north side of Bullock Dr. north of Hwy. 7.

They're managed by Middlefield Estates Ltd. of Toronto.

The firm has applied to the Rent Review Board for permission to increase rents above the accepted government rates. To do so, explained property manager Marilyn Smyth, a form for each home had to be submitted stating actual expenses incurred per unit, divided by 12, to arrive at a maximum monthly rental fee.

In some cases those figures amounted to an increase of 15.2 per cent. The acceptable government rate for increase is four per cent for 1985-86 and 5.2 per cent for 1987-88.

Tenants Jennifer Wood, Rhonda Magnus and Sharon Burns have formed a committee to take action against the proposed rent hikes.

"We're fighting this as hard as we can," said Ms. Magnus, who is facing a possible 15.2 per cent increase, equivalent to \$125 per month.

The committee sent notices to over 200 Middlefield homes asking for support. Over 60 forms have been signed and returned thus far, each tenant listing in detail the reasons why the application for increases in excess of 5.2 per cent should be turned down.

Ms. Wood suggested that perhaps new tenants do not realize that they too could benefit from opposing the application for rent increases.

"I don't think that some of the tenants realize that even if their proposed increase is low, they could possibly receive a rebate for 85-86 if the rent was increased by more than four per cent," she said.

Ms. Magnus and the other committee members assert that the proposed increases are not justifiable because of the poor service and lack of proper maintenance provided by Middlefield Estates Ltd.

"It's not just because we can't afford it," said Ms. Magnus. "It's beginning to look like a slum."

The problem of leaking basements causing flooding and moisture damage was a common complaint in many of the signed petitions. Ms. Wood said that she is unable to use her basement, even for storage, since the smell is so bad as a result of excess moisture and mildew.

Since November, Ms. Wood says she has called Middlefield four times to have her bannister repaired and still has had no re-

sponse.

When the siding blew off her house in a windstorm, it took over a year to have it replaced. It became a neighborhood joke when the door to the storage area linking her home with her neighbor's blew off every time it got windy.

Other complaints relating to maintenance include large holes in walls, sloping and badly squeaking floors, flea infestation, smelly carpets that won't come clean, poor lawn care and no professional landscaping. Tenants complain that the homes are not cleaned, repaired or painted between occupants.

Property manager, Marilyn Smyth, explained that it is company policy to paint only if there is a gap between tenants.

"I'm extremely pleased with the response to the petition," said Ms. Magnus. The originals are being sent to the review board and copies are also being sent to MPP Don Cousens in the hope of rallying his support.

"As a company, we have to look at market values," said Ms. Smyth. "Even with the maximum increases, the rents are still at or slightly below market value for the area." She added, "If you can only increase the rents 5.2 per cent and you're losing money, you'll just keep losing money year after year."

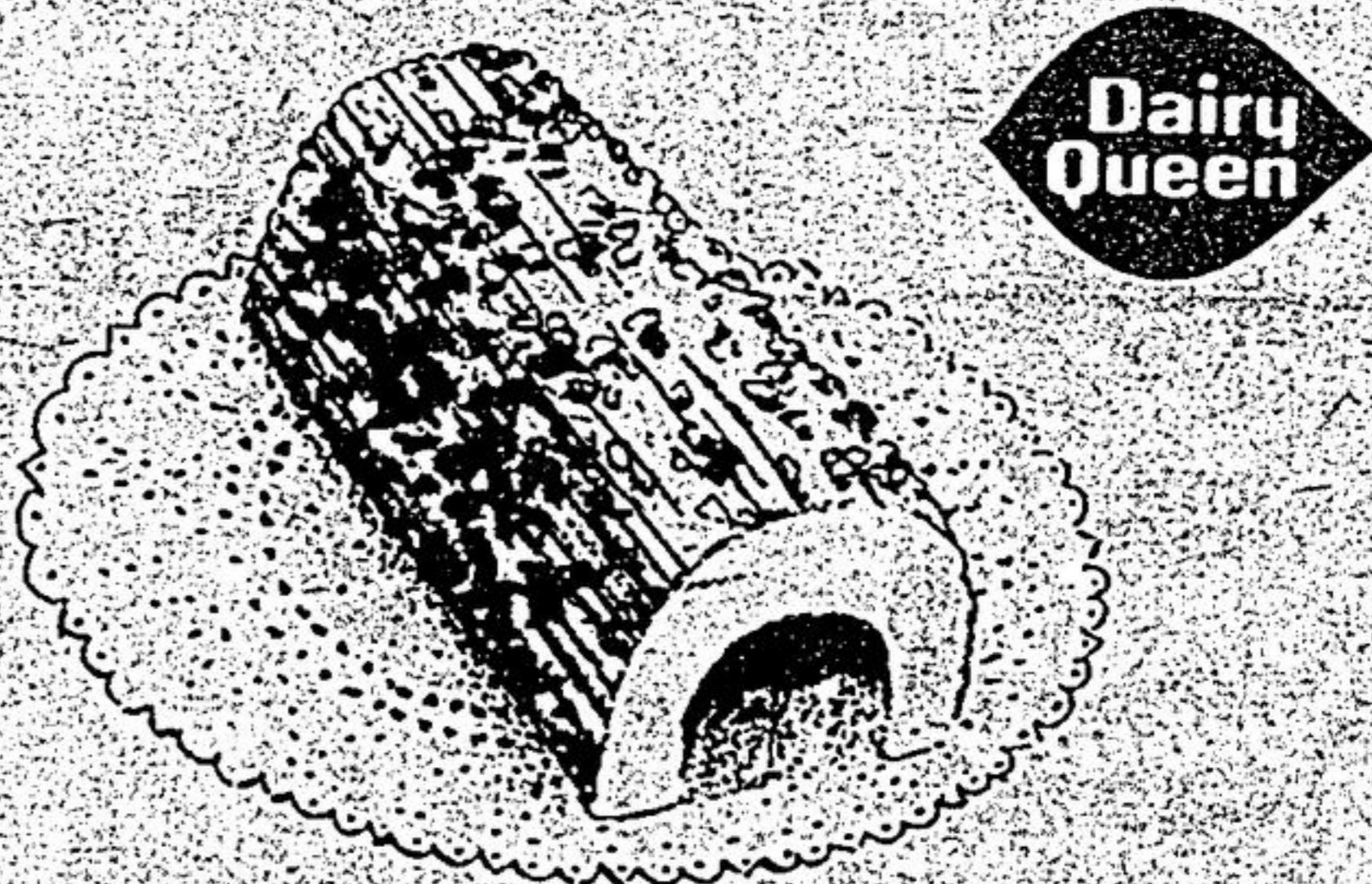
"Good tenants are worth their weight in gold. We can't go too high either or we'll end up with empty units," she concluded.



Rhonda Magnus, left, Sharon Burns and Jennifer Wood (on floor) met at the Wood residence last week to discuss rental rate increases proposed by Middlefield Estates Limited.

— Bill Lanning

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