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Mayor orders landlord to fix heating

By CBC News

The mayor of a Montreal borough has stepped in to force a landlord to provide heat for the four remaining tenants in his apartment building.

The mayor of a Montreal borough has stepped in to force a landlord to provide heat for the four remaining tenants in his apartment building.

The mayor of Côte-des-Neiges-Notre-Dame-de-Grâce, Michael Applebaum, said the heat should be on by the end of Tuesday.

The building at the corner of Girouard Avenue and Sherbrooke Street has 36 units, but most tenants have left because of recent renovations.

Tenants said they discovered early in October the landlord had ripped out the central heating system just as cold weather was moving in.

In a letter to residents, the owner Yves Clement, wrote: "Please note that if you refuse to vacate the premises, you will be forced to live without heat or hot water."

CBC News first reported the story last Friday.

Applebaum said he only learned about a problem with the building when a reporter phoned him.

The borough mayor said he contacted a representative of the owner, and then on Monday night had a 20-minute conversation with Clement directly.

"The owner was in agreement that it was necessary to fix the situation. He has hired an electrical firm in order to fix the problem," Applebaum said.

If Clement has not restored the heat by the end of Tuesday, the city will take over the work and send him the bill, Applebaum said.

Applebaum said it will be up to tenants, the landlord, and perhaps the rental board, to sort out the leases after the work is completed.

Applebaum said the building has a long history of disrepair, and the owner now understands how important it is for the tenants to have heat and for the renovations to be complete,

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hirondelle123 wrote:

Posted 2009/10/15
at 9:09 PM ET

To TheRealDave:

Here's some pure speculation:

A landlord wants to do the very extensive renovations that his old building desperately needs.

So he could fix the heating system.... ummmm.... during the summer?

Mr Beaver wrote:

Posted 2009/10/14
at 10:10 PM ET

So the cheap landlord should have reduced the cost of rent. Why ? the heating was not provided. As well as lack of comfort, they should go to "La Regie du Logement" to be compensated for the inconvenience.

Years ago, I did sleep once on 10th floor. I was with a bunch of friends in a rock n roll bar, and one of them decided that some of us would stay at her 2 and one half apartment. Luckily, I was working close by on the following afternoon. It was so hot in there that we had to open the windows that had a magnific view over Decarie Boulevard.

weldingchick wrote:

Posted 2009/10/14
at 5:52 PM ET

I have lived in that building for 10 years. Yes it was run down, but it was safe. This new "landlord" has had no basic respect for any of the tenants since day one. Since we had him, the main doors didnt lock (basic safety), fire extiguishers are out of date (basic safety) gutted apartments were left unlocked and I had two drug addicted squaters "living" on my deserted floor, (basic safety). At any given time, there would be no running water, and this whole problem with no heating because he ripped out the heaters..? This happened LAST FALL ASWELL. The BANK which he is paying his morgage to got involved because he was not paying his morgage, and THEY replaced the heaters. The landlord also owes money to the window company who put in new windows for everyone, aswell as the plumbing company who did some repairs over a year's time. Their should be a law where people who treat tenants worse then animals, should be black listed and not allowed to own buildings that house tenants. I LOVED my apartment. And I loved my location. I moved out last June.

Hobonium wrote:

Posted 2009/10/14
at 4:06 PM ET

Interesting story, especially because our landlord discovered only a week or two ago that the building's furnace (20 or so units) was kaput. So we haven't had heat yet this fall. What's more: only yesterday, the landlord resolved to replace the central heating system with baseboard electrical heaters, meaning lengthy and extensive work in every unit. Our lease (and presumably everyone else's) includes heating, so this solution introduces the additional hassle of having to work out what percentage of our Hydro Quebec bills will be devoted to heating and thus by how much the monthly rent will be reduced.

And no heat (except by portable heaters loaned out by the landlord) until the work is complete! What a nightmare!

barstoolprophet wrote:

Posted 2009/10/14
at 3:49 PM ET

I am a resident of the building and I can tell you that "slum lord" is exactly the right term. This building has been in the worst of conditions for years. Ever since the current landlord purchased the building our standard of living has declined steadily. He is not respecting his responsibilities as a landlord.

The larger issue here is that the Regie is not protecting the rights of renters - they spend most of their time protecting landlords. There is no one looking after the rights of the little guy - so in a very real way the little guy has no rights.

As rents rise higher in Montreal, I'm sure there will be an increasing number of landlords with the temptation to force out their current tenants in favor of new tenants paying higher rent. If there is no protection for renters, I fear that this type of situation will be more common - unless something is done about it.

TheRealDave wrote:

Posted 2009/10/14
at 12:45 PM ET

Here's some pure speculation:

It sounds as though this landlord wants to do the very extensive renovations that his old building desperately needs. He can't do the work with tenants in the building, and has been trying to get the building vacant for some time. He finally crossed the line into illegal actions in a last-ditch effort to get the 4 remaining tenants to move out, and got nailed for it.

So why did he not simply send an eviction notice to every tenant in the building, and schedule the required work? Probably because of tenant protection laws that limit evictions. The result: a building full of tenants suffering in an obsolete building that the landlord can't get fixed, despite wanting to.

anonymous_ wrote:

Posted 2009/10/14
at 12:45 PM ET

Slumlords are a special breed. They're best trick in Montreal is renting to people who don't know their rights or speak English or French and just put up with the squalor. If they're aware of the problem, tell them where to stick it by refusing to pay your rent until its fixed. Then you offer to pay the backrent minus 2 months to break the lease and let him go to the Regie if he likes. Slumlords are typically in the bad books of the regie, so scrapping 2 months of your rent to avoid dealing with the government is usually a pretty good deal for those slumlords.

TheRealDave wrote:

Posted 2009/10/14
at 12:40 PM ET

If you call this guy a "slumlord," you're missing an important point. This guy is trying to get the tenants out. He apparently doesn't want their money. He wants them out so that he can do the very extensive renovation that his old building desperately needs. He wants to spend money on improvements to his building, which will make life better for his tenants, and probably get him better rents.

cantphask wrote:

Posted 2009/10/13
at 9:45 PM ET

Didn't I see this story line on Law & Order many years ago ? Some one should revisit this story and check on the amount of rents after the renovations are finished. Were the other tennents "incouraged" to leave?

yyc403 wrote:

Posted 2009/10/13
at 9:40 PM ET

Disgusting

Spruce Str Says wrote:

Posted 2009/10/13
at 7:22 PM ET

Sure he understands and agrees.....cause if he doesn't that slum lord may end in financial ruin. He should be treated as a criminal for " not providing the necessities of life.."