

BRACEBRIDGE

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## RESIDENTS OF APARTMENT COMPLEX SCARED, CONFUSED

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BRACEBRIDGE - Jack Martin said he isn't going anywhere.

The 83-year-old was one of about 30 tenants of 129 Alice Rd. at a meeting on Dec. 5 to fight actions by their landlord.

The owner of a pair of apartment buildings in Bracebridge is allegedly attempting to get residents to move out with the inducement of cash and the threat that long-term renovations will make the property unlivable for some time to come.

Word got out building owner Weber Apartments had been attempting to sign people up to voluntary removal from the three-storey multi-unit buildings. Tenants met with District Coun. Don Smith, Jackie Mattice, director of the District of Muskoka Community Services department and Lake Country Community Legal Clinic lawyer Susan Campbell.

At issue for many tenants is the confusion surrounding the large cash offers to move out. The tenants say, in the midst of this,

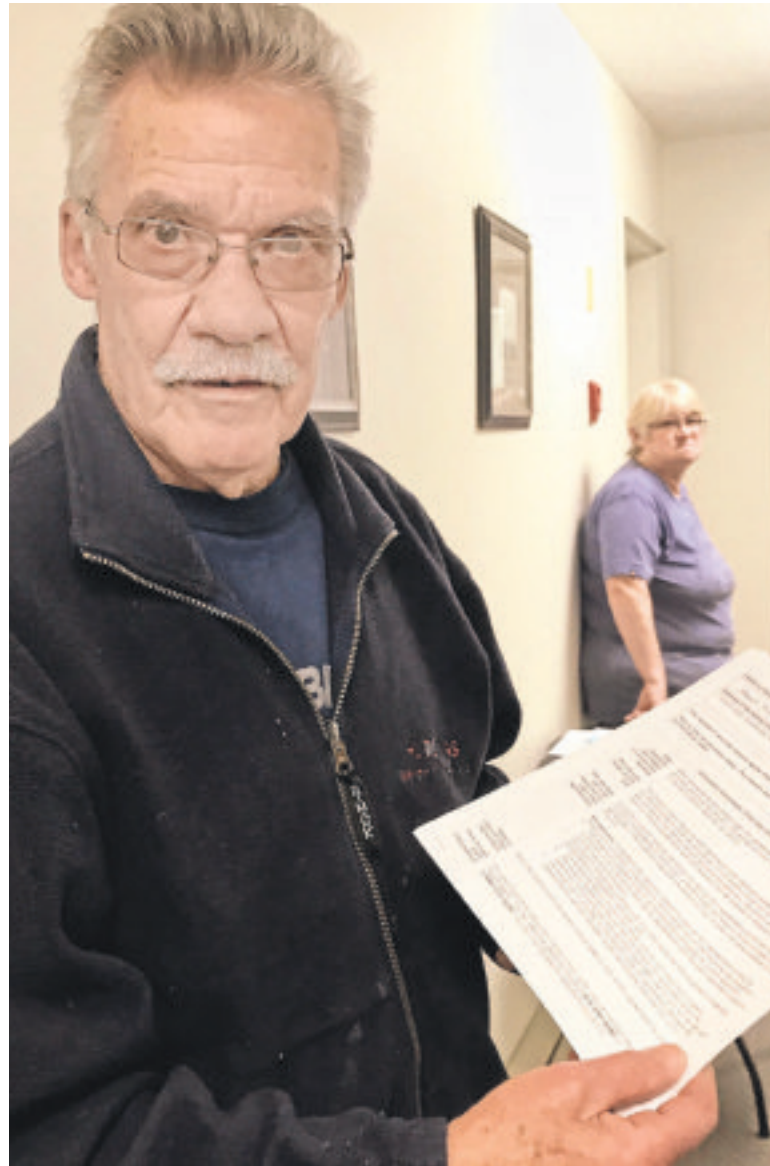


two new tenants have moved into previously vacant apartments at a new rent rate of \$1,500 monthly, double what most people are paying at the building. Attempts to contact new tenants were unsuccessful.

"It is what we call a reno-viction," Campbell told the residents. "Landlords get people to move out saying things will be a mess and unlivable, then a few minor things are done and there is no limit to how much the new rent can be."

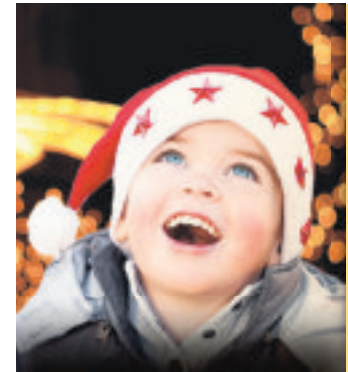
Ahead of the meeting resi-

See LEGAL, page 19



Doug Crosse/Torstar

Seventy-seven-year-old Al Sinderling initially accepted an offer to move out of his Alice Road apartment by April 2020, but has now decided to stay.



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# LEGAL AID LAWYER SUSAN CAMPBELL TAKES ON FIGHT

Continued from page 1

dents told similar stories of co-owner and landlord of the building, Matthew Regan making verbal cash offers of between \$4,000 and \$5,000 plus the return of a tenant's last month's rent and free rent until people move out in April.

A list of questions presented to the landlord resulted in this statement:

"Some tenants entered into discussions with a director of the corporation and agreed to on consent to terminate their tenancy as of April 1, 2020 and signed an N11 (a government form) which is an agreement to terminate. The tenants that signed the N11 volunteered to end their tenancy and thus signed to do so," wrote Whitney Graham.

Residents in 11 of the 15 units in Building Two have tentatively accepted the offers but based on reactions in the cramped hallway of the three-storey low-rise where the meeting took place, a high percentage were happy to be retained by Campbell and stop the process.

"I won't go," said 83-year-old Jack Martin defiantly. "It's the principle of the situation. People here have nowhere to go and also, where am I going to go?"

Martin said he was offered \$5,000 to move out by April, \$6,000 if he could move out by the end of December.

Martin is one of a number of residents that receive support from the district with a rent subsidy. He currently pays a total rent of just over \$800 with the district paying about \$250 of that. The district has a direct agreement with the landlord as well as the tenant to provide that support.

The building was bought by Regan in the fall from previous owners Ben and Cindy Tubman. Ben Tubman passed away in September from cancer and sold the building to Regan ahead of his passing.

Bob and Shirley Sharpe have lived in their apartment for 30 years and considered Ben and Cindy close friends. A tearful Tubman declined comment.

One tenant told Campbell Regan had said he would be removing the roof off of Unit 2 and creating an addition. Director of Planning and Development Cheryl Kelly told this newspaper that no permits had been applied for the 129 Alice Rd. apartments.

Al Sinderling is a semi-retired 77-year-old who initially accepted Regan's offer. But now he is working with Campbell to repudiate his contract and stay put.

He has been living at Alice Road for 10 years now and had started to look for a new apartment but realizes he is fine where he is.

"I don't want to move," he contended after the meeting. "I feel a lot better now that we have legal advice on what to do."



The exterior of building two at 129 Alice Road in Bracebridge.

Doug Crosse/Torstar

**THE ISSUE: BRACEBRIDGE LANDLORD OFFERS TO PAY LOW-PAYING TENANTS TO VACATE**

**THE IMPACT: LAWYER SUGGESTS IT'S RENO-VICTION**

Campbell told tenants asking people to sign a contract under duress is a major no-no in contract law.

Campbell wrapped up the information session by individually engaging tenants as clients so the legal clinic can act on their behalf in legal proceedings.

## STORY BEHIND THE STORY

Residents of 129 Alice Road reached out to us on Facebook to look into what they were going through. We attended the meeting where the tenants received legal advice from Susan Campbell.

## VACANCY RATES

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's 2018 Rental Market Survey revealed an average rent of \$927 for a one-bedroom in Bracebridge. The vacancy rate in 2018 according to the CMHC was just 1.2 per cent. Current ads for one-bedroom apartments revealed almost no inventory in an online search.

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