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Local senior told to vacate county housing following wife?s passing

Written By Joshua Drakes

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

A Shelburne resident currently living in county housing is working to find a new home thanks to an intervention by Services and Housing in the Province (SHIP).

Shelburne resident Richard Reed, 73, was still mourning the loss of his wife this past December when he received a notice from the County of Dufferin on Jan. 1 to vacate his apartment by Jan. 31.

Reed said that the news was blindsiding.

He spent the next month trying to contact the county to find anyone who could help him get an extension of time so he could settle his affairs and find a new home. For weeks, Reed said he couldn't connect with anyone, and that when he did, he was told they would get back to him, even as the deadline continued to approach.

?Everybody I tried has said the same thing, that they'd get back to me,? he said. ?But they don't get back to you. And if you phone them, you don't get a hold of them anymore. I don't feel like I'm being treated with any compassion.?

Reed said he is being pushed out because his name was never added to the lease for his apartment with his wife. He said that he was ready to pay and sign, but needed a response from the county, which never came.

?I had the money, and I had the time,? he said. ?All I needed was a paper to sign on and I'll do it immediately. They're still getting their money, so why is it being made into such a problem? I don't understand.?

Mere days before the deadline, Reed was contacted by SHIP, which operates the HART Hub in Orangeville and Shelburne. After speaking with them, they were able to secure an extension of his eviction, giving him an additional two weeks to find a new home.

Reed said that SHIP is actively helping him in his search, something he was not provided with before. He praised his social worker, who has been with him throughout this process since last week.

?A social worker is actually coming with me to look at houses,? he said. ?I'm not doing it alone. I have my son helping as well. He really, truly is my angel right now.?

Richard grew up in Toronto, close to Lakeshore, but his life in Shelburne began almost by accident. In 1972, he came up to the area for what was supposed to be just two weeks, helping his uncle build a house near Amaranth.

?Coming from the city, and seeing the town and the countryside, I found I liked the country and the people, and I just didn't enjoy living in the city,? he said. ?I liked it so much up here. I didn't go back after two weeks, I stayed and have been here since.?

Over time, Shelburne and the surrounding countryside became home, the place he chose to stay after walking away from Toronto's congestion for the quieter pace of rural Ontario.

Now that a house search is underway, he may be able to stay in town, but he will find another location close by if necessary. It's not what Reed wanted, but he will work within the limits he's currently facing.

While he remains extremely grateful to SHIP for getting involved to help him, he is shaken and concerned about why the county was

unable to do anything until mere days before his original deadline to leave, which has caused him high levels of stress.

?I still just can't understand why I have to get out when I've been here all this time, and they know it,? he said. ?I feel like I've been kicked while I'm already down.?

When contacted, the County of Dufferin would not comment on Richard's eviction, citing privacy policies, but stressed that staff work directly with individuals in these circumstances to explore any available supports or options.