

WIGWAM TO WIGWAM

YOUR HOUSE TO HOUSE NEWS

SEPTEMBER 2010



Classes resume (at most public schools)

on Tuesday, September 7, 2010

Please be advised that the office will
be closed on:

Monday, September 6, 2010

for Labour Day.

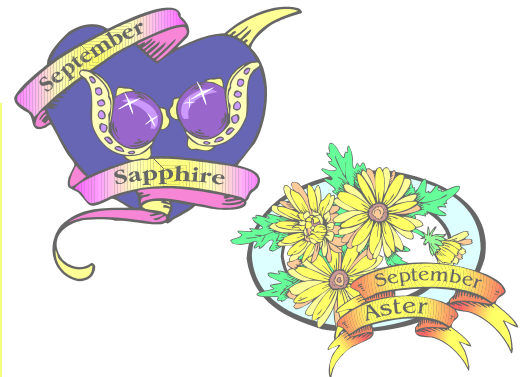


What is Labour Day?



"The Labour Day holiday in Canada, as in the U.S., celebrates worker solidarity. Most workers, public or private, are entitled to take statutory holidays off with regular pay. Some businesses remain open on holidays, such as medical clinics and some stores, restaurants, and tourist attractions."

SOURCE: http://gocanada.about.com/od/canadatravelplanner/qt/labour_day.htm



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IN THE NEWS

Home wrecker

Shame and scarce resources hinder the battle to repel Toronto's bedbug invasion

By Noor Javed, The Toronto Star, GTI, August 7, 2010

Kamla Ross had chosen the apartment downtown for all the right reasons: It was clean, in a safe neighbourhood near the subway. She loved it, until the night she saw an apple seed-sized bug crawling on her bed. Unsure if it was a bedbug, she went to sleep, setting herself up to be human bait.

It bit. She recalls waking in the middle of the night to confirm her worst nightmare: A red itchy bump forming on her arm.

"I had to move out of my place because I became obsessed that I was seeing bugs all the time," said Ross, who spent more than a year dealing with the infestation and eventually escaped by leaving the apartment and furniture worth thousands of dollars behind. "And for three months after that, I couldn't sleep in fear that I might have taken them with me."

Across the city, thousands like Ross are realizing the scourge of bedbugs is not limited to social housing, crowded shelters or low-income dwellings. Bedbugs are quickly becoming everyone's problem. Pest control companies say they receive four to five calls a week from mortified residents in swanky neighbourhoods, owners of upscale condos and helpless apartment tenants. And in recent months, William Osler Health Centre in Etobicoke, the Toronto Public Library and retail stores have joined the list of those battling infestations - which suggests that, despite the best efforts of public health officials, pest control companies and the afflicted, the city is on its way to a full-scale bedbug crisis.

"We're just seeing the tip of the iceberg," said Rima Zavys, of WoodGreen Community Services, who also served as co-chair of the Toronto Bed Bug Project Steering Committee. "It's not close to going away. In fact it is going to get a lot worse before it's going to get better."

The biggest problem isn't just the bugs, but the anxiety, paranoia and "social paralysis" they often leave behind - isolation from family, disgusted co-workers and friends, few places to go for support and difficulty resuming a normal life.

"All I wanted was a hotline to call in the middle of the night when I was freaking out, someone who could understand what I was going through and tell me that it would be over soon," said Ross. "Now I am scared to take the TTC, to go anywhere with cloth chairs, to even go to the movies."

Last week, in an act of desperation, officials in New York City declared war on bedbugs. In 2009, the city received 33,772 bedbug-related inquiries, up from 21,922 in 2008 - a jump of 54 per cent. But growing evidence of the pests in every corner of society - in retail store change rooms, fancy hotels, libraries and even as plot lines in New York-based sitcoms - pushed city officials to announce a \$500,000 initiative that includes a special task force, improved tracking tools, protocols for proper disposal of infested items, and requiring landlords to provide information on infested units to tenants.

In Toronto, infestation numbers are also rising. In 2003, Toronto Public Health had only 46 reports. In 2008, when TPH set up a self-reporting bedbug hotline, it got 1,324 calls. The city has taken 1,076 calls so far this year and expects hundreds more.

David McKeown, the city's chief medical officer of health, admits a better tracking system is needed. Most calls come from vulnerable tenants in social housing. Hotels, condos and apartments rarely call.

"Many institutions don't want to be stigmatized," said McKeown. "So if a hotel gets bedbugs, they may not call Toronto Public Health and will likely try to find a way to deal with it quietly," he said. "It's almost certainly under-reported."

It's impossible to know the full scope of the problem.

But most experts agree that without more resources and coordination among governments, Toronto could become another New York.

It's been eight months since he saw the first bedbug under his sheet, but Jim still vacuums his bachelor condo every night before going to bed. He sleeps in multiple layers of clothing. And only in the past week has he mustered the courage to lie in bed to read at night.

(Article continued)

He had never once thought about bedbugs until he found himself with a small infestation in his waterfront condo at Christmas. He called in a pest-control company, moved to a hotel for a week, bagged all his clothes and belongings and sent them for dry cleaning. The bill came to a few thousand dollars. The emotional toll continues.

"You can't sleep, you are exhausted, and you can't tell your friends about it. There is this huge issue of shame and embarrassment," said Jim, who didn't want his real name used. "I stopped visiting friends, because I didn't want anyone else to get it."

Even with a supportive family, the isolation began almost immediately. His sister-in-law asked him not to attend his niece's birthday party. His parents let him move in while his place was being fumigated, but his father lined the car with plastic, and Jim went through a daily ritual of changing clothes in the garage, bagging the clothes he'd worn, running into the shower, and wearing new clothes his parents had bought him.

"It was insane," he said. "But my family didn't want the bugs, either. You are driven by paranoia. Mentally, it really screws you up."

It is even worse for those without money or support, says Toronto Public Health.

"For those who have the means, it can be a distressing and unpleasant experience," said McKeown. "But for someone who is very vulnerable, has a mental health problem, a disability, or a chronic health problem, it can become a very serious health issue."

The city has three staff members who help to investigate and support vulnerable people who have severe infestations, he said. This year, they have helped more than 100 individuals. The city also approved a one-time allocation of \$75,000 last April to help low-income individuals to buy furniture and supplies once an infestation has cleared. And in addition to educational material available online, the city will soon be publishing a resource guide for landlords and property managers so they know how to identify and deal with infestations.

"People should feel that they can call," said McKeown. "There is no need for anyone to feel they need to struggle on their own."

But as a homeowner, that's exactly how Jim felt. When he reported the issue to condo management, they "basically said it was my problem," he said. Toronto Public Health offered him some advice but said unless the infestation was very bad he'd have to deal with it alone.

"I had to foot the bill," said Jim. "Although, ideally, I think the condo management should have taken responsibility and had the units beside me sprayed, and those above and below me sprayed."

He also decided against telling his neighbours about it. "The problem is that you don't want to get the word out, because you are worried about your property value dropping. So you are in a bind."

That's the catch-22 landlords also find themselves in when they find a unit or units are infested, said Vince Brescia, president of the Federation of Rental-Housing Providers of Ontario. Landlords and building managers in the province have a legal obligation to maintain their properties to allow for "reasonable enjoyment of the premises," and tenants have to prepare for the pest control treatment if they are able to. In the event of bad management, cases can be taken to the Landlord and Tenant Board, which can issue orders and enforce compliance.

Many landlords are just as traumatized when they hear of an infestation as the tenants, said Brescia. Beyond the high cost of extermination, they fear the building will become stigmatized, he said.

But as bedbugs gain ground across the city, a growing number of tenants say they should be told if the pests have moved in before them.

Dion Angelini found out just in time. He had signed a lease on an apartment in the east end and paid first and last month's rent. As he began to move in on July 1, he ran into a neighbour who told him the unit was full of bedbugs, as was hers.

"She showed me her place, and all the squashed bugs and all her furniture wrapped in plastic," he said. She had been there only a few weeks and was planning to move out soon. When Angelini called the property manager, he was told the unit had been treated numerous times.

"I never even thought about bedbugs. To be honest, I always thought it was a lower-income problem," he said. "Landlords should be obliged to tell you. It's not right to send someone to rent a place when they know very well that it's unlivable." He has yet to receive his last month's rent.

(Article continued)

In June, Mike Colle, MP for Eglinton-Lawrence, introduced a private member's bill, the Renter's Right to Know Act, which would require landlords to let prospective tenants know if there are, or may have been, bedbug problems in their buildings in the past five years. While many believe legislation would force landlords to take swift and effective action against bedbugs, others don't think it's really the solution.

"This might be useful from a consumer-protection point of view," McKeown said, "but not in terms of fighting bedbugs."

New York's plan avoids legislation, but calls for improved cooperation between building owners and tenants, including quicker response to bedbug complaints, implementing innovative solutions such as the use of heat-treatment chambers, and requiring landlords to give tenants bedbug information upon lease signing and renewal.

Some, like bedbug expert Michael Potter, of the University of Kentucky, say the New York plan is a step forward. But he scoffs at the \$500,000 set aside for it.

"It has cost some buildings half a million dollars just to treat the infestations in their building," he said.

Without more money, Toronto is also on the losing end of the battle. Part of the challenge has been to get other levels of government on board, said McKeown.

"We have been talking to the province about how they can support our work, because ... it's a problem in other cities, too," he said. The city has yet to hear back.

"Bedbugs are really not a part of the public health program that the province pays for us to implement," said McKeown. "We need more resources to address this issue effectively."

Currently, the public health unit uses money allocated for other services to tackle bedbugs. "We are just making do with what we have got," he said. Which is why, he admits, the city really can't do much more.

That's little comfort for those coping with infestations.

"I don't understand why the government isn't taking this more seriously," said Ross. "It's probably because the politicians haven't experienced it yet.

"It's one of those that you really don't get until you get it."

These are bedbugs - if you see even one in your unit call the office immediately:



Having an infestation of any kind is a serious issue and should be dealt with as soon as possible.

At Wigwamen Incorporated, we have protocols for dealing with bug infestations of all kinds and encourage tenants to contact the office AS SOON AS POSSIBLE if you suspect any type of infestation in your unit.



Wigwamen's 10th Annual Tenant Picnic

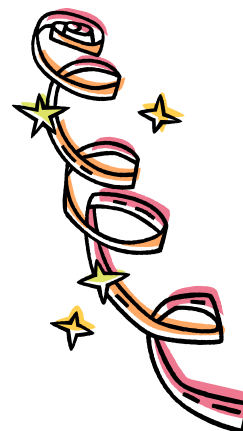
This year, Wigwamen Incorporated will be hosting it's 10th Annual Tenant Picnic. Over the past decade, we have hosted thousands of tenants and their families to a fun filled day of food, cake, activities and of course...BINGO!

This year the picnic will be on:

Saturday, September 18, 2010

Place: Christie Pits Park

Time: 11:00 am to 3:30 pm

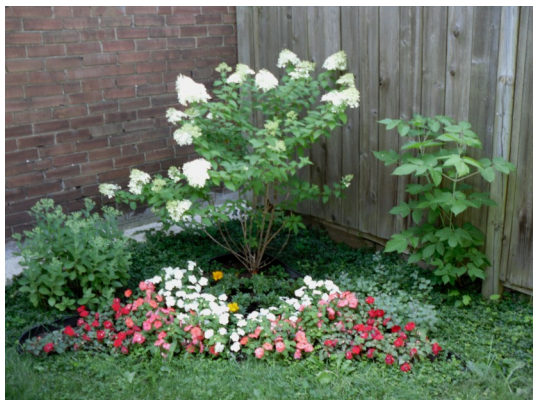


Remember to come early to enjoy all there is to offer and dress for the weather (September weather is unpredictable!)





Flower Power 2010

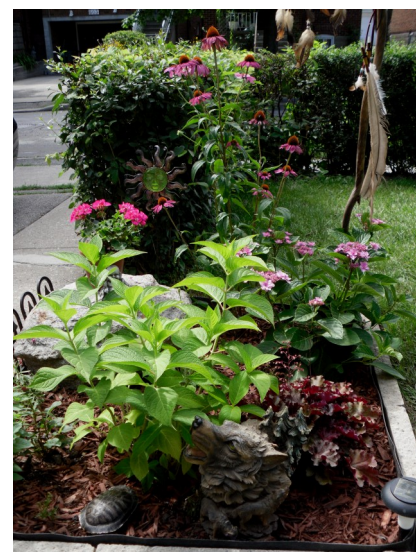


WINNERS:

1st Place: Nelly Borkowski

2nd Place: Marlene Henry & David Wiszniowski

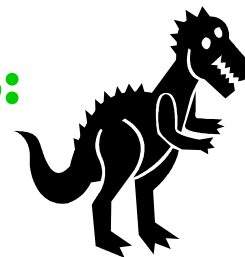
3rd Place: April Dostert & Veronica Rice





ATTENTION WIGWAMEN TENANTS:

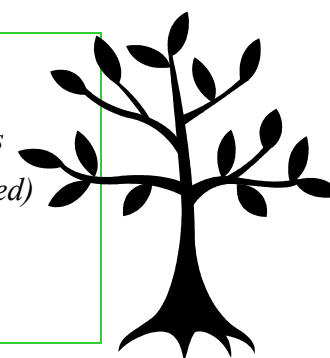
It's time to move out of the Stone Age!



In order to do our part for the planet and also progress into the modern ages, we would like to start sending out the *Wigwam to Wigwam* newsletter by e-mail.

Quick Facts:

- *Each month, Wigwamen sends out approximately 500 newsletters*
- *Each newsletter consists of 4 pieces of paper (printed double-sided)*
- *So...Wigwamen uses approximately 2000 pieces of paper to distribute the newsletter each month!*



So the question is...do you want to be part of this big change?!?

Tenants who are interested in receiving the *Wigwam to Wigwam* newsletter by e-mail can send their request (by e-mail) to dpowell@wigwamen.com.

AND...if you sign up to receive the *Wigwam to Wigwam* newsletter by e-mail, you will be [entered into a contest to receive \\$50.00!!!](#)

BUT DON'T DELAY...the contest deadline is [Thursday, September 30th](#).

Important notes regarding e-mail collection and use:

Your e-mail address will **ONLY** be used by Wigwamen to send you the *Wigwam to Wigwam* newsletter.

Your e-mail address will be kept private and at no time will your e-mail address be seen by any other person or party.

Calling all young artists...

Each month we would like to include a piece of artwork or writing (including poems, short stories, etc.) in our newsletter to highlight talent amongst our youngest tenants!

If you are between the ages 5 and 13 and would like to contribute your work to our monthly newsletter please contact Danielle Powell at (416) 481-4451.

PLEASE NOTE: Submissions must be no bigger than 5 1/4" x 4 1/4" (approximately half a piece of paper) and should include your name, address and age on the back of your work.

We look forward to seeing all of your wonderful submissions!



Check back each month to see if your artwork or writing is printed in the newsletter!



YOUR "HOUSE TO HOUSE" NEWS

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