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Jacquie Miller

Totally-allergic woman faces eviction into "unclean" world

A Smiths Falls woman who says she's allergic to the world outside her home is being evicted, and says she plans to take her belongings and live on the street. The Bank of Montreal has given Jean Metcalfe, 51, until Friday to leave her house because she hasn't made a mortgage payment in eight months. Metcalfe claims to be severely allergic to most things in modern life: chemicals, synthetic materials, exhaust fumes, cigarette smoke, perfume, even fumes from cooking. The rambling six-bedroom house where she lives alone is stripped nearly bare, with all the synthetic carpet, drapes, and furniture removed. She says she's been unable to find another home she's not allergic to, and is convinced she'll become seriously ill if she's forced to leave. "I'll just have to live on the street" she said Monday after getting word from the bank to expect a bailiff at her door Friday. Metcalfe, who has two grown children in Smiths Falls and two in Alberta, says she can't live with family or friends because she'd be exposed to things like synthetic carpet, cigarette smoke and fumes from oil and gas heaters. "All my friends have gas or oil heating. I've been to all their homes but I had to leave before I got ill. I have a tent but I can't even live there because I'm allergic to the canvas. I'm just trusting in God to find me a home.

She says she needs a home with electric heat and no carpeting. Traditional allergists dismiss the idea of "total allergy syndrome" as medically unproven. But some unorthodox doctors say the massive chemical build-up in modern life can trigger a breakdown in the body's immune system for some people like Metcalfe. Metcalfe belongs to the Human Ecology Foundation, a self-help group for people who believe many illnesses are caused by things in the environment. Ottawa Dr. Libuse Gilka, a family physician, specializing in preventative medicine, said it would be a tragedy if Metcalfe is forced from her home. It was Gilka who advised Metcalfe to avoid going out into the polluted environment and to eat a strictly limited diet. Last year, Metcalfe quit her job boarding women from the Rideau Regional Institute. Her \$436 monthly welfare cheque is too small to pay mortgage and heat payments that top \$600 a month.

Paul Howard, the lawyer representing the Bank of Montreal, says the bank has no choice but to repossess Metcalfe's house: "We've been trying to stall but she's been unable to come up with any alternative financing. This lady is many months in arrears and there's only so far the bank can go. Who's the innocent party here? The bank lent some money and the lady isn't paying it back." Metcalfe says she's been looking for another house to rent for a year and a half, and has put ads in several newspapers, with no luck.

house is one day less that I'll have to sleep in the park." Mr. Howard
says the public is the loser in this case. "Other people have to pay
higher rates because of actions like this."