



ASK MARIA

By Maria Bartolotti

A SENIOR MOMENT

How the new provincial law regarding age affects senior condo owners

Q: Dear Maria: I am a senior and I've heard about the new Alberta Human Rights Amendment Act. How will this affect senior condo owners?

A: The Alberta Human Rights Amendment Act, 2017, is designed to strengthen human rights protection and further protect Albertans from age discrimination.

If passed, the bill would amend the Alberta Human Rights Act to add "age" as a prohibited ground of discrimination under sections 4 and 5 of the act. These sections include the areas of tenancy, goods, services and accommodation or facilities. **Kathleen Ganley, Minister of Justice and Solicitor General:**

The bill also includes provisions, which allow seniors-only housing to continue without violating the act. The minimum age cut-off would be 55. The Government of Alberta recognizes that older Albertans may choose to live together in a community of people at a similar stage in life.

Existing age-restricted condominiums would be granted a 15-year transition period to provide affected Albertans with substantial notice.

"The belief that individuals should have a choice in their housing and lifestyle decisions is strongly supported by the condominium owners we consulted with in Alberta. At the same time, we recognize the national trend that restrictions by age can affect communities where there is a critical

shortage of housing. As a result, we feel that the 15-year transition period is a reasonable and common sense solution to allow existing condominium owners to make consumer decisions."

Hugh Willis, co-chair, Government Advocacy Committee, Canadian Condominium Institute, North Alberta Chapter:

"The largest increase in demographics is older adults in Alberta. With this proposed legislation change, older adults can be assured of fairness in the areas of tenancy, goods, services and accommodations or facilities. Typically, older adults are not able to increase their financial resources to have a wider range of housing options available to them plus enjoy a life that is usually quieter. The fairness of government proposing 15 years as a transition period is appreciated."

Luanne Whitmarsh, president, Alberta Association of Senior Centres:

The proposed amendments would ensure that programs providing a benefit to minors and seniors, such as discounted movie tickets, are allowed to continue.

The bill would also protect ameliorative programs such as employment or internship programs for Indigenous youth. Prior to the introduction of this legislation, Alberta was the only jurisdiction in Canada



whose human rights legislation did not provide an exception for ameliorative programs or activities.

The Government of Alberta conducted consultations on this subject over the summer.

"The Alberta Human Rights Commission's mandate is to foster equality and reduce discrimination. The proposed amendments extend protections in all areas under the Alberta Human Rights Act and aim to further protect and promote the human rights of Albertans."

Susan Coombes, acting director, Education and Engagement, Alberta Human Rights Commission:

If passed, the bill would come into effect on January 1, 2018.

Until next time... **CL**

Editor's note: Maria Bartolotti is a board member of the Canadian Condominium Institute - Southern Alberta chapter (CCI-SA). CCI represents all participants in the condominium community.

Maria Bartolotti ACCI, FCCI is the owner-manager of New Concept Management Inc. She has developed a strong reputation for rendering timely and efficient services to the condominium industry. Maria believes that her company's success hinges on her hands-on approach to condominium management as well as maintaining open lines of communications with her clientele. Maria is actively involved in her industry. For more information, visit www.newconceptmanagement.com