

## COLLIER PLACE INC.

Collier Place is a 156 unit social housing residence located in Barrie, Ontario. It offers an independent lifestyle for senior citizens and those at least 50 years of age who are involuntarily retired from the workforce. Collier Place has an agreement with the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and as a result manages its own waiting list.

Over the years the organization had received consistent complaints from tenants who did not smoke but were experiencing second-hand smoke in their units. The Board of Directors was also aware of similar complaints about the unpleasant odour of stale smoke in some of the hallways.

Based on the complaints, concern for the health of all tenants in the building and damage to the property, at its September 9, 2008 meeting the Board of Directors voted to give its encouragement and support in implementing a no-smoking policy.

Two weeks later the Board's decision was announced at a tenant meeting, and a letter was delivered to each resident of Collier Place informing them that effective November 11, 2008, smoking would be prohibited everywhere on the property inside and out. The letter explained that existing tenants who smoked would be "grandfathered," or exempted from the policy. Tenants also received a survey at the same time so that the Board could gauge the level of support for the announced measures.

In total, 164 surveys were sent out to ensure that every resident in the building had an opportunity to provide input. One hundred and twenty-six surveys were completed, representing a 77% response rate. The survey demonstrated that:

- 89% of respondents supported the no-smoking policy, including 6% of tenants who identified themselves as smokers; and
- 10.5% were not in support.

Following the survey results, all tenants and people on the waiting list were informed that Collier Place's no-smoking policy had come into effect. To ensure that all potential tenants were aware of the new policy, staff included the following text on the first page of the application form:

*Smoke-Free: Collier Place is now in transition from a building in which smoking is allowed in leased units to one where there is no smoking. Although smoking in the*

*unit being newly leased will be prohibited, existing tenancies are grandfathered, pursuant to the effect of the Residential Tenancies Act 2006, and that smoke could move from a grandfathered smoking unit and the landlord assumes no responsibility should this happen.*

Thanks to the overwhelming support from tenants, including a lot of face-to-face verbal encouragement directed to staff members, the transition towards becoming a smoke-free building was made a little easier. Nonetheless, the staff and Board did experience some challenges, including complaints from residents who did not smoke but wanted their guests to feel welcome to smoke inside their apartments and on their balconies. Some staff also received threats of being taken to court from visitors who claimed that the policy was against the law and the *Residential Tenancies Act*.

Based on their experience in adopting and implementing a no-smoking policy, the Board and staff of Collier Place have some advice for other housing providers:

1. Be your own best advocate and believe that smoke-free is the way forward;
2. Gain support from staff members who smoke to uphold the policy, especially the superintendents who live on site;
3. Know the law and your rights as a landlord; and
4. Enlist help from other sources including the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association (June 2009 document entitled "Info On... Smoke-Free Multi-Residential Apartment Buildings") and the Non-Smokers' Rights Association (legal opinion) plus other relevant information.

One year on, Collier Place still has a waiting list full of people who would like to call the building home, and some prospective tenants have even indicated to staff that they are on the list precisely because of the no-smoking policy.

Congratulations to the Board and staff at Collier Place for helping to increase housing choices for Ontarians who want or need to live smoke-free.