

NORTHWESTERN PROPERTY MANAGEMENT LIMITED

Northwestern Property Management Limited is a property management company based in Thunder Bay, Ontario. People from all walks of life, including families with children and senior citizens live in condominiums, market rate apartments and non-profit, rent-g geared-to-income housing managed by this company.

At the 2008 Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association's annual trade show, the company's general manager stopped by an information booth promoting no-smoking policies for landlords and property managers which was hosted by the Smoking and Health Action Foundation/Non-Smokers' Rights Association.

Implementing a no-smoking policy as described by the Smoking and Health Action Foundation/Non-Smokers' Rights Association seemed the next step towards seeking a solution to second-hand smoke issues that the Board and Management have spent time and money dealing with. The added benefits of reduced maintenance costs, potential fire insurance savings and a healthy, smoke-free environment made this approach even more appealing.

One year later, two of the non-profit buildings and two of the condominium corporations they manage have developed no-smoking policies approved by their respective Boards of Directors.

The first building to develop a no-smoking policy was a small condominium of 24 units. Only one unit was owned by someone who smoked, and the by-law was passed without any challenges. Another condominium building is in the process of developing its own by-law with 66% of the residents in full support.

All of the no-smoking policies in these buildings grandfather existing smokers who have registered their names with the property manager. Future leases for all new owners and tenants will state that smoking is prohibited in all indoor spaces at all times. Patios and balconies, while initially included, were made exempt from these restrictions because of concerns about accommodating visitors. Outdoor grounds are not covered under these policies; however, residents who live in Thunder Bay must comply with the no-smoking city by-law that bans smoking within 3 metres of the entranceway to any workplace or public place.

Developing the policies for the non-profits and the condos followed virtually the same steps, with open communication with the residents at all times being a critical component. Surveys were conducted to gather input from residents, and the findings and draft policies were discussed at annual general meetings and tenants' meetings. All tenants and residents were sent a copy of the policy prior to final voting to ensure that they were aware of it and had the opportunity to raise any concerns.



The process to pass each policy was tailored to the unique circumstances under which each building operates, whether governed by a volunteer board of directors in the condominium or by rules and regulations established by a non-profit board.

The general manager believes that as time passes and units turn over, residents will get used to the smoke-free environment, and support will grow for no-smoking policies that extend to other buildings and cover outdoor areas as well as indoor spaces.

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