

# real estate

## **Condo-Ology®: A former front line condo manager's perspective**

*Ontario gives the green light to introduce mandatory licensing for managers.*

A recent announcement from the Ontario government indicated that mandatory qualifications for condominium managers are being considered as part of the Province of Ontario Condominium Act Review. Consumer Services Minister Tracy MacCharles had the following comment with respect to these qualifications:

*"There is an overwhelming consensus that condominium managers be qualified to carry out their significant responsibilities. One in 10 people in Ontario live in a condominium and their quality of life depends to a great degree on qualified, well-trained condominium managers."*

The majority of professions have mandatory qualifications and regulatory oversight. The fact that the condominium management profession is just now considering mandatory qualifications is unnerving, to say the least. Condominium managers have significant responsibilities, inclusive of overseeing and managing large operating budgets, that impact the lives and livelihoods of many Ontarians. To say, "it is about time" would be a substantial understatement.

This announcement is not a surprise to those following the Condominium Act Review, the licensing of condominium managers have had and will continue to have unanimous support from all stakeholders. There are several parties that deserve recognition for advancing this and other condominium issues including consumer advocate condominium owners groups, MPP Rosario Marchese and many determined individuals.

The determination to legislate mandatory qualifications for condominium managers is only the first step. The more important issue from this point forward is what these requirements will entail.

In November 2012, the Association of Condominium Managers of Ontario (ACMO) along with the Canadian Condominium Institute CCI (Toronto Chapter) through their Joint Government Relations Committee made a presentation to the Minister of Consumer Services which

proposed that requirements to achieve a license to manage condominiums should include twenty hours of education. Once licensed, the licensee would have five years to earn a Registered Condominium Manager (RCM) designation that requires one hundred sixty hours of instruction and two years experience. A select group of management companies teach the RCM educational requirement internally, as opposed to using an independent third party provider.

It is important to note that ACMO has now changed the original license proposal from twenty hours to forty hours, which is now the equivalent educational requirement to obtain a security guard license.

As an active participant in the condominium industry and a former condominium manager, I feel personally and professionally embarrassed that the proposed mandatory licensing requirement is so low. This is not reflective of a profession that looks to be taken seriously.

Additionally, I believe that the current practice of allowing a select group of management companies to self-administer the RCM courses is unacceptable and that an independent third-party provider should be sought. Ideally, the third-party provider would be a provincially approved/funded educational institution.

In comparison, in British Columbia their Licensed Condominium (Strata) Managers must satisfy a language proficiency requirement, complete approximately 250 hours of studying, provide a criminal background check and proof of individual insurance. Most importantly, the educational courses are only available through a third party provider - the University of British Columbia, Sauder School of Business (Real Estate Division).

While the specifics of the mandatory qualifications for licensing condominium managers in Ontario will continue to be an on-going discussion, this initial announcement is a significant step in the right direction. Throughout this Condominium Act Review, the condominium industry as a whole and those directly involved in the review should keep the overarching concern front and centre - the new Condominium Act must protect and enhance condominium ownership / lifestyle for all current and future condominium owners.

**FORE!**

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