THE VOICE OF THE FEDERATION OF RENTAL-HOUSING PROVIDERS OF ONTARIO

FE

FRPO'S FAIR EXCHANGE OF RENTAL INDUSTRY NEWS

MAY/JUNE 2018

SMART TECHNOLOGY

ONTARIO'S RENTAL SHORTAGE

THE NEW STANDARD LEASE

AUTOMATION VS. THE HUMAN TOUCH

TIPS FOR STRIKING THE RIGHT BALANCE

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FRPO'S **FAIR EXCHANGE** OF RENTAL INDUSTRY NEWS

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FRPO'S **FAIR EXCHANGE** OF RENTAL INDUSTRY NEWS

The voice of the Federation of Rental-housing Providers of Ontario

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A WALK DOWN MEMORY LANE

Technology continues to transform the way we live, work and interact with one another on a daily basis. This is not breaking news. Depending on your generation, however, technological advances have impacted our experiences differently. For example, a few years back, a friend of mine was in the drive-through and was placing her coffee order. As the employee read back the order and gave her the total, her young son yelled, "Thanks Siri!"

Younger generations have been brought up side-by-side with technology. They are comfortable with it and have very specific expectations about the world around them because of this. You may remember the video that went viral several years ago featuring a year-old baby attempting to use a magazine as an iPad, which further illustrates my point. Recently, I pulled out an old box of photographs and found myself unconsciously trying to expand and zoom in on the photos with my fingers.

I identify with the 'zennial' micro-generation, which describes those born in the late 70s or early 80s. This group is characterized by having had an analog childhood and a digital adulthood. Though I grew up as many of us did, in a time where phones had cords and TV repairmen had jobs, my dad (affectionately known as Rickster), always had a keen interest in new technology. I remember him bringing home a Beta machine when I was very young. He hooked it up and showed my brother and I how it could record our favourite television shows. He laughed when I told my brother to be very quiet because the machine was recording.

As soon as the Commodore 64 came out, he just had to have one. Some of you may remember the primitive code that was necessary to use these early computers. There were no icons to click on, no apps. Instead you used commands, such as: LOAD 'X', 8,1. Then, in 1991, the World Wide Web was introduced with little public fanfare. A couple of years later, Rickster came home and announced that our home would now have access to the internet. In those early days, you bought a certain number of hours and once you used them up, you'd have to wait for the next month to rollover. We had 40 hours per month and Rickster kept a notepad beside the computer so that we could keep track of our usage.

I remember him showing me the 'search engine' and how to use Netscape to look up anything I wanted. I sat in front of the computer and couldn't think of a single thing to search. Much has changed since then. The internet took hold and we've never looked back. It has increased productivity and response times. It has allowed us to connect in ways that we couldn't even imagine 20 or 30 years ago. It has had a profound effect on every aspect of our lives and continues to evolve on a daily basis with no signs of slowing down.

It's hard to stay ahead of the curve these days as things change so quickly. Early adopters of new technology are risk-takers but also reap huge benefits when they bet correctly. Some of the trends to watch for in 2018 that could impact our industry include; Artificial Intelligence (AI), Virtual Reality, the Internet of Things, drones and even robotics. Some hotels have recently started using robotic bellhops to supplement their bell staff.

This issue, as you've likely guessed, focuses on technology. We'll be covering automation, lead generation, vending machines and much more. Thank you for indulging me on my walk down the technology memory lane. Until next time.

LYNZI MICHAL
Editor, FE magazine
Director of Membership & Marketing, FRPO

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JUST THE FACTS

When it comes to the rental housing deficit, the numbers don't lie

DARYL CHONG
President & CEO
(Interim)
FRPO

This edition of FE will be in your hands just around Election Day. How the month leading up to voting day plays out is completely unpredictable. The barometer will change, maybe multiple times, as new key issues emerge. There will be winners and losers, and regardless of the outcome, we will continue to work with everyone to promote and support our industry.

Although actions don't show it, I think the general consensus is that we are in great need of new rental supply. The latest Urbanation report notes that due to tighter mortgage lending standards, $100,000 in income is now required to qualify for an average priced GTA-located condo. A year ago, $70,000 in income was required. This federally created barrier has increased the demand for rental housing by disqualifying many would-be home buyers. The problem is: other government 'initiatives', such as the expansion of rent control, do not encourage new development.

As the full effects of the above new schemes are still rippling through, our rentON campaign has highlighted the experience of a variety of Ontario renters in their search for their next home. Their challenges need to be addressed in a constructive manner, while incentives and regulatory fairness need to be implemented to encourage new, widespread construction.

Urbanation reports that roughly 8,000 rental units are currently under construction in the GTA. These will open over the next few years at an average rate of 2,500 units per year. Some will spin this as a doubling of new supply—and sadly, it is. But the rental demand sits at over 20,000 units per year, meaning a very large deficit still exists. The data is fact-based.

FRPO and our members will continue to share the facts after the election dust has settled. We only ask that the facts are used when developing policies.

I hope to see you at our annual golf tournament in July. Register early, as we always sell out. Until then, enjoy the warmer weather.

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UPCOMING INDUSTRY EVENTS

JUN 13

APARTMENTALIZE

Jun 13, 2018 8:00am to Jun 16, 2018 2:00pm

San Diego, California

The NAA Education Conference & Exposition has been renamed Apartmentalize! It's the same Conference that you've come to expect from NAA, but with a new name. Join us to Apartmentalize in sunny San Diego, which means taking your career, your company and the experience your residents receive to the next level. Achieve greater success in all three areas by joining us in San Diego to attend the apartment housing industry's premiere event.

JUL 23

FRPO CHARITY GOLF CLASSIC

Jul 23, 2018 11:00am to Jul 23, 2018 8:00pm

Rattlesnake Point Golf Club, Milton

The FRPO Charity Golf Classic will be held on Monday, July 23rd at Rattlesnake Point Golf Club in support of Interval House. This event will sell out quickly, please register ASAP to avoid disappointment. Registration is available on the FRPO website www.frpo.org

NOV 28

THE BUILDINGS SHOW 2018

Nov 28, 2018 8:00am to Nov 30, 2018 4:00pm

Metro Toronto Convention Centre

The Buildings Show is the leader in sourcing, networking and education for the North American design, architecture, construction and real estate communities. The Show is home to Construct Canada, HomeBuilder & Renovator Expo, IIDEXCanada, PM Expo and World of Concrete Pavilion, and together they create the largest North American exposition for the entire industry. The Toronto Real Estate Forum also happens concurrently. More than 30,500 trade professionals attend the Show annually to discover new innovations across the building industry and source the latest materials, products, tools and technologies from more than 1,600 Canadian and international exhibitors. Through the Show's comprehensive seminar program, attendees can choose from 350+ seminars, panels, keynotes and roundtables led by a roster of 500+ industry experts in addition to tours, awards, parties and association meetings. Topics include: best practices, leadership, building codes and regulations, sustainability, new approaches to construction, technology and design trends in housing, healthcare, education, retail, workplaces, accessibility, hospitality and wellness.

The Buildings Show takes place at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre from November 28 – 30, 2018.

NOV 29

2018 MAC AWARDS GALA

Nov 29, 2018, 5:00pm to 9:00pm

Metro Toronto Convention Centre

The MAC Awards Gala is the most important annual event for our members and is well attended by rental housing providers ranging from hands-on managers to third party management and holding companies. This event allows us to recognize excellence in the residential rental housing industry and to advance the high standards that the Federation of Rental-housing Providers of Ontario aims to promote. This year's gala will be held on Thursday, November 29th at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre in conjunction with PM Expo and the Building Show. Registration will open for this event in October 2018. Thank you and see you there!

Please check the FRPO website (www.frpo.org) regularly for newly added events.

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Fédération Canadienne Des Associations De Propriétaires Immobiliers

ADDRESSING THE NEW CHANGES

CCPC tax reform impact on passive income

BY JOHN DICKIE, PRESIDENT, CANADIAN FEDERATION OF APARTMENT ASSOCIATIONS

Since CFAA last reported on the planned federal corporate tax reforms, the government has changed its approach to passive income.

Until late February 2018, the government said it would move forward with measures to increase taxes on the income from passive investments purchased after the Fall of 2017 using income on which the small or active business tax rate had been paid. (In October, the government promised grandfathering for existing passive investments, such as rental real estate.)

However, in Budget 2018, the government changed to a new approach, in which it will exempt the first $50,000 of passive income each year, but for passive income above $50,000, it will grind down the small business deduction by $5 for each $1 of passive income, so that the deduction disappears once the corporation has $150,000 of passive income. (See the examples in Table 1, columns 1 and 2.)

Instead of grandfathering past passive investments, as promised in October, the government is now going to use income from currently held investments as a reason not to allow new active business income to receive the preferred small business tax rate. The threshold of $50,000 of passive income, and the grind down, will apply to passive income received from investments, regardless of when those investments were or are made.

The tax reforms being discussed here do NOT affect people who hold rental property in their own name or with their spouse (or another family member). The tax reforms also do NOT affect REITs, REIT unit owners, public corporations, or shareholders in public corporations.

CFAA is continuing to work with the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and other members of the Coalition for Small Business Tax Fairness to encourage the government to withdraw the changes, or moderate them.

In particular, CFAA and the Coalition are asking the government to raise the threshold to $100,000 and to reduce the grind down rate from $5 per $1 of investment income to $2.50 per $1 of investment income. That would produce the impact shown in column 3 of Table 1.

CFAA and the Coalition are also asking the provincial governments not to follow the federal lead on passive income. The provinces have a free choice on whether to follow the federal lead or not. So far, the current Ontario Liberal government has said that it will follow the federal lead. If there is a new Ontario government after June 7, then perhaps that decision can be revisited.

INCOME SPLITTING

Budget 2018 also maintained the position that the income splitting restrictions are to be effective starting on January 1, 2018, except that individuals and corporations are to have until December 2018 to meet the 10 per cent ownership test. It still seems likely that income from property owned through trusts will be affected by the changes, although that is not yet completely clear.

The CFAA position on income splitting is that all spouses should be exempt from the reasonableness test for income splitting since the family law regimes of

TABLE 1: SAMPLE IMPACTS OF THE LATEST PASSIVE INCOME PLAN

Investment earnings	Limit of corporate income eligible for the small business tax rate	
	Per Budget 2018	As sought by CFAA
(1)	(2)	(3)
0 – $50,000	$500,000	$500,000
$75,000	$375,000	$500,000
$100,000	$250,000	$500,000
$125,000	$125,000	$437,500
$150,000	$0	$375,000
$200,000	$0	$250,000
$250,000	$0	$125,000
$300,000+	$0	$0

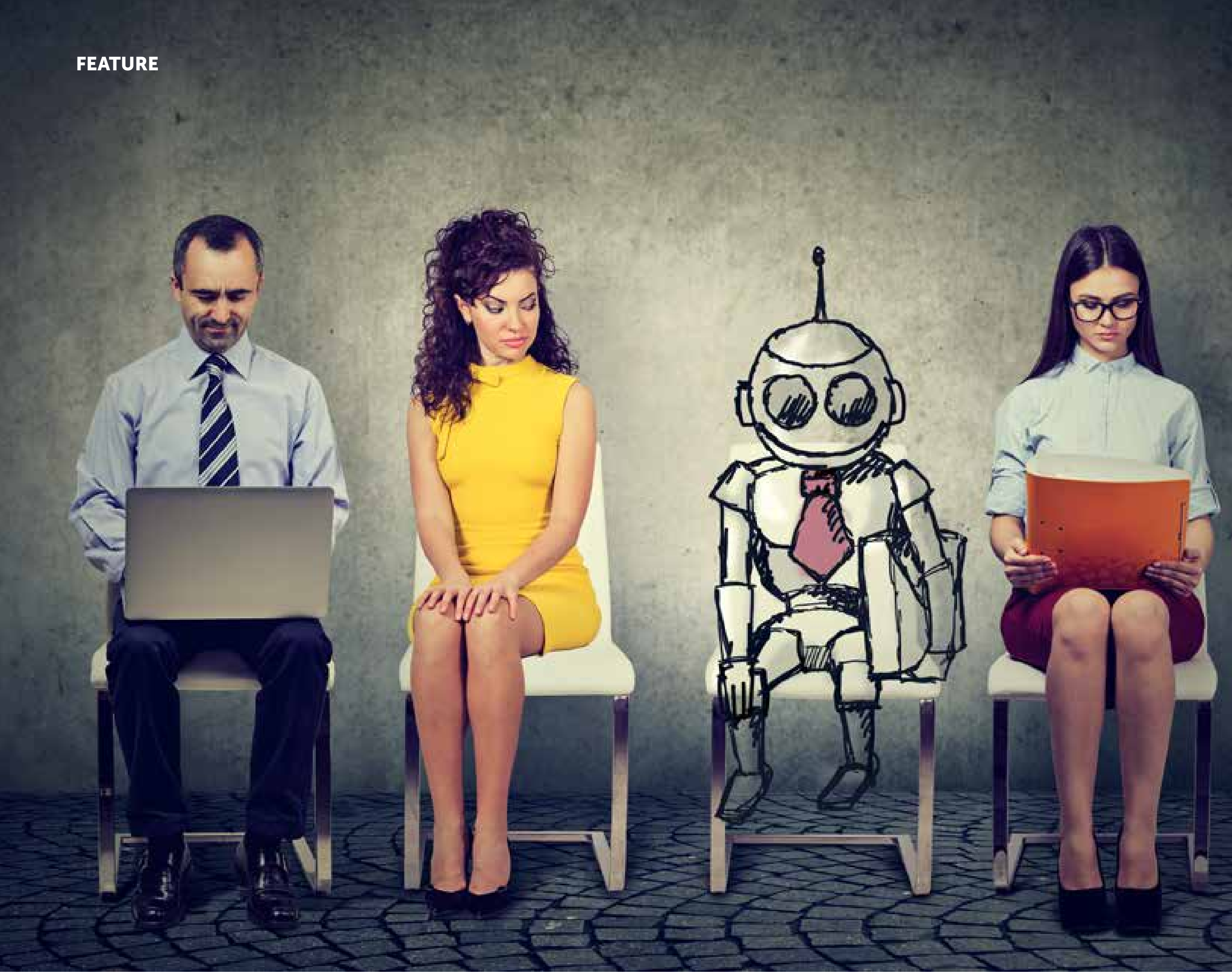
Ontario and most other provinces give spouses a 50 per cent stake in property and business growth on separation.

CFAA'S REACTION AND ACTION

While we would have preferred the government to scrap its changes to the taxation of CCPCs entirely, the government's changes in October reduced the impact of the reforms. However, the changes announced in Budget 2018 have increased the number of corporations and people who will be affected. In particular, the government is impacting more people by reneging on its October promise to grandfather existing passive investments.

CFAA invites input from landlords who will be affected if the proposed changes are enacted. Member associations and landlords are invited to check CFAA's website for CFAA's submissions and the latest information, and are invited to email president@cfaa-fcapi.org with their issues and concerns. Please also send us any letter or submission you sent or send to the government on the tax issue.

To receive more articles on national or federal issues, sign-up to receive CFAA's e-newsletter by emailing, communication@cfaa-fcapi.org.



FINDING THE BALANCE BETWEEN AUTOMATION AND THE HUMAN TOUCH

Too much technology is a turn-off

BY TIM BLACKWELL

Automation certainly has its place in business and multifamily today. Busy workplaces and lifestyles require a little digital help when real, breathing humans can't get to the phone to answer predictable questions.

But not everything should be reduced to a digital series of commands or questions before narrowing down to an answer, place or resolution—at least according to the latest Pew Center for Research study, "Automation in Everyday Life."

The study asked respondents their thoughts on driverless vehicles, a future where robots and computers replaced most tasks of human workers, the possibility of robot caregivers for older adults and a computer that can hire job candidates with no human involvement.

The scenarios presented struck a nerve with many, and the results show we are generally more edgy than enthusiastic about the future of automation (in some cases almost three to one).

However, perhaps the most compassionate category – caregiving to the elderly – is one that respondents said they would appreciate some automated assistance. Forty-four percent are enthusiastic about the possibilities, which include complicated medication administration.

The majority (72 percent) are worried that they will be replaced in the workforce by computers or robots, and most are hesitant to use the latest gadgets, and are concerned about making important decisions without a human involved on the other end.

For instance, says Pew, roughly 70 percent who would not want to ride in a driverless vehicle fear about their safety. Also, respondents say that no matter how you program a computer or robot, the hiring process just won't be the same without human contact and decision-making.

TRUST AND INTANGIBLES DRIVING ACCEPTANCE OF COMPUTERS, ROBOTS

For those worried that too much technology isn't a good thing, it ultimately comes down to trust in technological decision-making and "an appreciation for the unique capabilities and expertise of humans." The latter is what sports commentators call an intangible—that certain something that a team or player has that makes a difference.

In other words, a pitcher may not have a Nolan Ryan-like fastball but has a knack or instinct for getting outs in critical situations late in the game. That could explain why the player isn't very effective over several innings but is the league's top closer when entering in the bottom of the ninth with runners on base.

A computer or robot may be programmed to throw a blazing fastball or drop-bottom curve but that doesn't ensure a positive outcome when the game and money is on the line and 60,000 people are screaming at the top of their lungs.

Translated to multifamily, the intangible is the apartment manager who may not process an application lickity-split but just has that way that makes people want to sign a lease. Humans like that sort of thing. It's a feel-good proposition, a way to relate and bond.

The perfect solution here would be for the resident to fill out the nefarious paperwork online and the leasing agent closes the deal with a personal touch. Many multifamily properties employ just that one-two punch through online leasing and follow-up.

NAVIGATING WITH A CO-PILOT, NOT A ROBOT

Automation technology should only empower our processes to make lives better, at least that's what Americans are saying in the Pew survey.

Many want to use technology but have a safety net that prevents them from being swallowed by algorithms. Those surveyed favoured a driverless car that would be equipped with a human driver who could immediately take control in an emergency. A co-pilot, and not a robot.

THE FUTURE TEST IS FINDING RIGHT BALANCE BETWEEN AUTOMATION AND HUMANS

Most believe that automation technologies will impact their futures. They envision a day when a medical diagnosis is made by a computer, or buying appliances from a kiosk. It's inevitable that drones will be making parcel deliveries (we're getting closer than you may think). In each scenario, human involvement will be limited.

The survey, however, can be interpreted as a warning shot to the advances of programming in business. It could suggest that too much automation is a turnoff to someone when deciding to choose a place to live.

Granted, we're busy and many people want automation to help navigate the day. Deep down, people need people rather than to always feel they are going it alone in the daily minutia.

Finding the balance between automation and humankind is going to be the true test for technology in the future.

A CONVENIENT PERK

Apartment's automated vending machine generates $2,500 in weekly revenue

BY TIM BLACKWELL

Occupancy at the Ladera Palms apartments in Fort Worth, Texas, is up, and the proof may be in the pudding – literally.

Since Post Investment Group, Inc. installed an automated vending machine, or robotic convenience store, last year that dispenses everything from food items to household goods, occupancy has improved 5 percent at the 800-unit property on the city's southeastern side. Asset Manager Leslie Kuhlman isn't sure if the automated store, the first installed by Ohio-based Shop24 Global at a U.S. apartment community, is the reason that occupancy reached as high as 98 percent, but she's convinced that offering residents a convenient shopping experience without leaving the property is a benefit.

"We would like to say its Shop24," Kuhlman said of the installation, which will mark one year in February. "Starting in September of 2011, we were seeing 90-92% occupancy. Since summertime, we've maintained an average of 95%."

Post Investment Group, which has more than 12,000 apartment units in six states, has been so pleased with the vending machine's performance that two more have been ordered for other Texas properties, one at Broadway Square in Houston and the other at Residents at North Dallas. And Post isn't the only company to capitalize on corner store vending machines – a Silicon Valley startup called Bodega is putting vending machines in apartments, offices, sorority houses, and selling items tailored to fit demographic data.

AUTOMATED VENDING MACHINE: THE APARTMENT PROPERTY AMENITY WITH $1 MILLION REVENUE POTENTIAL

The store is generating about $2,500 a week in revenue, which Post Investment Group officials anticipate will increase when an application to accept Texas' Lone Star Supplemental Nutrition

Assistance Program (SNAP) cards gets approved by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Ladera Palms has been trying since the automated vending machine was installed to get approval to accept the government assistance cards.

For now, residents at the Class C-plus property are buying enough with cash or credit cards to make the machine's $125,000 investment worthwhile, and Kuhlman believes Ladera Palms eventually could mirror sales that recently hit $1 million at a New York university.

"We see it happening once we get approved for SNAP," she said. "We expect to triple the sales."

TOP RESIDENT BUYS: FOOD STAPLES AND HOUSEHOLD PRODUCTS

Ladera Palms will be in good position to handle the bump in revenue after shifting stocking responsibility to Shop24 Global, which initially agreed to allow the property to manage inventory once the machine was installed.

Milk, bottled water, beans and rice move the quickest, sometimes lasting only a couple of days in inventory. Household items like Clorox, furniture polish, paper towels, Windex and Pine Sol, plus toothbrushes and toothpaste, have moved well, too.

Takis, a spicy snack that sold quickly after the machine was first installed, is still a popular item. And of course, it sells pudding.

Kuhlman said Ladera Palms' staff attempted to manage inventory after the machine was first installed and quickly realized the task required more time. Average stocking, slowed by preparing some products so they would fit within the carriage and not get caught in the machine's mechanism when dispensing, was about three hours per day for three or four days per week. Ladera Palms soon restructured its agreement with Shop24 to manage the inventory.

"It was such a task," Kuhlman said. "We tried it for a few months. That's not what our staff is there for. They are there to keep our asset running."

AUTOMATED VENDING MACHINES SHOW POTENTIAL AT ALL APARTMENT PROPERTY TYPES

Adding a robotic convenience store, which Kuhlman calls an automated vending machine on steroids, is just one of several new amenities planned in a $7 million makeover at the Residences of North Dallas, which Post Investment Group purchased last year.

While the closest convenience store is just around the corner, the property is being redesigned to be more inclusive. Along with installations of a theatre and state-of-the-art fitness center, the Shop24 store will be another reason to keep residents on the property, which targets middle-class residents.

Because the clientele will be much different than that at Ladera Palms, Kuhlman believes the inventory will be altered but the service will be just as important. About six months prior to installation, residents will be surveyed on preferred items. It's unlikely that caviar will find its way into inventory, but Kuhlman says you never know.

"We're happy with (the machine). If we weren't happy with it, and even though it's not making the money we'd like for it to make it at Ladera, we're still moving on at other sites. We know what it can do."

Would you consider adding a vending machine or one of these robotic convenient stores on one of your properties? It's hard to argue with an amenity with such revenue generating potential.

HOW TO ATTRACT BETTER TENANTS

Tips to avoid marketing complacency

BY MAX STEINMAN

Management companies based in low vacancy cities, like Toronto and Vancouver, rarely have to worry about their apartment units being vacant (aside from regular turnover). If this is your situation, you might be asking yourself: should I still be spending money on marketing efforts when I'm already riding the gravy train of constant low vacancy?

The answer is yes. Marketing should never be ignored, and while marketing complacency may not lead to immediate vacancy, it definitely will affect your bottom line over time.

1. ATTRACTING BETTER TENANTS CAN SAVE YOU MONEY

When hiring a new employee, an employer might look at several, if not dozens of resumes, and interview a variety of candidates. When it comes to prospective tenants, the same should be true. Just like hiring, tenant prospecting starts with generating interest. In 2018, this is done through online marketing. The more effective online marketing a company does, the more rental leads they will ultimately generate, giving a larger pool of prospects to select from. This means more choice and a better quality tenant pool.

2. MARKET MORE FOR REVENUE MAXIMIZATION

Are you considering raising your rent $100.00 per month on a certain property or unit type, but not sure if you will still be able to attract renters? With three or four times the number of rental prospects, that wouldn't be a concern. Perhaps your current marketing efforts are doing enough to keep your properties full, but are not doing anything to help push your rental rates up. Sometimes it can actually be a red flag if you are getting too much interest with very little marketing on a specific availability. It could be that you are under-valuing your apartments and undercutting your bottom line. Raising your rates and your marketing spend to increase exposure will add long-term value to your property.

3. INCREASE PROPERTY VALUES

The combination of finding better tenants to spur cost reductions and marketing more to optimize rents, leads to greater profit margins. At the end of the day, rental income real estate is largely valued on cap rates and profit. Through marketing, there is actually an opportunity to increase the true value of your real estate.

HOW TO IMPROVE AND GENERATE MORE LEADS

In a low vacancy market, it's not always about increasing your marketing budget. Sometimes additional money can be the answer, but often it is more about looking at your existing marketing spends and optimizing them. Here are a few strategies to consider:

- Calculate your cost per lead on each of your marketing services to determine your most efficient sources and least efficient sources

- Be willing to sign up for trials to test new sources of marketing. Most listing sites offer 30 day trials to new clients. RentSync.ca is one of the platforms that has partnered with several Canadian ILSs to provide 30 day trials on multiple listing sites. Data syndication services like RentSync make it easy to trial many sites at once without having to invest administration time in creating ads

- Continue to monitor and track your advertising on a monthly basis. Marketing sources trend in effectiveness, and we have seen drastic shifts within the last two years on the top performing ILSs in Canada. Each ILS has markets where they are stronger or weaker. It's important to stay on top of the trends

- Improve your own rental website and on-site property signage. Using your own website and your own physical real estate, presents a great opportunity to generate inexpensive and highly qualified rental leads. If you don't have a rental website, or you have a sub-par or non-mobile friendly one, you are definitely missing out on this cost-effective rental marketing source available to you.

In the end, marketing complacency may be serving you okay at the moment, but it will hurt you in the long run. Remember: "Success breeds complacency. Complacency breeds failure. Only the paranoid can survive."

- Robert Grove (Former CEO of Intel)

Max Steinman is Director of Sales with Landlord Web Solutions (LWS). LWS is the #1 builder of top-quality, rental housing websites in Canada and manages advertising syndication for many of the country's largest property management firms. LWS is also host to one of the largest rental housing conferences (WEBCON) in North America, with a focus on forward-thinking marketing, and also celebrates the top marketing initiatives of the rental industry at their annual Rental Marketing Awards (RMAs).

THE INTERNET OF THINGS

IS MORE THAN JUST NEST-DEEP IN MULTIFAMILY

BY TIM BLACKWELL

Talk to a facilities manager and property manager about the Internet of Things and you'll probably get two very different perspectives.

A property manager may have visions of IoT toys—those smart devices designed to make life a little easier—while the facilities manager might focus on system management. A bigger difference is that the property manager may get a little overwhelmed thinking about how to leverage devices as leasing amenities because of all the unknowns and costs. Measuring a return on investment might be a little cloudy.

That's a common fear in multifamily today. Video doorbells, thermostats, lighting controls and other apartment bling aren't cheap. Linking them so they can be effectively managed between resident and property manager is another concern.

Their worth and the IoT, however, is more than nest-deep. Attracting residents is one selling point, but the behind-the-scenes IoT is another that's just as big.

That's a conversation that RealPage Senior Vice President Jason Lindwall recently had with a client over lunch. When a twinkle transformed into doubt over the return on the smart devices, the discussion took a different turn.

"The way you really need to look at it is from an asset management perspective, not just an amenity perspective," said Lindwall, who has more than 24 years of experience building and developing technology centres. "When you look at it from an asset management perspective, there are some significant savings that you can create."

He points to a model of building management systems that commercial real estate properties have used for years. Systems have allowed identification of mechanical issues, better utility management and water leak detection that aren't always visible.

The benefit is driving down management costs, as well as extending the life of mechanical systems through proper preventative maintenance, Lindwall says. And multifamily can enjoy the same through the IoT.

Lindwall was among panelists who talked about what the IoT can do for multifamily in April at the Texas Apartment Association's Education Conference & Expo in San Antonio. He says leveraging connectivity gives properties a one-two punch of resident amenities and better ability to control costs in several areas.

MANAGING VACANT UNITS BY CONTROLLING HVAC SYSTEMS AND LIGHTS

One of the biggest benefits is reducing vacant unit costs. Through connected thermostats and lights, managers can monitor energy costs when units are being remodeled or on the market.

"When you have connected thermostats and lights, you can manage these in a central dashboard which allows the ability to reduce the costs of these utilities and minimize runtime of those appliances," Lindwall said. "They're an easy addition to any unit and the ROI is easy to calculate."

As a side note, management also can understand the resident profile through usage data that the connected devices provide. And, renters can program devices and be alerted or check in on them to keep their energy costs lower. For example, the resident can see that the HVAC system is running unnecessarily while away and make an adjustment, which lowers consumption and ultimately reduces wear and tear on the system.

IDENTIFYING POTENTIAL ISSUES WITH AIRFLOW THAT CAN COST BIG

Monitors can check airflow in a resident's unit or in common areas. Using data collected by these devices, the property can determine how long it takes to cool or heat an area.

"This can be very helpful in identifying issues with HVAC systems," Lindwall said. "If the airflow of a system reduces we can first identify when the last time the air filter was changed. Using an airflow monitor tells the asset manager when to change the filter, making sure proper airflow within the systems are not inhibited by the filter. This can reduce freezing of HVAC systems prolonging the life of the system."

The data also can identify possible condenser issues, which can potentially minimize hefty repair expenses.

LEAK DETECTION DEVICES CAN ELIMINATE SIGNIFICANT DAMAGE

IOT-based leak detection devices along with an automated water shutoff valve can reduce the trickle-down effect of plumbing leaks caused by a faulty water heater. Several devices on the market support multifamily applications, Lindwall said.

He added that preventing a leak that damages several units on more than one floor could be significant in terms of repair costs.

ELECTRONIC DOOR LOCKS REDUCE ACCESSIBILITY ISSUES

One of the most common smart devices, door locks are not only a nice amenity for residents but offer convenience for the maintenance and office staffs. Maintenance technicians can access units through their mobile devices and notify residents that they are in the unit.

"They no longer have to go back and forth for keys," Lindwall said. "This allows much more efficiency of work orders."

CONNECTIVITY TO WEATHER DATA CONSERVES ON OUTDOOR WATER USE

IoT-based sprinkler systems effectively manage water usage through evapotranspiration controlusing weather patterns and data received from weather information sites. Sensors monitor precipitation and support the amount and how much a system runs, avoiding the unwanted situation where the sprinklers are running and it's pouring rain. Or they come on, as scheduled, when the ground is already wet.

"We are seeing these systems now move into the commercial and multifamily space creating much needed conservation in this area," Lindwall said.

RTA SEMINARS RECAP

A record 650 industry professionals attended this year's events

Throughout the month of April and early May, FRPO held its ever-popular Residential Tenancies Act Seminars. These events took place in Toronto, Ottawa, Hamilton with an additional seminar held in Scarborough this year. Given the recent legislative changes impacting the rental housing industry, we recorded our largest attendance yet of almost 650 industry professional. This type of turnout demonstrates our members dedication to continuing education and best of class professional management.

This year's presentations included topics, such as: the new standardized lease, cannabis legalization, collecting damages on consent orders, AGI and capex changes, and much more. Examples of recent Landlord Tenant Board orders and Divisional Court decisions were also presented. Landlord Tenant Board staff were on hand at each seminar to provide attendees with procedural changes, updates and information on upcoming pilot projects.

This annual seminar series serves as a refresher to rental housing professionals with a different focus each year. Attendees include: on-site staff, property managers, leasing professionals and owners. Feedback on these seminars has been overwhelmingly positive. We would like to thank Horlick Levitt Dilella LLP, Cohen Highley LLP, Dickie & Lyman LLP and Aird & Berlis for providing our speakers and presentations this year.

PUTTING A FACE TO THE PROBLEM

Ontario would-be renters speak out through #rentON

BY LYNZI MICHAL, DIRECTOR OF MEMBERSHIP & MARKETING

"My boyfriend and I are graduating in a few months and are looking for a new place to move in together. With 30+ other people looking at the same places, the odds are really stacked against us."

– Elise

It's a story that's all too familiar for many Ontarians searching for an affordable place to call home. With housing prices up and rental vacancy rates down across the province, the challenge of finding an apartment that's affordable, in the right location, and available is increasingly tough.

That's why during Phase 2 of our ongoing Rent ON campaign, we launched an online contest asking Ontarians to share their personal stories about finding rental housing in the current market, in just 150 words or less. The responses we received showed that the struggle is indeed real. Of the nearly 100 entries submitted, we heard a range of experiences, but one common theme: frustration from would-be renters in Ontario looking for a suitable rental in our province's largest cities. Renters are searching high and low, resorting to lengthy commutes or using short-term rentals as stopgaps.

Here are some of the other notable entries we received:

"I had to provide little prepared rental packages that included all of my references, credit score, and rental history just so I would be competitive at crowded viewings."

– Madeline

"I will be retiring soon and cannot afford the high prices for 1 bedroom... $1,500 minimum. [It's] ridiculous as you can only get a basement apartment for that price. Something must be done."

– Therese

"I've been looking for an apartment for over a year. Have been to many places, and even for a closet-sized apartment the rent is steep and the competition is fierce."

– Abigail

"Finding a rental within budget is a real struggle. It seems like any decent living space is priced so high. Even with two incomes it's not possible to find any reasonable prices."

– Becca

"[We are] looking to move to Niagara Falls for affordable housing. My husband will have to commute from Niagara to Vaughan every day for work. Very frustrating experience!"

– Sanika

"I looked for months and months for a place in Etobicoke, and every place I found had no vacancies. I ended up having to hop from Airbnb to Airbnb for a month before I moved into my current apartment."

– Korinna

By bringing this important issue to life though firsthand accounts from those experiencing the struggle, these stories underscore the extreme importance of industry and government working together to find fair and balanced solutions to Ontario's housing crisis. After all, a healthy rental housing supply is essential for a healthy quality of life in any thriving jurisdiction, but market research suggests the trend of scarce supply will continue for the next decade without serious interventions.

As this issue goes to print, the Ontario election will have concluded. We look forward to working with the Premier and Ministers of the newly elected government, whatever their political stripes, to ensure this topic is a top priority on the provincial agenda. We invite FRPO members to join the Rent ON movement and help us get the word out as we refresh and reintroduce our message on the need for more affordable rental housing to our political leaders over the next several months. As our contest entries show, it's not just our word – it's the word of Ontario renters.

To learn more, visit www.rent-on.ca or join the conversation on social media using the hashtag #rentON.

RENTAL CONSTRUCTION IN THE GTA

Nearly 8,000 units in development... and it's still too low

BY SHAUN HILDEBRAND, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT OF URBANATION INC.

Urbanation's latest rental report for Q1-2018 revealed that the number of purpose-built rentals under construction in the Greater Toronto Area totaled 25 projects and 7,937 units. This was up from 5,832 units under construction a year ago and represented the highest level of activity for the sector in three decades. In fact, the last time rental construction in the GTA reached 6,000 units was back in 1992. Despite this growth, the report also validated that even greater levels of rental development are needed.

With average condominium apartment rents transacted through MLS rising 11% year-over-year in the first quarter to $2,206 across the GTA, and the number of condos listed for rent falling by 12% annually, there is a very clear demand-supply imbalance impacting the market. This finding was even more obvious within the new stock of purpose-built projects. Urbanation's survey of buildings constructed since 2005 revealed a vacancy rate of 0.4% and annual rent growth for units that became available at 16%, reaching an average of $2.93 psf. And this excludes the seven rental buildings completed over the past 12 months that averaged rents of $3.36 psf, surpassing $4.00 psf within projects that started to occupy in Q1-18.

Indeed, 198 condo leases signed in the first quarter were in buildings averaging over $4.00 psf, with an additional 406 leases in buildings averaging between $3.75 and $3.99 psf. To put these numbers into context, a year ago only 16 condo leases signed in Q1-17 were in buildings averaging rents above $3.75 psf. To adjust to the new reality of substantially higher rents, some renters have begun to shift into lower-priced product. In the first quarter, there was an increased share of condo lease activity occurring within studio units under 500 sf, which rent for an average of $1,640 — 26% below the overall market average. Also, there was a strong increase in rental activity in the 905 region of the GTA, where the volume of lease activity grew 17% annually (compared to a 12% overall decline reported for the GTA) and where rents averaged $1,914 — $500 a month less than the average in downtown Toronto.

A key factor impacting the rental market in early 2018 and driving up costs is ownership affordability, caused by tighter mortgage lending standards, high prices and somewhat higher interest rates. Urbanation calculated that the income required to qualify for the average priced condo in the GTA reached $100,000, which compared to $77,000 required to qualify a year ago. The higher barrier to homeownership directed more demand into the rental market and also impacted rental supply through lower tenant turnover (also encouraged by new rent controls). On top of this, the condo rental market (the biggest source of new supply) saw the lowest level of new project closings in Q1-18 than in any quarter over the past eight years. As rental investors represent half of all new condos, the slowdown in deliveries made a tight supply situation even tighter.

So, while 8,000 rentals under construction may sound like it could help improve market conditions in the GTA, it won't. New purpose-built rental supply coming into the market will average roughly 2,500 units per year for the next few years, against rental demand running at over 20,000 units per year. The condo market will fill most that gap, but not all of it, leaving a supply shortfall that will continue to put downward pressure on vacancy rates and upward pressure on rents.

Furthermore, roughly two-thirds of rentals under construction are located in the central core of Toronto, leaving marginal amounts of new development on the horizon in more affordable markets of the GTA. Some early signs of improvement on that front have been noted recently by the number of planned purpose-built rentals in the 905 region more than doubling over the past 12 months. But until this translates into substantially higher numbers for purpose-built construction, the best we can do is keep congratulating the market for beating dismally low data points of the past.

PROCEED WITH CAUTION

Ontario's Standard Form Lease will challenge small landlords

BY JOE HOFFER, COHEN HIGHLEY LLP

Effective April 30, 2018, landlords who enter into new tenancy agreements are required to use the Standard Form Lease (SFL) developed by the Province of Ontario. The requirement to use the SFL does not apply to leases signed prior to April 30, 2018 even if the possession date and commencement of the lease term are well after April 30. All leases that were signed and in effect prior to April 30 are "grandfathered" even if they are informal "verbal" agreements or monthly tenancies, and any renewals or amendments of those grandfathered agreements do not require use of the SFL.

While a failure to use the SFL does not have serious consequences for landlords with large portfolios, for small landlords, the financial consequences can be severe, particularly if the landlord is unaware of the tenants' rights, which flow from the landlord's omission. If the SFL was not used when required, then after moving in, the tenant may make a written demand for the SFL signed by the landlord and upon receipt of same, the tenant can refuse to sign and give a 60 day notice to vacate, regardless of how long the lease term of the non-compliant lease was. In a robust rental market, this consequence may not matter, but in a soft rental market, the unit that the landlord thought was rented for the next year, may be vacated on short notice and the landlord will potentially incur both vacancy and turnover costs—both of which are avoided if the SFL is used from the outset.

Another potential consequence of failing to use the required SFL is that a tenant may withhold up to a maximum of one month's rent if the landlord fails to produce a signed copy within 21 days of the tenant's written demand for same. Only the rent "that comes due" after the 21 day waiting period can be withheld, but tenants are not necessarily familiar with the nuances of the specific provisions of the RTA and may use the landlord's failure to use the SFL as justification for non-payment of rent, which for small landlords can result in serious financial consequences, particularly if the landlord has to go to the Landlord and Tenant Board (LTB) to recover the withheld rent.

Problems for small landlords are not completely resolved if the SFL is used, because it must also be used properly. The SFL must be in the "prescribed form." That is, the government version of the form must be used and there can be no amendments to it, nor can documents like "rules and regulations" be inserted anywhere other than at the end of the government document (which itself is 13 pages in length). While landlords can, and should, add "additional terms" such as those available from FRPO's standard leasing documents, there is also a requirement to provide the incoming tenant with the Province's two-page "Information for Tenants" form, plus to ensure all third party contracts, such as agreements with utility providers, are also given to tenants.

In summary, the incoming tenant who receives proper leasing documents will usually be given in excess of 30 pages of material, and the landlord who gives that material must administer, record, and manage all of that material too. For small landlords, the sheer volume of paperwork can seem unmanageable; however, the electronic version of the FRPO forms will cut down on storage and paper demands and will allow for transmission of documents to tenants via email, including electronic signing and storage of documents.

Small landlords should exercise caution in the following areas when completing the SFL:

- While the names of more than one landlord can be entered, it is best if only the name of the landlord who is to receive notices under the RTA and maintenance requests, etc. is the name used in the form, and when address information is provided, it should be for that same landlord;
- Only tenant names should be entered on the SFL, not the names of "occupants" other than tenants (although names of occupants can be added in the additional "terms" per s. 15 of the SFL);
- The SFL invites the landlord and tenant to "agree" that any communications may be by email; however, the RTA does not allow notices, even 24 hours of entry notices, to be given by email, so there is no advantage and significant potential for harm if the landlord agrees to email communications with the tenant;
- In the "services" section, landlords should not include "visitors parking" as a service included in the rent (it is a service for visitors, at best) and should be aware that any additional items listed in that section will be evidence that can be used against the landlord if the service changes in future. In other words, the less said about additional "services", the better;
- While there are clauses that refer to assignments/sublets and "maintenance and repairs," there are no details as to how requests for assignments or maintenance are to be made and a failure to qualify those terms can have devastating financial consequences for small landlords, but are easily cured by having a proper set of additional terms and conditions.

In summary, while small landlords are required to use the SFL, they should ensure they use it wisely to avoid the financial and legal pitfalls that can occur by default if the SFL is filled out without proper attention to details. Most landlord associations offer programs to keep landlords informed about best practices and legal risks relative to their leasing operations and small landlords are best advised to educate themselves about the SFL through education programs offered by such associations.

Cohen Highley is the premiere legal resource for residential landlords and property managers on all matters relative to multi-residential rental housing law, including leasing, acquisitions, financing. We provide full litigation and consulting services Landlord and Tenant Board proceedings, Above Guideline Rent Increase applications, Fire and Building Code legal services, Superior and Divisional Court proceedings. Our lawyers also have specialized expertise in advising landlords in navigating through housing issues tied to Human Rights applications and Accessibility and Housing issues.

WELL-RUN, WELL-MANAGED... AND NOW, WELL-MAINTAINED

Increasing value to FRPO CRB members with new State of Condition Standards & Reporting

BY TED WHITEHEAD, DIRECTOR OF CERTIFICATION, FRPO

As the ancient Greek philosopher Plato once characterized: "Necessity is the Mother of all Inventions," and as such, this saying has never been truer for FRPO's Certified Rental Building program (CRBP). A growing number of municipal licensing schemes continue to threaten industry members across the province. In order to meet and respond to the increasing regulatory demands of the marketplace, FRPO's CRBP is undergoing a significant transformation.

When the CRB program was initially conceived, it focused on the inputs, processes, and procedures that a property manager needed to embrace in order to run good buildings. CRB-approved properties stood for "well-run" and "well-managed", with the program focusing on quality of product and quality of service. However, over the past several years, as the marketplace has evolved and as tenant advocate groups have gained greater presence with political stakeholders, some municipalities and their property standards staffs have censured CRBP, identifying that it does not fully and adequately cover off a review of many of the physical attributes of an apartment building.

It's not that the physical attributes of a building were totally ignored in the CRBP standards and audit process, as any blatantly oblivious physical shortcomings would have been noted and addressed prior to all buildings receiving approved "certification" status. However, these physical building attributes were not a major focus of the CRBP's standards.

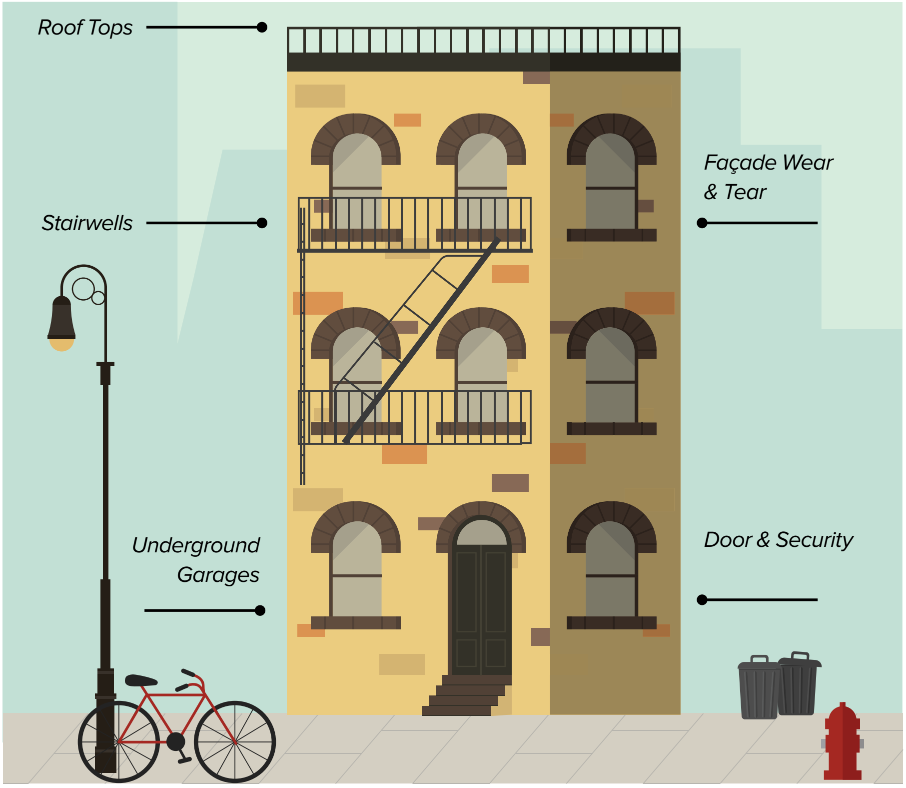
When the City of Toronto passed its new Apartment Bylaw #354, it did positively recognize FRPO's CRBP, however, it was also noted that the CRBP would need to ensure it demonstrated a complete "apples to apples" approach with City property standards and bylaws if it is to garner possible added recognition status in the City of Toronto.

NEW "STATE OF CONDITION" ASSESSMENT

Our analysis has shown that the City of Toronto has the most rigorous and extensive set of municipal property standard bylaws in the province of Ontario. Therefore, it made sense for us to dissect the City's property standards and related bylaws, and compare them to our standards and audit practices to determine if any gaps existed. After several months of examination and assessment, 28 CRBP standards of practice were amended, and four new standards were created. New standards establish requirements and address Outdoor Cleaning/Maintenance, Underground Garages, Roof Tops, and Doors and Security. A few of the amended standards address additional requirements for waste management, elevators, HVAC, and Pest Management, etc.

These changes do translate into several additional compliance requirements that a CRBP member must be able to demonstrate in order to gain/ensure their status as CRB-approved buildings. The good news is, our pilot testing has shown that most professional property management companies already have the vast majority policies/processes/procedures in place. As such, it should not be overly onerous to demonstrate compliance with these CRBP new State of Condition compliance requirements

STATE OF CONDITIONS



BENEFITS OF STATE OF CONDITION REPORTING TO PROPERTY MANAGERS

- A "State of Condition Assessment" allows for the pro-active identification of major defects that may be considered "Life and Health Safety" issues. This type of assessment can also facilitate the identification of other property standards deficiencies that may deter from the building and property being perceived as a good quality rental product.
- The "State of Condition Assessment" process, while not an engineering review/report, does provide property managers with an Independent third-party review of the condition of many physical elements of your property and buildings.
- The "State of Condition Assessment" process helps to reduce the risk of a property/building being subject to a full-blown audit, (and any associated fines or audit costs) by municipal property standards staff audits/inspections
- A "State of Condition Assessment" Report provides property managers with a tool to demonstrate to residents that their building is being regularly reviewed and that the property is being well maintained.
- Adding the State of Condition Assessment to the CRBP certification process allows CRB-members to market/advertise their properties as being well-run, well-managed, and now well-maintained.

RE-ENGINEERED CRBP AUDIT REGIME

It quickly became apparent that we couldn't just change the CRBP standards to reflect new State of Condition reporting. The CRBP's risk management/auditing regime would also need to be amended.

Working with outside industry consultants, and using the collective feedback of a number of CRBP members, a new building evaluation approach and audit reporting regime was developed.

A pilot project, using five CRBP members and 10 buildings was carried out to test the new audit approach and to evaluate these buildings against the new State of Condition standards/requirements. The results for each company's pilot buildings were reviewed with senior PM staff.

Overall feedback was very positive. Members saw increased value in having an independent third-party State of Condition assessment of their buildings, and the early identification of any quality of product deficiencies. Members saw the new audit-reporting format producing a valued-added document that clearly identified any potential life, health safety issues and/or any other areas for improvement that may negatively impact the overall condition of the property.

CHANGE IN CRBP AUDITORS

As many readers may already know, FRPO's CRBP has had a long association with J.D. Power as its outside third-party auditor. As the company has undergone a number of major business changes over the past few years, they have placed less focus on the Canadian multi-res sector. As a result, they have decided not to carry-on as the program's auditor. We enjoyed a strong business relationship with J.D. Power over the last 10 years and acknowledge their efforts and valued partner relationship.

I am pleased to advise FRPO members that two Canadian-based, local companies have stepped forward to take on the role as FRPO's CRBP auditors: PSN – Performance Solutions Network Corp. and Taeus Group Inc. These two companies are extremely familiar with Ontario's multi-res property management sector and FRPO's CRB program.

THE CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT FACTORS

FRPO's CRBP was founded on a business model that promotes continuous improvement and demonstrating our industry's ability to responsibly self-regulate. Equally the CRBP was designed to provide added value to our key stakeholder groups – property managers, residents, and outside political stakeholders. Over the past few years, the CRBP has introduced AODA/IASR employees training, new environmental operating standards and training (under the Living GREEN Together brand banner), new tenant "Move With Confidence" Packages, and now the new State of Condition standards and requirements.

For more information about FRPO's Certified Rental Building Program, please contact Ted Whitehead at twhitehead@frpo.org or call 416 385-1100 ext. #27.

THE FULL PICTURE

Five best photography practices for marketing properties in 2018

BY ASHLEY TLUCHAK

Spring 2018 has officially arrived. A new season brings the opportunity to turn over a new leaf. Are you thinking about ways to upgrade your marketing game?

Photos are a great place to start. Many renters are eyeing your website and social media platforms before they ever set foot on your property. They want a full picture of the space they could be legally binding themselves to. In addition to professional property website photos, real-time photos are more important than ever.

Before you hire a professional photographer or direct staff to take property photos, these five best practices should be kept in mind:

1. LIGHTING IS YOUR BEST FRIEND

Good lighting is the starting point. Before photos are taken, you should always make sure the space is well-lit. For interiors, open nearby blinds/windows and take advantage of natural light. Also, showcase LED light installments to highlight an energy-saving community.

2. COMPOSITION AND QUALITY IS EVERYTHING

Say goodbye to tilted, pixelated, blurry photos. Pay attention to the frame and quality of each photo. Is your staff still using a digital camera from 2008? It's time to invest in a new digital camera or professional DSLR. If it's not in the budget, some newer mobile camera models will fit the bill.

3. STAGING IS IMPORTANT

Clear the clutter, but don't leave too much bare space. Provide potential renters a realistic idea of how their space could look by incorporating furniture and props. Keep it simple.

4. HIGHLIGHT COMMUNITY DETAILS AND GAME-CHANGING AMENITIES

What makes your property unique? Does your community have smart home technology or first class amenities? Showcase the gourmet coffee bar, updated gym, business centre, fitness centre and details that make your property stand out from the rest.

5. CHOOSE WISELY WHEN EDITING

In case you end up with a tilted photo or bad lighting, you can enhance or adjust your photos with editing tools. For property photos, it's best to stick to the basics. Increasing the brightness and contrast are good places to start, but don't overdo it—renters will wonder if you're hiding something.

With all of the tasks that property managers are faced with, photos are usually the last thing to think of. However, they can be the difference that gets a renter to sign a lease.

2018 SPRING H.O.P.E. FOOD DRIVE

Thank you to everyone who participated and gave so generously. Together we can make a difference!

"Thank you for your support this Spring. The Spring Hope Food Drive was a great success! I am very happy to share the results with you for Kitchener & Waterloo: 4390 lbs and $57 for a total of 3,601 meals that will go out into our community! Please pass our appreciation on to everyone who participated and thank you again for all the work that you have done, and continue to do on our behalf."

– The Food Bank of Waterloo Region

"Thank you so much for all your hard work on this years' Tenant-Landlord Food Drive. The totals are in and you raised an amazing 20,320 lbs of food! Your donation will help put a hot meal on the table of a family in our community. We are deeply grateful for your generosity and support. Your contribution makes a difference, it enables us to reach our vision that no one goes hungry in Ottawa. We count on you and people like you to ensure that we can continue providing these services. Kindly pass along our thanks to all your landlords."

– Ottawa Food Bank

"On behalf of Partners In Mission Food Bank, I would like to thank you for the donation of 11,582 lbs of food and $135.00 collected during the Kingston Spring Hope Drive. 2017 was our busiest year to date, with a total of 12,488 hampers being distributed to low income families and individuals throughout Kingston. This reflects a 3.88% increase over 2016 and indications are that this trend for emergency food assistance will continue. Last month, we had a 6.95% increase compared to April last year. As part of a very giving community, the support we receive from individuals, churches, schools, organizations and businesses has allowed us to continue to serve those less fortunate."

– Partners In Mission Food Bank

KEEP IT SIMPLE

Managing smart home technology to win residents

BY TIM BLACKWELL

Around conference circuits, much time and energy is spent on discussing the merits and values of in-apartment technology upgrades. Nearly every agenda yields a session or two on automation through digital infrastructure. November's National Multihousing Council OpTech Education & Exposition was no exception.

As a panel of seasoned property management and technology veterans touted the value of adding high-tech door locks, thermostat, light controls and other creature comforts, they also offered some sage advice: Don't be outsmarted by smart home technology devices.

"This is an industry that's in a great deal of flux right now," said RealPage Vice President Henry Pye. "A lot of people are doing things just because it seems cool."

He and other panelists agreed that multifamily leaders need a measured approach and a lot of thought about how the components operate, whether they meet code compliance and fit in with resident expectations.

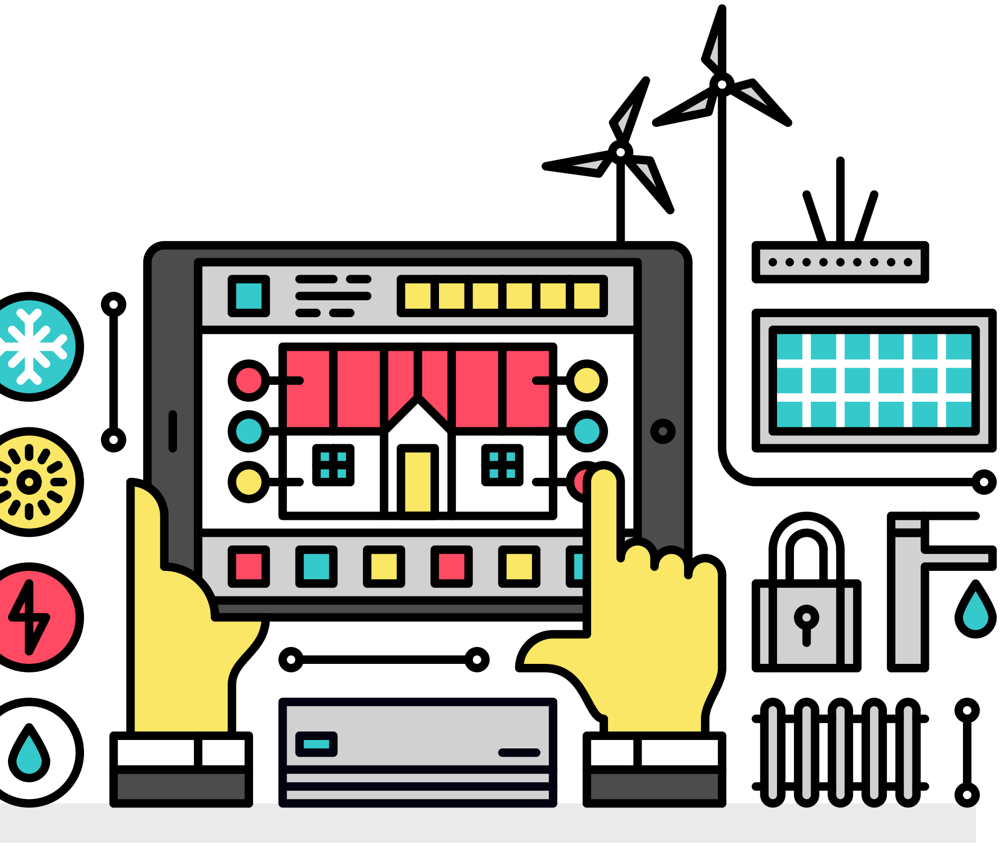
'SMART HOMES ARE ABOUT A LIVING EXPERIENCE, NOT GADGETS'

Pye was joined by Dwelo Chief Executive Officer Michael Rovito, UDR Director of Building Technology Josh Erosky and Wasatch Chief Operating Officer Jarom Johnson to discuss how to give residents a very cosmopolitan feel with networked digital devices.

Digitizing the rudimentary acts of turning on lights, entering apartments and adjusting temperature controls are a shiny marketing tactic for just about any community. Yet tossing an unorganized bundle of technology through the door can spoil what could be an otherwise distinctive experience for renters.

"Smart homes are about a living experience not necessarily the gadgets," Johnson said. "It brings something new to your apartment when it's interactive with you."

Rovito, whose company offers smart home platforms for the multifamily industry, said properties need to have a connected hub and unified interface that promotes thoughtful interaction with the network for community and resident devices accessible through mobile software.



TIMING AND A GOOD TECHNOLOGY PARTNER IS EVERYTHING

When properties install and market smart home technology, they should have seamless operation and the right people to help residents and onsite staff maneuver through the digital roadmap. Especially when using wireless communications protocols. like Z-Wave and Zigbee. that allow devices to talk to each other.

Johnson said the right provider enables the property to customize a positive experience for the resident.

Properties should focus on simplicity and speed of deployment so residents aren't disappointed. If it's not simple and isn't working within the first few days of the resident move-in, then the property isn't capitalizing on the potential.

"You've taken something that could have been a gain and now made it a detriment, which they will remember the rest of their lease," Pye said.

Erosky said it's important to help residents with the right network needed to support gadgets they bring into the apartment. Essential to that is focusing on a single app-control hub and a reliable network.

"If you don't have a good network on the backbone, your entire smart home integrations can fail."

Also, Johnson said, residents are not DYIers and want somebody on site to help set up their smart home technology.

SMART HOME TECHNOLOGY CAN REALLY MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Ultimately, smart home technology is an opportunity for multifamily housing to shine, whether it's something as simple as a door lock that opens with the touch of an iPhone or tablet or a fully integrated network of switches, shade controls and smart outlets.

If properly done, an otherwise pedestrian apartment can become a technology wonderland.

"The thing about smart technology is it's one of the amenities that can really make a difference," Johnson said. "If you can set it up where a resident moves in, you go into that apartment and set all that smart home technology up, get their internet up, so when they walk into that apartment, everything just works. People will love that."

SOCIAL MEDIA COLUMN
Sponsored by MediaEdge

Want to stand out on social media? Don't fake it

By Steven Chester

Let's face it, we all want our businesses to be social media rock stars, and we know it ain't easy.

It's becoming more prevalent that some of the most popular social media platforms have been infiltrated by those who game the system.

This includes those that buy fake followers and "likes" in order to create the illusion that their social media profile is more popular than it is. These fake followers are predominantly bots – accounts run by software designed to look and act like real people.

New services are also popping up that allow authentic social media accounts to become part of the bot game. By signing up for the service, the user authorizes their account to automatically like, follow and randomly comment on other users' posts, and in turn they trade that fake engagement with other users. Sound harmless enough? The thing is you have no say in in the message your account is spreading or where it ends up.

Ask yourself this: What's more important, having 50,000 cosmetic followers, or having 500 followers who are in your target market that actually want to hear from you?

As a consumer, it's even simpler, as deceptive tactics are easy to spot. If you're using underhanded methods to promote your business, this can be viewed as a reflection of your product or service. Your integrity is at stake.

This is one of the more complex topics that can't be fully covered in this space. As always, I invite you to stay social and continue the conversation on Twitter at @Chestergosocial where I'll share a link to the full article.

Steven Chester is the Digital Media Director of MediaEdge Communications. With 15 years' experience in cross-platform communications, Steven helps companies expand their reach through social media and other digital initiatives. To contact him directly, email gosocial@mediaedge.ca.

MARKETING AUTOMATION: THE FUTURE IS BRIGHT

Fostering better customer relationships using the newest property marketing technology

BY PETER ALTOBELLI, VICE PRESIDENT AND GENERAL MANAGER, YARDI CANADA LTD.

Property marketers can spend a fortune on signage, digital ads and priority placement on listing services, but if the right tools aren't in place to properly foster a relationship with the leads that come in, they will rarely result in leases. Are your leasing teams missing calls from the best prospects? How many email inquiries are getting buried in the leasing office inbox?

Today's property marketing technology enables you to effortlessly assist prospects and renters while measuring the ROI of your marketing sources and delivering a better resident experience. Online marketing platforms help you more effectively communicate value, availability and accessibility. Customer relationship management (CRM) and call automation systems access your contact, lead, lease, resident and property data and package it in an intuitive format to be used more effectively by your leasing teams. Modern tools make it possible to go mobile, automate repetitive tasks and deliver targeted marketing to convert more leads and retain more residents by giving your customers the service they expect.

MEETING MODERN RENTER EXPECTATIONS

The 2017 Informa Canada's Tenant Preference Survey – the only survey of its kind for the Canadian market – revealed what renters really want and how to keep them happy. Among the findings were these statistics:

- 66% visit property websites and read reviews
- 52% wish to communicate with property managers via email
- 31% use community website portals
- 47% of those that do not have a community portal would like one
- 47% prefer online debit rent payments

This means that now is the time to get serious about your online presence and services, if you haven't already. Renters expect to find everything they need online, from property details and reviews to communication and payment portals. But do you have the time and resources to manually update every listing, reply to every email and process every payment and application in real time? Of course not. This is why it's necessary to use technology to provide access to property information and services 24/7.

The upside of this focus on the immediacy of results is quick decision making. By giving renters everything they need to take the next step, they often will do so without any additional prodding from your sales team.

CREATING BETTER PROSPECT RELATIONSHIPS

Because prospects come from many different sources at many different stages of the renter lifecycle, CRM tools are essential in the property management industry. Modern CRM platforms don't just store your prospect contact information; they let you know how a potential renter found you and

how they engage with your brand so you can take (or even schedule) the next logical steps. Tools like call automation, automated follow-ups and lead tracking do the legwork for you so you can focus on what's important: building relationships.

For example, consider the experience of a busy renter who calls to inquire about a unit at lunch while all your agents are busy. Typically, they would leave a voicemail at your office and then call the next property on their list, often renting from whatever company responds the most quickly. Another customer lost, right? Not if you have call automation and automated follow-ups in place. In that case, the call could be automatically transferred to a designated backup on your staff or an expert call center agent, who could engage with the prospect. A guest card with the prospect's details would be entered in your CRM database, automatically prompting your team members to follow up, increasing the chance of conversion and decreasing your missed leasing opportunities.

TRACKING THE TOTAL CUSTOMER JOURNEY

CRM technology can help you track and measure the performance of your marketing sources, helping you adjust your marketing spend to optimize your overall strategy. If you can see where your leads that turn into leases are coming from, then it just makes sense to invest more advertising dollars there, while diverting marketing dollars away from underperforming sources.

However, we know that the majority of renters visit five or more websites before they even set foot inside your leasing office. In today's digital marketplace where customers shop around for everything, does it make sense to only give one source credit for the lease?

Modern CRM tools can give you the bigger picture, providing insight into the total customer journey from brand awareness to closed lease and beyond – even tracking your customers' interactions with you as residents to help you secure more renewals.

DELIVERING THE BEST RESIDENT EXPERIENCE

Ultimately, it all boils down to converting leads to leases and then delivering the best resident experience – so you end up with happy customers who renew their leases and recommend your properties to others.

Your business is your residents. Today's marketing automation technology will make it easier by empowering your staff to better serve residents. If you automate data entry by choosing a CRM system that integrates with your property management platform, you can eliminate redundancy, reduce opportunities for human error and free up time for your staff to interact with customers. Other tools like call automation and automated follow-ups will help you make sure that no contact opportunity is missed, so every applicant and resident gets the attention and response they need.

Using technology to build a stronger, more agile and more responsive property management brand: Now that's marketing genius.

Yardi® develops and supports investment and property management software for all asset classes and portfolio sizes. For more information on how Yardi is Energized for Tomorrow, visit yardi.com.

RCMP
ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

Cannabis Legalization in Ontario

Highlights for Landlords and Rental Services

IMPORTANT NOTE

This document is intended to raise awareness of the proposed legalization of cannabis. All information is subject to change; amendments may occur before legislation comes into force.

Renters, condo-dwellers and multi-family dwelling inhabitants may have additional restrictions. Check your local regulations for additional information.

In Ontario, it is proposed that an adult of at least **19 years of age** will be allowed to:

Purchase	fresh or dried cannabis, cannabis oil, and plants or seeds for cultivation from licensed retailers
Possess	up to **30 g** of legal dried cannabis in public, with no maximum for home possession
Distribute	up to **30 g** of legal dried cannabis to adults
Grow	up to **4 cannabis plants per residence**, regardless of how many people reside there
Make	cannabis products, such as food and drinks, provided organic solvents are not used

The Liquor Control Board of Ontario (LCBO) will oversee the **sale and distribution** of recreational cannabis in stores and online through a subsidiary corporation. Cannabis will not be sold in the same stores as alcohol.

Edibles and concentrates (cannabis extracts with higher levels of THC) will not initially be permitted for legal sale. They will, however, become permitted for legal sale within one year of legalization.

Zoning restrictions may also be set by the province. Example: cannabis will not be sold near a school.

Consumption of cannabis will only be permitted in a private residence. Authorized medical users will remain subject to the same consumption rules of tobacco smoking.

The proposed changes will not alter the existing *Access to Cannabis for Medical Purposes Regulations*.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police Gendarmerie royale du Canada

Canada

Illegal Cannabis Grow Operations

Illegal cannabis grow operations are often set up in residential or commercial rental properties. The buildings may be altered to accommodate equipment required to grow cannabis.

DANGERS TO PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY

- **Fire:** The use of enormous amounts of electricity combined with illegal tampering of electrical systems can lead to fires.
- **Explosion:** Chemicals used may be highly volatile and can result in explosions.
- **Health:** The high humidity and temperatures necessary for a grow room lead to the formation of damaging mould and fungus.
- **Electrocution:** Electrical bypasses and rewiring performed by unqualified individuals results in dangerous electrical hazards.
- **Poisonous gas and chemicals:** The chemicals used in the production of cannabis are left to circulate inside the residence.

COMMON SIGNS OF AN ILLEGAL CANNABIS GROW OPERATION

- Residents may only be in the home occasionally for short periods of time.
- People access the residence only through the garage.
- Unusual visitor behaviour ranging from no visitors to frequent visitors for short periods of time.
- Windows are covered.
- Condensation forms on windows due to high humidity levels inside. This may also result in lack of snow on the roof in winter.
- Skunk-like odour of growing cannabis can occasionally be detected outside.
- Unusual garbage: little or no garbage or unusual items (e.g. pots and soil, fertilizer containers, wiring, PVC piping).
- Electrical equipment inside creates humming sounds.
- Hydro meter is often tampered with or bypassed.
- Grow operations may use other “props” to deflect suspicion. Some of these include: outdoor and/or indoor lights, radio and/or TV on for 24 hours, children's toys and bikes outside without children living at the residence.
- A "Beware of Dog/Guard Dog" sign may be used to deter trespassing, protect against theft and avoid detection by police.

TIPS FOR LANDLORDS

Protect your property.
Obtain a credit history. References should be mandatory and followed up.

Be alert for signs of a potential grow operation.
Tenants may be reluctant to allow landlords to inspect the property and may insist on paying rent in cash.

Check your property regularly.
A crop may take two to three months. Checking your property every four to five weeks is recommended.

If you suspect drug activity in your neighbourhood, do not investigate.

Contact your local police.

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