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September 17, 2020

AMO Policy Update – New Legislation, Regional Gathering Restrictions, and Pre-Federal Throne Speech Submission

Provincial Legislation Introduction

Minister Steve Clark, Municipal Affairs and Housing, has [introduced legislation](#) that will, if passed, provide a residential rent freeze and extend suspension of commercial evictions for 2021 as well as change the future management of the municipal electors' list. Although the actual legislation is not available at this time, we are able to provide the following details.

Rent Freeze for Residential Tenants

The *Helping Tenants and Small Businesses Act* would, if passed, freeze rent in 2021 over a one-year period for tenants of most rent-controlled and non-rent-controlled residential units. This includes municipally funded community housing rental units.

Suspension of Commercial Evictions

The Bill, if passed, would change the *Commercial Tenancies Act* to extend the temporary ban on evictions for commercial tenants. The ban will prevent small businesses from being locked out or having their assets seized during COVID-19.

Municipal Electors' List

Minister Clark also announced legislation to change the *Municipal Elections Act* and *Elections Act* to create one unified Electors' List for provincial and municipal elections

which will be in place for 2024 and subsequent municipal elections. The Minister first announced the intention to move forward with a single list in October 2019. Challenges with the Electors' List for municipal elections have been identified for some time, making election campaigns and administration more difficult for candidates and municipal staff. The proposed changes should reduce duplication and efforts by municipal elections officials to verify information and improve the voting experience for the public.

AMO will review the legislation once publicly available and will provide updates to members when required.

Regional Gathering Restrictions and Increased Enforcement

The Ontario government has amended order [O. Reg 364/20](#): Rules for Areas in Stage 3 under the *Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act, 2020*, to set a new limit on the permitted number of people to attend social gatherings and organized public events in the Toronto, Ottawa, and Peel Region public health unit areas that have higher rates of transmission of COVID-19. This includes functions, parties, dinners, gatherings, BBQs, or wedding receptions held in private residences, backyards, parks, and other recreational areas.

This amended order sets a new limit on the number of people allowed to attend an unmonitored social gathering or organized public event in three specific regions to:

- 10 people at an indoor event or gathering (previous limit of 50); or
- 25 people at an outdoor event or gathering (previous limit of 100).

Additionally, to increase compliance with public health guidelines, both within these three regions and across Ontario, amendments to the *Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act* would, if passed, create:

- a new offence regarding hosting or organizing a gathering in residential premises or other prescribed premises that exceeds limits under an order
- a minimum fine of \$10,000 for organizers of these gatherings
- authority for the Lieutenant Governor in Council to prescribe additional types of premises for the purpose of the new offence
- authority for a police officer, special constable, or First Nations constable to order the temporary closure of a premise where there are reasonable grounds to believe that any gathering exceeding the number of people allowed is taking place and require individuals to leave the premises.

Pre-Federal Throne Speech Submission

With the Federal Throne Speech expected next Wednesday, September 23, AMO President, Graydon Smith, wrote to Prime Minister Trudeau and Minister Freeland

yesterday, regarding [“Supporting Communities: Driving Recovery in the Wake of COVID-19”](#).

In navigating the COVID-19 environment, AMO recognizes that Ontario’s municipal governments can drive aspects of economic recovery and ongoing safety to ensure a path toward greater national prosperity. To that end, AMO is outlining policy priorities that align with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM). These priorities can lead to a fair, safe, and inclusive recovery for all Canadians.

AMO’s [COVID-19 Resources](#) page is being updated continually so you can find critical information in one place. Please send any of your municipally related pandemic questions to covid19@amo.on.ca.

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