

Resolution 17A

HOUSING FOR SENIORS (CARRIED)

⇒ Halifax Regional Municipality

WHEREAS Nova Scotia has one of the largest populations of senior citizens in Canada; and

WHEREAS the demand for housing that meets the needs of senior citizens will continue to rise; and

WHEREAS creating living arrangements that provide social networks and support systems will improve the quality of life for senior citizens and allow them to retain an active part of the broader community; and

WHEREAS the Provinces of British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Newfoundland have exempted seniors housing from provincial human rights legislation;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities call upon the Province of Nova Scotia to exempt housing designated for senior citizens as a basis for discrimination under the *Human Rights Act*.

BACKGROUND:

In 2007, Halifax Regional Council requested that the Province consider changing its human rights legislation to allow housing developments that are limited to seniors. Currently this type of limitation is not permitted because it is considered discrimination on the basis of age under the Human Rights Act. However, British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Newfoundland have all exempted seniors housing from their human rights legislation.

Senior citizens comprise one of the fastest-growing segments of the population in Nova Scotia. Demand for housing that meets the specific needs of seniors will grow in the coming years. Designating some buildings "seniors-only" provides them with a support system and social network that is not readily available in standard buildings. There is benefit to create housing options that will keep seniors in the broader community, with easy access to transit, medical services, shops, and recreational opportunities, while meeting their accommodation needs.

Currently the Provincial government may create seniors-only housing in subsidized buildings. Seniors who do not receive subsidized housing should have the ability to access an equally supportive living environment.

Forwarded to:
Minister of the Minister responsible for the Human Rights Act

RESPONSE:

Thank you for your letter dated November 21, 2011. In your letter you requested a response in respect of the Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities ("UNSM") Resolution 17A-Housing for Seniors which passed at the annual conference this year.

Recently, the Law Reform Commission considered a seniors-only housing amendment to the Human Rights Act. In its final report, the Commission recommends against such an amendment. The report is available on the Commission website: www.lawreform.ns.ca

While I appreciate your concerns, I am satisfied that its recommendation is the most appropriate at this time.

The Human Rights Act allows the Human Rights Commission to exempt an activity from the Act in appropriate circumstances. You may wish to discuss this further with the Commission.

For their information, I have forwarded a copy of your letter, the resolution and this letter to the Honourable John MacDonell, the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations, and Eunice Harker, the Chair of the Human Rights Commission.

*The Honourable Ross Landry
Minister
December 12, 2011*