

## **CHRIS CEBULA, LANDLORD**

### **Right at Home Realty**

Chris Cebula is a landlord and real estate agent who has spent more than 20 years managing dozens of luxury, furnished condominiums in Toronto. Her condos are located in exclusive neighbourhoods near the waterfront, the St. Lawrence market area, Yorkville and the financial district.

She made a decision early in her career to never live in a property where smoking had been allowed and has since extended the same consideration to others. As someone who regularly hires people to clean, repair and maintain her condos, Chris is also conscious of her responsibility as an employer to provide a safe, smoke-free workplace environment.

Properties that Chris owns and rents have always been advertised and maintained as completely smoke-free—although some units are located in older buildings where other residents smoke in their own apartments. The no-smoking policy also extends to the patios and balconies of her units; however, the common areas of her condos are under the jurisdiction and regulations specific to each building.

Chris reports that she has never had a client ask for a unit where smoking is allowed. To the contrary, she has noticed an increase in the number of people asking for accommodation where there has NEVER been any smoking. In the past, some clients might have been tempted to view an otherwise desirable unit to see if it could pass the “sniff test” for stale smoke. However, Chris is finding that consumers now are more sophisticated and to discover that smoking was previously allowed in a unit can be a complete deal-breaker. Those seeking luxury accommodations in this niche market often have exacting standards and prefer to avoid exposure to second-hand smoke for both health and esthetic reasons.

An additional motive for Chris to keep her condos smoke-free is to accommodate clients with allergies or compromised immune systems who need to be near a downtown hospital while undergoing chemotherapy or radiation treatments for cancer. Such clients are often reluctant to risk any additional exposure to toxins and fear that those found in second-hand smoke could exacerbate their already vulnerable state of well-being.

Chris has had first-hand experience dealing with the challenges and expenses involved in trying to eliminate tobacco product residue and smell from upholstered fabrics, draperies and rugs—and never wants to be in that position again. One tenant repeatedly entertained a guest who smoked in one of her condos. The cleaner whose services were part of the rental contract reported the smell and cigarette butts to Chris, and the issue was eventually brought before the Landlord and Tenant Board. Chris won the case, but not without a great deal of time and effort spent to enforce her policy. The financial award



helped to cover the repairs, renovations and work required to replace the furniture, rugs and draperies, but the unit was off the market for months.

Health hazards lurk long after the original source of second-hand smoke is gone. Chris feels that ignoring this safety issue could expose a landlord to increased liability should the situation ever arise where a client's health is negatively affected because they were exposed to second-hand smoke in a unit that had been advertised and rented as smoke-free.

Education about the harmful effects of tobacco smoke to both her clients and the population in general are key factors in promoting this message. Chris believes that an informed public will appreciate the benefits of smoke-free environments, so that it is worthwhile repeating the messages over and over again. She says "It's like water wearing away a rock. The more education there is the fewer people will want to smoke. Where smoking takes place, you and your furniture end up smelling like an ashtray, and who wants that? From a business perspective you want to do your best for your clients and their safety—the things you can manage to do, you do—even though we live in a big city where there are doubtless many other factors beyond our control."

Thanks to landlords like Chris, clients seeking this type of accommodation can rest assured knowing that she is acting on their behalf to keep their homes healthy and smoke-free.

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