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The forests of building cranes in almost every major city signal record growth in condo construction. They also herald extraordinary expansion opportunities for management firms.

☛ But with that growth come rising challenges. Like the cranes, they have become part of the horizon – and over the past 18 months, navigating the topography has become even tougher. We are faced with a new process for licensing managers and providers, an online Condominium Authority Tribunal (CAT-ODR) and the spectre of an increasing shortage of qualified managers.

New requirements for 2019 condo licence renewal

As you know, both property managers (PMs) and condo companies must hold licences issued by the CMRAO. General Licensees who completed their educational and examination requirements before November 1, 2017 now have to pass a new continuing education program to renew their licences. This will update them on recent changes to Ontario's condo laws and ensure they understand their additional obligations and responsibilities (cmrao.ca/en-US/licensing/continuing-education-requirements).

The application and payment period for 2018-19 licence renewals has been extended to August 31, 2019. If you want to check if your management company is registered and can operate a condominium management company go to the CMRAO website for a complete listing.

Condominium Authority Tribunal (CAT-ODR)

Canada's first CAT-ODR is now online. The bilingual dispute resolution system is designed to help people resolve their differences conveniently, quickly and affordably. Users communicate by exchanging offers to settle their case, and sending and receiving documents and messages. The system produces negotiated settlements or legally binding decisions that everyone must follow (condoauthorityontario.ca).

So far the tribunal, which for now is limited to ruling on disputes relating to condo records, has issued five decisions on owners' rights to access to records. Details are posted here: <http://condoadviser.ca/2018/07/new-tribunal-rules-on-owners-accessing-condominium-records/condo-law-blog-Ontario>

Shortage of qualified condo managers

Recent legislative changes have led to a new

licensing and training regime for PMs that raises the threshold to entry. Many managers balk at the prospect of seeing more money coming out of their pockets for license fees and continuing education, thus requiring even more of their time. They often feel underpaid and undervalued.

PMs have tended to be people on second or third careers who are heading toward retirement. The next generation of young managers are not coming in quickly enough to fill the increasing gap, since fewer people are attracted to this kind of work. The role of the condominium manager requires complex, high-level administrative, financial, management and people skills. The shifting landscape isn't allowing time for development of an experienced talent pool. Director and owner expectations, negative relationships, and evening meetings make up a large part of this profession and can make it difficult to attract people to the PM life. This is further impacted in our Region by the staggeringly low unemployment rate, one of the lowest in Canada.

While I believe that required professionalization from the new licensing regime will be a step toward increasing respect and recognition for PMs, it does not guarantee improved retention or greater appeal – both of which are needed to improve the numbers of available licensed managers. Like the building cranes, these hurdles won't be going away any time soon. This situation will likely get worse before it gets better.

Why is this relevant? The Canadian Condominium Institute leads the National Condominium Industry by providing education, information, awareness and access to expertise by and for our members. It is important that our membership is aware of this impending crisis in the property management industry. We need to start the conversations on how we are going to address this.

The Grand River Chapter is holding a series of Leaders' Circles this summer. One of the topics that will be addressed is board of director and management relationships. This may be an opportune time to discuss this further. We hope to see you at these sessions and look forward to some open discussions and suggestions for building stronger relationships in the future. If you would like to discuss this further, please reach out!