

# Senior faces eviction for smoking indoors

'She's ashamed,' says 88-year-old's daughter

BY LEA STORRY, CALGARY HERALD    OCTOBER 20, 2010



Philipina Schergevitch has lived in an apartment at Francis Klein Centre in Acadia for a decade. The senior has to move out because of no-smoking regulations she is unable to adhere to.

**Photograph by:** Ted Rhodes, Calgary Herald, Calgary Herald

Friends and family of an 88-year-old Calgary woman say her dignity is being degraded after the lifelong smoker was told to find another place to live because her residence has gone smoke-free.

Philipina Schergevitch, a smoker for 73 years, has been living at the Francis Klein Centre for a decade. The southeast centre is run by the Bishop O'Byrne Housing for Seniors Association and banned smoking in July.

Schergevitch's daughter, Liz Daniels, said her mother is devastated over the news she has to find a new home by the end of this month. Her lease isn't being renewed, and Daniels said her mother is so stressed out, Daniels hasn't told her she'll be forced to move.

"I told her they said she could stay," said Daniels. "She's ashamed and she's embarrassed. Who expects to be evicted at age 88?"

The association provides affordable housing for the functionally independent. Myrt Butler, the association's chief administrative officer, wrote in an e-mail that because of provincial privacy laws, the association couldn't comment on tenants.

Butler said the association's board of directors voted five years ago to implement a no-smoking policy in all 519 of its Calgary units.

In 2009, residents were given one-year notice there would be a ban on smoking in suites, effective July 31, 2010, said Butler.

She said short-term leases were signed with smoking tenants so they could either adjust or find alternative housing. Tenants are allowed to smoke in designated exterior areas, Butler said.

Schergevitch's daughter said her mother smokes outside in an area that is hard to get to for the senior, who uses a walker.

Daniels said her mother has been smoking since she was 15 and has tried to quit, but at age 88, it's hard.

She's been smoking in her suite since she moved there in 2000.

"I understand no one likes smoking, but are these people lepers?" said Daniels. "It's not fair. These people have contributed all their lives and now they're treated like this."

Residents Joan Poulin and Carol James are also upset with the Bishop O'Byrne Housing for Seniors Association. The two non-smokers said Schergevitch doesn't deserve the treatment she's getting.

The pair appealed to the association to make an exception to the no-smoking policy, because Schergevitch moved into the residence before the ban was imposed.

James, who has lived at the centre for a year, said Schergevitch will have trouble finding a home.

"There's no place for people to go," said James, 66. "These are independent apartments, subsidized for low-income seniors and they have to find something like it, but there's very little out there."

James said there are other options other than turfing Schergevitch, such as having a smoking room.

However, when the residents took their concerns to the association, they were told to leave if they didn't like what was going on, she said.

Poulin, 73, has lived at the centre for 10 years. She said Schergevitch is a much-loved friend, and if she leaves, it'll be like losing a family member.

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