

POSITION PAPER

Emotional Support Animals

September 2020

Background

The Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission (SHRC) released their emotional support animal [policy](#) in October 2018. Since this time, the Association has been made aware of numerous instances where tenants have been attempting to use this policy to bring pets into no-pet buildings. Consultations were undertaken with the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation in September 2020.

Policy Position

The Association states the following in relation to emotional support animals:

1. All pets by their nature, are emotionally supportive. That is the main reason that individuals and families adopt pets – to provide comfort and support. Therefore, the Association believes emotional support animals should not be a special class of animal and not given preferential treatment in the eyes of the law.
2. Having pets in no-pet buildings jeopardizes the health and safety of tenants with allergies and can increase housing instability for these tenants.
3. Pets or “emotional support” animals typically have no special training and are more prone to cause damage to a rental property.
4. The current policy published by the SHRC is vague and does not provide adequate information for landlords, tenants, or medical professionals to consider when dealing with “emotional support” animals.

Association Recommendations

To ensure landlords can continue to provide housing to all people on income assistance, the Association is recommending:

1. That additional clarity be provided by the SHRC so that tenants, landlords, and medical professionals can effectively navigate this new area of law.
2. That mandatory training be instituted for emotional support animals so that landlords and fellow tenants can be protected against damages, troublesome behaviour, and violations of a tenant’s right to quiet enjoyment.
3. That tenants must be required to provide documentation to substantiate their need for an emotional support animal.
4. That the emotional support animal policy be abolished and that the SHRC recognize emotional support animals as what they actually are – pets.

Moving Forward

The Association is waiting for a decision to come down from the SHRC in a recent landlord and tenant issue to inform future advocacy. The hope is to be able to provide a draft policy for SKLA members to use that would give some protection against emotional support animals being brought in, when in fact they are just pets.