

# CONDO LIVING

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## Ask an Expert

### Why those tiny slider windows?

A reader wonders why all windows in condo projects seem to be the same. Architect Martin Gerskup explains factors in window choices. Page P6

## Why do condo windows all seem the same?

**Q** I have been to many new condo sales offices and cannot understand why the windows all seem the same. They are four to five feet wide and five to six feet high but have postage stamp-size smaller windows at the bottom that slide sideways to open. Why do high-rise condos use those postage stamp windows?

**A** *Condo Living put the question to Martin Gerskup, principal of Best Consultants Inc. He is an investigative architect and building science specialist experienced in the condo field.*

Despite the reader's impression, condominiums do not all have sliding windows of the same size. Indeed, some high-rise buildings have been designed with hoppers and casement windows.

While the recent trend has been to increase the size of residential windows, building codes and standards have placed emphasis on creating more energy-efficient designs.

Increasing the size of windows and their operating parts increases the overall cost of windows in a competitive market place. Designers have tried to keep the cost of windows down by keeping the size of the sliders to a minimum.

Canadian windows must comply with the performance requirements detailed in a national standard, which rates all windows for air tightness, wa-

## Ask an Expert

ter tightness, and wind-load resistance. This standard considers all types of residential windows, including vertical sliders, horizontal sliders, hoppers, awning and casement windows.

As a result of the strict criteria for air and water tightness imposed by the standards referred to in our building codes, the portion of the window assembly most prone to air and water leakage — the operable versus the fixed — is kept to a minimum.

The building code restricts how wide windows in residential high-rises are allowed to open to ensure the safety of small children. This code requirement, however, does not restrict the size of the sliders or other style of window.

In upscale condominium projects, where cost is not necessarily the prime concern, developers have recently introduced a wider range of window designs with larger operable components. In some cases, familiar window styles, such as casements, are manufactured using new technology to create energy-efficient products.

*Send questions by mail to Condo Living, Toronto Star, One Yonge St., Toronto M5E 1E6, or by fax to (416) 865-3635 or E-mail (condos@thestar.ca).*