

WHAT CONDO DWELLERS ARE READING



REPLACING THE CONDOMINIUM MANAGER

With the typical condominium manager remaining in place for only a few years, most communities must deal with the eventuality of interim and new management. When this time comes it is important to 1) keep things running until a new condominium manager is hired, and 2) hire a new condominium manager.

Most management contracts include a sixty-day termination

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FROM THE EDITOR

The Condominium Authority of Ontario (CAO) celebrates its fifth year of operation. Beginning this month, **Toronto Condo News** looks at how CAO and the Condominium Authority Tribunal have impacted on condominium living and management. This month, we begin by looking at what it means to ensure fairness and justice in condominium communities.

Our feature this month, **Replacing the Condominium Manager**, addresses a task condo boards deal with every few years. In **Capturing Condo Data**, page 22, we look at how to manage one of the tasks shared by management and condo boards. Surprisingly, the tools important for capturing and analyzing condo data are the same for ensuring a smooth transition when replacing condominium management.

In **Preparing for Climate Change**, page 3, we look at what is likely to take up more management and condo board time in the coming years.

A PEEK

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PREPARING FOR CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change has and continues to occur. In recent years we've experienced increased rainfall and prolonged heat waves.



Canada's average temperature increased an estimated 1.7 C from 1948 to 2016. Temperatures continue to rise and rainfall continues to increase. The number of days in southern Canada where temperatures exceed 30 C is expected to be four times more frequent by 2050.



Recent flooding events include Toronto's 2018 flash flood when 100 millimetres of rain (nearly 4 inches) fell in under two hours, and a 2014 Burlington storm where 192 millimetres of rain (more than 7 inches) fell in under eight hours. Cars parked in parking garages were destroyed

and people trapped in elevators.

Since we are unable to control weather, we must adapt.

High-rise communities are generally protected against heat waves by air conditioning but this comes at a cost. During these periods the amount of electricity used, and its cost, continues to increase. We create more air pollution.

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PREPARING FOR CLIMATE CHANGE... CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

Flooding history for an area is unlikely to be a reliable indicator of future flooding which has and continues to increase. Newer flood maps are expected to show where water surges are more likely to occur. Understanding these likely flows may help identify communities more likely to experience sewer backups and flooded lower levels. Microbursts, short downpours of heavy rain, make any area more susceptible to flooding.



Recent events are likely to be minor compared to what can be expected. Over a 25-year period ending in 2008 property and casualty

insurance payouts ranged from \$250 to \$450 million annually. Over the next ten years annual losses more than doubled. Most were the result of flooding including internal water damage from preventable leaks.

Effects of increased rainfall include faster growth of mould, mechanical systems failing and health hazards. Rodents, ants and beetles thrive after flooding. Higher humidity is desirable for midges which are a persistent annoyance in downtown high-rise towers near Lake Ontario. Diseases such as West Nile virus may expand to Toronto as temperatures warm.

Most high-rise communities will adapt. Today's small pest control budget may grow by a factor of ten as pest and virus control efforts increase. Preventative maintenance budgets will grow to ensure currently manageable concerns don't become unmanageable.

Mitigation against water includes anything that prevents it from leaking in or entering a building. Sensors detecting water can prevent elevators from proceeding to flooded levels. Leak detection systems can send notification to management when water is detected allowing them to take action sooner and prevent damage. Some systems will automatically close water valves when water is detected. Pavement and landscaping can be angled to direct water away from a building. Other measures include clearing drains more frequently, ensuring roofs and windows remain in good condition, and installation of moisture sensors where water can pool in hidden areas of the building.

Reflective and green roofing can redirect sun and heat from a building rather than having it absorbed.

Backup power generation, if not located on lower levels, allow a building to remain inhabited when flooding occurs.

More extreme weather is on the way. The choice is one of preparing now for floods and extreme heat, or suffering later while paying dramatically more for maintenance and insurance.



REPLACING THE CONDOMINIUM MANAGER... CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

BEING A
**PROPERTY
MANAGER**
≡ IS EASY, IT'S LIKE ≡
RIDING A BIKE
EXCEPT THE BIKE IS ON FIRE
YOU'RE ON FIRE
L EVERYTHING IS ON FIRE

clause intended to allow the condo board time to employ a new manager or management company. It can be preferable to terminate immediately and pay the sixty-day termination

service requests. Contractors will have been scheduled for cleaning, preventative maintenance, elevator repairs, equipment testing and other activities. Problems will come up and need to be addressed.

Someone will need to maintain operations. That individual, an interim manager, director or new hire, will require knowledge of these activities and access to building records inclusive of appointments,

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requirement.

Until such time as a new manager has been hired, the board may take on certain responsibilities. After a new manager has started working it will take time to figure things out while addressing a backlog of service requests, maintenance requirements and other matters.

Transition works best in communities prepared for this eventuality.

One day the condominium manager will not be in the office. They may have called in sick or been injured. They may have received a better job offer or been terminated by the condo board.

That first day and moving forward regular activities will continue. Things will break down and need to be repaired. Residents will submit service requests. There will likely be an outstanding list of unresolved building maintenance issues and

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CONDO BOARDS & MANAGEMENT

REPLACING THE CONDOMINIUM MANAGER... CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

calendars, and both resident and vendor details.

If the no-longer-accessible manager was allowed to set up their own systems, nobody may be aware of what needs to be done, what has been scheduled and where to find necessary information.

Communications stored in a manager's e-mail account, rather than one controlled by the corporation, may no longer be accessible. This is what happens when a condo board allows things to be done without sufficient oversight.

A proactive condo board establishes policies and procedures in preparation for this eventuality. They ensure operations can continue uninterrupted when someone is no longer available.

Central Filing System

Paper records should be stored in an accessible filing cabinet in an organized manner for immediate access. Older records, those unlikely to be needed, can be stored elsewhere for retrieval if necessary.

Records for current residents and owners, current vendors and active contracts should always be readily accessible.

Contact Records

A list of contacts should be available at any time and reviewed annually. This should include all vendors, service providers, emergency services, and key employees including condominium manager, concierge/security supervisor and superintendent.

Resident and Owner Records

Resident and owner records should always be readily accessible to those with authorized and necessary access to this information. There is no

way to anticipate when and what information will be required. Finding that information in minutes, rather than sifting through files dating back years only to end up reporting records as "unavailable" is a sign of poor management.

Role of Condo Management Software

Active use of condo management software simplifies any transition. It allows any new or interim manager to maintain operations, address active issues, and handle new concerns as they come up. Ensuring all communications, service requests and scheduling are recorded in the application provides virtually all the information any new or interim manager needs to sustain operations.

Condo management software can provide immediate access to records on current and prior tenants of any unit along with all service, maintenance and communications that have occurred. Any new or interim manager has access to the same information as the departing manager. Unresolved service requests submitted electronically are easily identified and addressed. Scheduled activities shown on the calendar include both historical and ongoing.

Condo boards that have prepared for the transition to new management find it can occur seamlessly and without disruption.



FAIRNESS AND JUSTICE IN CONDOMINIUM COMMUNITIES



The Condominium Authority of Ontario (CAO) is celebrating its fifth year of operation. In this five-part series, **Toronto Condo News** looks at how CAO and the Condominium Authority Tribunal have impacted on condominium living and management, and present an inside-view of what it is like to appear before the Tribunal.

February 2023 - Fairness and Justice in Condominium Communities

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|--------------|--|
| March 2023 - | What they Don't Want you to Know
- Lurking behind their closed door |
| April 2023 - | Making a Successful CAT
Submission |
| May 2023 - | Calling for the Expansion of CAT |
| June 2023 - | Condo Disputes without CAT |
-

What does one mean when it comes to ensuring fairness and justice in condominium communities? Since both the Condominium Authority of Ontario (CAO) and Condominium Authority Tribunal (CAT or Tribunal) are arbiters of fairness, and determine the relationship between condominium corporations and condo owners, defining fairness and justice is necessary to evaluate their effectiveness.

The first day of class for a legal studies course provides clarity to this question as we sit in on the class.

Dr. Joerg Storm of Stuttgart, Baden-Württemberg, Germany posted on LinkedIn a story about a student kicked out of their first legal studies university lecture meant to explain fairness and

justice.

The professor enters the lecture hall. He looks around.

"You there in the 8th row. Can you tell me your name?" he asks a student.

"My name is Sandra" says a voice.

The professor asks her, "Please leave my lecture hall. I don't want to see you in my lecture."

Everyone is quiet. The student is irritated, slowly packs her things and stands up.

"Faster please" she is asked.

She doesn't dare to say anything and leaves the lecture hall.

The professor keeps looking around. The participants are scared.

"Why are there laws?" he asks the group.

All quiet. Everyone looks at the others.

"What are laws for?" he asks again.

"Social order" is heard from a row.



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FAIRNESS AND JUSTICE IN CONDOMINIUM COMMUNITIES... CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

A student says "To protect a person's personal rights."

Another says "So that you can rely on the state."

The professor is not satisfied.

"Justice" calls out a student.

The professor smiling. She has his attention.

"Thank you very much. Did I behave unfairly towards your classmate earlier?"

Everyone nods.

"Indeed I did. Why didn't anyone protest?"

Why didn't any of you try to stop me?

Why didn't you want to prevent this injustice?" he asks.

Nobody answers.

"What you just learned you wouldn't have understood in 1,000 hours of lectures if you hadn't lived it. You didn't say anything just because you weren't affected yourself. This attitude speaks against you and against life. You think as long as it doesn't concern you, it's none of your business. I'm telling you, if you don't say anything today and don't bring about justice, then one day you too will experience injustice and no one will stand before you. Justice lives through us all. We have to fight for it."

CAO and CAT take a long-term view to ensuring

fairness and justice in condominium communities. CAT establishes standards by publishing all decisions for others to review, then relies on them to decide on similar concerns. As with all organizations, mistakes will be made and corrected as part of the learning process. Both organizations, still in their infancy, have already proven their value in bettering condominium living and management in Ontario.

Condominium owners and residents appearing before the Tribunal are no longer at a financial

disadvantage nor fear lawyers representing the corporation when there is a dispute. CAO and CAT have restored a degree of balance to the relationship.

CAO and CAT exist

to ensure a basic level of communication, and protect condominium owners and residents against abuses where they otherwise may not feel they have recourse. In this they have succeeded.

Despite whatever flaws and failures exist in condominium governance, there is importance and value to what Condominium Authority of Ontario and Condominium Authority Tribunal offer to condominium living and management in Ontario.



You think as long as it doesn't concern you, it's none of your business. I'm telling you, if you don't say anything today and don't bring about justice, then one day you too will experience injustice and no one will stand before you.

BRINGING ON NEW BOARD MEMBERS



Condominium communities where residents are more involved, and interested in serving as directors, likely have a process for identifying and working with qualified candidates.

One unique aspect of condo board governance is that elections are held, and new directors elected, each year. It takes longer to develop an agenda and implement plans. Introducing new directors with different agendas is a complication making success more difficult. Owners want a board to act quickly yet governance restrictions make this difficult.

Working through this is achievable by instituting a plan to identify prospective directors and offer new orientation training. This helps ensure everyone is on the same page, understands the current agenda and priorities, and is productive as quickly as possible.

Condo boards should always be on the lookout for new board members. Once potential board members are identified there should be a concerted effort to educate, inform and welcome them while identifying their strengths.

Early Preparation

Invite those expressing interest in serving on the board to observe one or two meetings so they have a feel for how the board operates. Provide a document detailing the time commitment and obligations of each role on the board.

A monthly update and quarterly newsletter will educate residents while attracting interest of those willing to offer their time. Matters of importance to the board and capital projects are of interest to residents.

Search for Recruits

Always be on the lookout for director-candidates with the right skills and expertise. If the treasurer resigns, consider appointing a qualified candidate over assigning the role to an unqualified director. Strive to maintain a balance of soft, hard and technical skills on the board.

Encourage interested candidates to participate on a committee providing advice and access to the board. This gives them an opportunity to learn about their community while they are observed and evaluated on leadership, communication and skills.

Offer Mentorship and Time

It takes time for a new director to understand the intricacies of condo governance, legal responsibilities, ethical considerations and board dynamics. The importance of treating everyone equally and listening to opinions before formulating one's perspective is not always understood by all.

Much of a new director's first year should be spent listening; absorbing information, protocols and responsibilities; and becoming familiar with the general flow. This allows them time to determine how their skills best fit into how the board operates.

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VIRTUAL MEETINGS AND ELECTRONIC VOTING IN 2023

Some communities are migrating back to meeting in-person, while others remain committed to virtual meetings.

Opinions on virtual meetings are split. Some prefer to meet in-person with positive feedback coming from owners, boards and condominium managers. Some condo owners have become disillusioned with virtual meetings where they are unable to gather, voice concerns and socialize. The virtual format has been abused by some condo boards that prefer not to meet or communicate with owners who have elected them as their representatives.



Those who support virtual meetings cite the speed with which meetings are conducted, and not having to bring a large number of people together in one

room. Those who remain uncomfortable with larger gatherings are able to participate.

Some condo directors have justified the need for virtual meetings on their service providers - accountant or lawyer - unwilling to attend in-person meetings. While such a claim may or may not be correct, this is no justification for continuing with virtual meetings. Any service provider unwilling to meet with their clients is easily replaced. More likely, the service provider is blamed because they are inaccessible to owners.

Electronic Voting

Communities and condominium managers continue to explore electronic voting. Online or electronic voting, also described as e-voting, can increase engagement, save time and money, and ensure accurate vote count.

Adoption of electronic voting during the pandemic, for some, became an opportunity to manipulate the results of condo elections.

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BRINGING ON NEW BOARD MEMBERS... CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

Encourage new directors to speak up and make suggestions. New ideas and constructive criticism should be welcome. All directors should be encouraged to disagree when discussing matters and provide complete support once a decision has

been voted on. Assign newer directors with fewer board obligations to run committees.

An orientation process for condo directors is not yet a practice in most communities. It should be.

VIRTUAL MEETINGS AND ELECTRONIC VOTING IN 2023... CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

Some electronic voting platforms are not designed to ensure fair condo elections.

Some electronic voting platforms are not designed to ensure fair condo elections. One electronic voting platform, GetQuorum, has compromised the security of electronic voting and tainted the results of thousands of condo elections. Condo boards using the platform are unable to assure owners that their votes are secure and confidential. As first reported in The Globe and Mail, the company acknowledged that their platform fails to ensure voting remains confidential until an annual general meeting. The company works with thousands of condominium corporations, property management companies and other groups using what they claim is a secure online platform. What they fail to disclose is that their platform can be used to manipulate the outcome of condo elections.

Regardless of how annual general meetings are held, **Toronto Condo News** has been an advocate of electronic voting for its many advantages over paper-based systems which includes the need for proxies which, at times, has been abused.

Early vote result disclosure should not be an accepted feature of electronic voting systems even if some condo boards or directors desire advance access to real-time voting information.

"Most electronic platforms recognize the need for confidentiality of advance voting to maintain the

integrity of elections" explains Alexis Barrett of [CondoVoter](#), a popular electronic voting provider for Condominiums and HOAs. "Among condo owners there is an expectation that voting results are not disclosed until after an election period closes. An electronic voting platform should not compromise the integrity of the voting process by providing advance access to voting results that allow an election to be manipulated. After clicking 'submit' on a ballot screen, it should be impossible to disclose individual vote choices, and there should be no way to obtain advance viewing of election results until after an election period has closed."

Early vote result disclosure should not be an accepted feature of electronic voting systems even if some condo boards or directors desire advance access to real-time voting information. This provides an unfair advantage to an incumbent director or anyone supported by the board in their efforts to influence the outcome of elections without owners being aware.

Ontario has virtually no rules governing what form of electronic balloting is acceptable and no regulations defining what sort of confidentiality owners should expect. It is up to condo boards and owners to ensure their elections are conducted fairly and transparently.





ELEVATOR CONGESTION

Smaller units in high-rise communities are impacting in unexpected ways.

Smaller units were never intended to house more than one or maybe two people. The reality is that many condo units are housing more people than intended. Smaller units, designed for one or two people, can now include children who have grown up to become teenagers or adults. Like roadways filled with cars, there is a high level of congestion in communities never designed to support so many people.

Nowhere is this felt more than in communities built with too few elevators. One less elevator meant an additional unit could be built on each floor. Smaller homes allow for more units, and people, per floor.

When new, elevator capacity was not a problem. Not everyone had moved in and smaller units did not house as many people as now.

Today, there can be long waits while too few elevators struggle to transport more people than intended. This has become an infrastructure issue for which there is no solution.

There is no accurate data available on elevator failures or availability. Availability of 93 percent in condominium buildings has been cited by some

as being indicative of poor service by elevator service companies or poor staffing levels. This fails to consider equipment age, availability of parts, the need for major repairs, elevators out of commission for months due to modernization, and elevator failures due to flooding or vandalism. These are situations within the control of communities choosing to better plan for and maintain their infrastructure.

The Canadian Press reports that Ontario firefighters responded to 4,461 calls to assist people trapped in elevators in 2015, double what was reported in 2001. This fails to consider that many more make "non-emergency" calls from their mobile phone

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WHY THROW AWAY MONEY PAYING RENT



This philosophy has become an epidemic among those who are less financially literate. The exact opposite is true.

By virtually any measure, renting is cheaper than owning. Comparably, high-rise condo living is cheaper than single family housing. The fact that some are able to argue differently by offering incomplete information to those less informed does not change this reality.

Owning a home does offer advantages for those who can afford it. For the rest it means living an unaffordable lifestyle with future consequences.

For the vast majority, rent is less than mortgage payments. Saving this difference provides some combination of greater financial security and more disposable income. Renters don't pay property tax or condo fees. They don't pay to replace a roof, repair broken pipes or replace the furnace. Total annual savings is likely in the tens of thousands of

dollars. Invested properly over decades this amount combined with government benefits may be sufficient to pay for retirement.

Renters don't benefit from rising home prices nor do they risk loss of property value in a declining market. They have greater flexibility to relocate if the desire or opportunity arises.

High-rise condo living offers many benefits. Combining this with renting, while not for everyone, offers a way to dramatically reduce expenses and save for the future.



ELEVATOR CONGESTION... CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

rather than use the emergency phone in the cab provided for this purpose. When firefighters are called to deal with an elevator failure that is not a health emergency, their actions are likely to cause unnecessary damage to the elevator that could have been avoided had an elevator technician been dispatched by use of the emergency phone.

Many high-rise condominium buildings are under-elevated. Elevators supporting more people are

under greater strain requiring increased maintenance and repairs. When out of service, greater hardship is placed on all residents.

This article has been prepared with assistance from Phil Staite, President at [Quality Allied Elevator](http://QualityAlliedElevator.com) which is one of the largest independent elevator service companies in Canada specializing in elevator maintenance and elevator modernizations.



ELDER CARE IN HIGH-RISE COMMUNITIES

As high-rise communities age the issue of elder care becomes more prevalent. Determining if condo residents are in good health or sound mind is fraught with responsibility and liability.

As people age most eventually become incapable of fully caring for themselves. They may develop dementia. Another may have had a stroke. Yet another may get lost wandering the halls. Most require some level of in-home assistance. Many have no family, or family that no longer cares for them. Some are too proud to accept help.

Initial problems may appear minor making it difficult to determine when a neighbour begins to have trouble, and knowing what can or should be done. An older resident may begin leaving garbage outside their door, forgetting what floor they live on or try to enter the wrong suite. Newspapers may accumulate. While their door is open there may be strange odours or visible trash on the floor.

Problems can escalate. A resident not feeling well may be unable to make it from the lobby to their suite. They are unwilling to go to the hospital and refuse offers to call an ambulance. After being helped to their suite, it appears unsafe and unhealthy. Clothing is strewn everywhere, doorways are blocked and dishes uncleared. They could easily get hurt if left alone at home and nobody would know. They may be behind in paying condo fees and other bills, and unwilling to accept help from neighbours.



Individual residents may choose to assist and are welcome to do so.

Management or the board, wanting to be

helpful, should tread lightly. The corporation, while being helpful, should not be taking on personal obligations such as ensuring individual residents are healthy or safe beyond what is done for all on an equal basis. Boards should protect the corporation, and all residents, from delinquent condo fee payments by individual owners. Treating one resident differently from others is a cause for concern.

In an act of compassion, an elderly owner delinquent in paying condo fees may be granted a grace period. Another owner loses their job and falls behind in paying condo fees. Granting a grace period to the elderly owner requires that a similar allowance requested by others must be accommodated. Failing to treat both situations equally, by granting a similar exemption to all owners on request, unnecessarily exposes the corporation and creates a legal problem. It doesn't take long before many are not paying their condo fees and the corporation is in financial difficulty.

No condominium corporation should allow one

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ELDER CARE IN HIGH-RISE COMMUNITIES... CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14



condo owner to financially benefit at the expense of another, which occurs when a financial delinquency is allowed to occur or continue. Condo management and boards allowing this to happen are accepting personal liability for financial losses to the corporation.

Condo leaders struggle with balancing the need to maintain safety and the positive atmosphere of their communities with their desire to assist residents requiring intervention. They can reach out to family members, or contact local health care agencies or retirement homes that can provide assistance.

Condo communities can be a great home

for aging or disabled individuals capable of independent living. When assistance is required to maintain semi-independent living, communities can assist. They cannot and should not replace family and other more personally involved parties. Community rules and by-laws need to be enforced equally among all residents regardless of personal circumstances.

Treating everyone equally is not cold and uncaring. It is a reasonable expectation for a condominium corporation required to treat all owners equally in accordance with its declaration, by-laws and rules.



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ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHALLENGE

It is inevitable that the adoption of electric vehicles will grow. Governments are creating financial incentives making them more economical while manufacturers continue to improve on battery and other necessary technologies. Some automakers have announced their intent to discontinue production of internal combustion engines in the near future.

High-rise and condominium communities have a crucial role to play in the acceptance of electric vehicles. With more than half of Toronto's population residing in high-rise buildings, there is a need for easy access to charging stations in high-rise homes.

Earlier government attempts at convincing high-rise condominium communities to embrace electric vehicle charging systems failed. Allowing reserve funds to pay for this upgrade without previously funding for them was correctly viewed as an unnecessary debt that would have to be repaid. A further problem was that available solutions were inappropriate for high-rise buildings.

Better and more effective solutions are now available.

Problems to Surmount

Few communities have sufficient capacity to support charging stations for more than a limited number of parking spaces. Accommodating even a limited number of stations could affect the amount of electricity available for other uses throughout the building. The high cost of upgrading a building's

electrical infrastructure to support a limited number of residents never made sense. Shared charging stations may offer a short-term solution so long as very few residents desire access.

Until recently, the only practical solution for many high-rise communities was to increase overall electrical capacity so that residents can install a charging station at their cost and convenience. The cost and complexity of doing this deters most communities.

A Smarter Approach

New electric vehicle charging technologies can work within existing building electrical capacities while providing service to a larger and growing number of electric vehicle owners. These systems are able to share available capacity amongst all vehicles connected to the system at a given time. They automatically adjust to provide more or less charging capacity to each vehicle without overwhelming total system capacity. As more electric vehicles are connected to the system, the amount of electricity provided to each is reduced. Charging takes longer so that all other electrical needs in the building are unaffected. As each vehicle is fully charged, the amount of electricity provided to other connected vehicles increase. Individuals charging vehicles overnight are unaware that it takes longer to achieve a full charge.

Now that a practical solution is available, more communities are expected to embrace electric vehicle charging.

GREEN ROOF BENEFITS



A roof is the condo equivalent of a Swiss Army Knife; a multi-function device essential to a quality lifestyle. A green roof makes that roof even more valuable.

The main reason to replace a roof is to fix leaks or avoid water infiltration.

Building roofs have evolved from what was an asphalt covering with a waterproof membrane that protects against water entering a building. Insulation has been incorporated to reduce energy costs by limiting heat loss. Cladding, an additional layer, offers added insulation and protection against the elements. Pavers on top of all this can convert a roof to outdoor space for sitting, walking, gardening or barbecuing.

What we call a green roof can take many forms. Reflective roof materials help decrease energy use and lower environmental emissions. A soil covering and plantings reduce heat absorption and

reflection of heat to street level. A green roof can control storm water runoff and have a life expectancy of up to 40 years – about double that of a traditional roof. Air quality is improved by reducing the heat-island effect that raises the temperature of a concrete community. Solar panels are an option that can reduce the amount of electricity purchased.

When it comes time to replace that condo building roof, consider the cost savings, increased value of unit resales and other benefits of investing in a green roof.

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I WISH SOMEONE HAD TOLD ME

"I wish someone had told me before I purchased" is a common refrain among condominium owners who were "told" before purchasing but never bothered to read or understand.

When owning a single-family home, the homeowner decides what they choose to do when it comes to maintenance, renovations and activities in the home. The situation is more complex in high-rise communities. Each owner has an obligation to ensure what occurs in the home does not impact on other residents or the community. Outside the four walls of each unit wiring, pipes and shared access to amenities such as a fitness room is governed by the corporation's governing documents for the safety and enjoyable use of all.

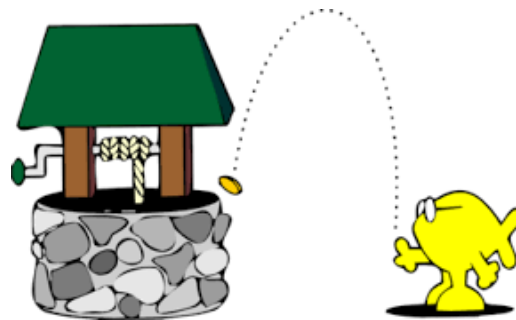
Problems arise because so few choose to read their governing documents, or because they come from a rental environment where things operate differently. Many mistakenly treat the corporation, board and manager as a landlord.



Single-family home ownership is simple. You purchase a home and the land it sits on, and are responsible for maintaining your property. When the roof leaks you repair it. You decide when and how to undertake repairs, and live with the consequences

of your decisions. You are responsible for shovelling snow, clearing walkways of ice, mowing the lawn and landscaping. When pipes freeze you alone are responsible. You are king of your castle

and accept all responsibilities that come with this.



In a condominium your owned property is limited by the walls of your unit. All other spaces are shared ownership

and you have agreed to band together with other owners to assume many responsibilities as detailed in the declaration for the corporation. Owners vote to elect directors tasked with management of the corporation and make decisions on your behalf which may include restrictions on pets, smoking or other activities. You agree to pay condo fees to support the corporation.

Many owners believe that the board and manager are there to provide service much like a landlord. They direct all complaints to one or both parties and expect resolution. The board is not a landlord. It exists to serve the community as a whole and employs management to assist in the task. Their obligations to individual residents are limited. Residents are not entitled to direct access to the board or agents such as the accountant, lawyer, engineer or condominium manager. The board does not address individual problems.

Transitioning from a tenant mentality to a

CONTINUED PAGE 19

LEDs NOW PREFERRED IN HIGH-RISE COMMUNITIES



It's easy to understand why LEDs are so popular in high-rise communities.

One community of 1,844 units made the

transition 15 years ago. When it came time to replace their 1,850 LED (Light-Emitting Diode) lights in 2021, which remain on 24 hours a day seven days a week, the choice to stick with LEDs was obvious. Residents love their brightness and light colour. The corporation loves the savings and low maintenance.

It was fifteen years ago that the community transitioned to LED retrofit bulbs using only 1 watt each from incandescent bulbs which require 13 watts and regularly burn out. The project cost was

about \$50,000 and savings were about \$20,000 a year in electricity. The project paid for itself in 2.5 years and generated savings over the remaining 12.5 years.

Additional savings were realized by not purchasing replacement bulbs and not having to replace burned-out bulbs.



I WISH SOMEONE HAD TOLD ME... CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18

condominium mentality takes time. After leaving the family home, many are unfamiliar with maintaining their home and simply assume the corporation will do it for them. Tenants are accustomed to calling the landlord when anything goes wrong. They are surprised to learn that repairs required of a landlord - fixing water leaks, replacing ceiling light fixtures, window caulking and repairing damaged electrical outlets - are now their responsibility.

Human nature is such that many choose not to read documents before purchasing or choosing to rent a condominium. Some people don't like being told what they can do in their home. While condominium living may not be appropriate for these individuals, there is no reasonable way to proactively ensure future residents understand their obligations.



HIGHER CONSTRUCTION COSTS AND CONDO PROJECTS

Building repair costs have skyrocketed this past year. Contractors are harder to find and delivery of supplies is taking longer.

Condominium communities wanting to complete work in the next year or two can expect their projects to cost more and take longer. Reserve funds are unlikely to have been adequately funded for these short-term projects.

The Construction Price Index for residential buildings has increased by 56 percent between Q1 2020 and Q2 2022. During this period, most reserve fund studies have likely incorporated cost inflation of five to eight percent.

The largest cost increases are those which are material-heavy projects such as window, elevator and roof replacements. Renovation projects of all types are also being delayed and costing more.

Part of the reason for cost increases is a labour shortage which is unlikely to disappear since fewer are entering the workforce than baby boomers who are now retiring. Fewer employees combined with Covid-related closures, some of which have become permanent, has caused shortages and delivery delays for construction materials that include lumber, metal, aluminum, sealants, waterproofing chemicals and fasteners. Projects are unable to proceed or be completed without these essential materials.

Supply deliveries are slower and more expensive. Many supplies come from overseas. Some ports

continue to struggle with finding employees to unload shipping vessels causing further delays and higher storage costs. Warehouses, rail terminals and trucking depots struggle with increased congestion from consumer items ordered online. Extreme weather events such as wildfires in British Columbia, below freezing weather in Texas in 2021 which caused many operations to close for months, and the 2021 Suez Canal obstruction have all caused further delays that continue to affect manufacturing and deliveries.

Many of these bottlenecks will eventually subside. In the interim, there is little condominium boards can do in response to these global factors other than to increase their budgets, allow more lead time for material deliveries and sign contracts well in advance of project start dates.

Many of these higher costs will be reflected in condo fee increases the next time your reserve fund is updated.



MORE THAN JUST A PLACE TO PARK YOUR CAR

That underground garage is more than a place to park your car. When repairs are required, they cannot be put off like a common area renovation without consequence.

The typical underground garage is constructed from the lowest level up to include:

- Concrete slab at the lowest level lightly reinforced with wire mesh or unreinforced.
- Suspended slab with reinforcing steel bars above the ground and typically covered by a waterproofing membrane to protect the structure from water and salt infiltration.
- Roof slab or deck which is often exposed to the outdoor elements. It is protected by a waterproof membrane and may be covered by grass, landscaping, concrete, asphalt and walkways.
- Throughout the structure are columns and beams to reinforce the structure; drains that should be located to remove potential ponding water; and expansion joints to support movement of the garage structure while remaining water-tight.

Deterioration in the parking structure is identified by visual observation and

various testing methods to identify corrosion, water infiltration and damage to concrete or other elements of the structure. Damage can result from water, salt or other contaminants, and general use.

[Brown & Beattie Building Science Engineering](#)

works with condominium corporations to repair and maintain their underground parking areas. Once damage is identified, they advise that “further damage and higher repair costs can be averted by

repairing sooner rather than later. Localized repairs defer the need for major structural repair or replacement. In the case of a water leak, immediate resolution can avoid damage to

the concrete slab or metal corrosion which are more costly to repair.”

For communities more than 20 years old, an underground garage should be assessed about every five years or as-needed once problems are identified. An assessment determines the overall state of your garage structure and can set out a timeline for major and minor repairs to maximize its lifespan.





CAPTURING CONDO DATA

Many decisions condominium boards make are subjective; based on casual observations and independent experiences. Relying on anecdotal experiences and opinions is biased and leads to poorer decisions. Gathering insights from a variety of owners and residents gives added perspective and insight to what the community values, wants to see improved, or where most are content.

Data based decision making is superior to decisions based on observation and intuition. It reflects the experiences of hundreds of individuals over extended periods helping to understand how perspectives change.

One way to gather this useful data is to conduct periodic, perhaps annual, surveys of condo owners and residents. Asking the same questions every year or two helps understand how views change.

- Is your unit a comfortable temperature?
- Would outdoor barbecue and seating space be desirable to you?
- Is outdoor covered seating something you would utilize?
- Would you recommend your building to a friend?
- Are we doing a good job at keeping the building clean?
- Is the exercise room well-maintained?

Looking at how resident responses change over time helps a board understand what is important and find opportunities for improvement. The purpose of such questions is to identify where

responses are changing, more positive or declining, and where strong opinions are held. Online survey software for this purpose is easy to use, affordable and typically available in popular property management software solutions.

“A more useful and equally easy approach to data gathering is to capture incident reports, amenity reservations, service requests and comments in a form suitable for ongoing analysis” explains Nicholas Gill of [BuildingLink Canada](#). “Condo management software and apps make it easy for residents to submit service requests electronically, and for better management and response. It incorporates tools and analytics for consolidating this information to better understand what problems exist or are growing.”

A similar approach occurs when your HVAC or Building Automation System continuously monitors and records temperatures throughout a building. This allows management to understand what must be adjusted or repaired to ensure comfortable temperatures throughout a building without wasteful use of energy to compensate for systems that require adjustment, repair or replacement.

Combined, both methods of data gathering provide boards and management with a more complete understanding of issues, concerns and problems affecting the building and community.

Gathering and utilizing data improves decision making and allows a board to focus on more important areas of concern.

SERVING ON THE CONDO BOARD



Despite growing interest and satisfaction with high-rise condominium living, few are interested in serving on the condo board or committees.

Serving on the board provides a feeling of accomplishment, personally influencing decisions, and a degree of control on management of what is the biggest financial commitment for most.

As important as it is to serve on the board, many are concerned about the real or perceived time commitment. There is discomfort about becoming a focus of resident anger or rage. General apathy is also an impediment.

Lack of time is cited most often for not volunteering. Evening meetings, when most have personal responsibilities, is part of the reason. Potential liability and unnecessarily long meetings inefficiently run are also deterrents.

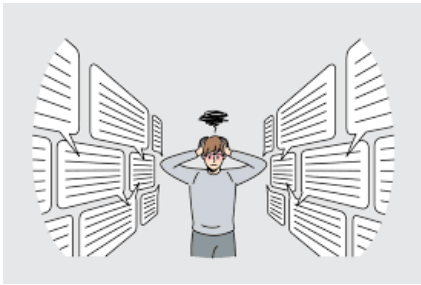
Time commitment is two or three hours a month for meetings, additional time to review materials prior to meetings, and periodic between meeting discussions to address immediate issues. Officers such as president, treasurer or secretary have additional obligations. Committees require less of a time commitment. They take some responsibilities from the board and serve as a training ground for future directors.

Since most people work directors tend to be retired or nearing the end of their career, or without young children, and have more time for volunteering.

Communities successful at attracting owners for service as directors and on committees tend to be better managed with fewer immediate problems. They have good communications among themselves and residents, and directors put time into planning for the future. In these communities many directors serve for multiple terms with sufficient turnover making room for new blood on the board with different ideas and perspectives.

Serving on the board is a commitment every qualified condo owner should make at least once.





TOO MUCH COMMUNICATION

At one time condominium community communications was nothing more than a paper notice posted in elevators, mailroom and high traffic areas. There may have been a monthly or quarterly newsletter distributed to each door. Today there is a flood of communication methods, channels, systems, technologies and apps. It can be easy to go overboard. Too many communication channels and systems create unnecessary effort without any benefit.

Forward thinking communities seek a unified experience that brings together all internal communications and seamlessly integrates with other information systems.

In addition to legally mandated disclosures, internal communications and information systems for a high-rise community are a combination of:

- Resident and owner records
- Information notices printed and placed in high traffic areas
- Electronic notices on monitors or distributed in place of printed notices
- Resident communications and service requests

E-mail, internet, intranet, text, Facebook, WhatsApp and Snapchat are just a few of the currently popular communication platforms. Utilizing all of them makes no sense if it quadruples your workload without any appreciable benefits or reaching more residents.

Too much information floating around in too many

channels is unhelpful and possibly harmful.

Condo management applications link resident and owner records to their communications with management making it easier to resolve specific issues and service requests while keeping all parties updated. Sending text messages and posting of general information is equally simplified thus improving communication without adding to workload. That elevator notice posted electronically can be available on the intranet for resident access at their convenience long after the notice has been removed.

Avoid Social Media Platforms

Platforms such as Facebook and chat boards are popular because they are inexpensive or free. They lack central oversight or management making it difficult to control content or distribution. While residents may choose to communicate on these platforms, they are not a reliable source for official and accurate information provided by building management or the board. Where these platforms are utilized, they should be monitored to ensure sensitive or false information is not being conveyed. When this is the case, clarification should be provided only through controllable channels.





NO HEAT

My condo is chilly at night. I complained to management and informed that the heat is off and the air conditioning is on.

Why can't I turn up my heat when I am cold? I am angry, fed up and think the Government should investigate these scams.

What are my rights?

M.

Response from Toronto Condo News

High-rise buildings offer a more efficient and effective way of heating and cooling than single-family homes. It costs less to keep the home comfortable. There are rarely cold or hot areas in residential units because of uneven heating or cooling.

Your ability to either heat or cool your unit has nothing to do with poor management or rights. It is part of the physical design of your home that is

impractical to change.

Most building systems are unable to provide both heating and cooling at the same time. Heating must be turned off, usually in late April or early May, so that air conditioning is available. Heating is usually turned back on in October or November depending on local temperatures each year.

Problems can arise during that in-between period when heating has been turned off and air conditioning has been turned on. This process can take a few days. Depending on weather conditions at the time, it may be preferable to have a short period without heating or cooling. When weather conditions unexpectedly change, this can become a problem for a few days.

Few consider this to be a problem. In a single-family home, where you can turn heat or air conditioning on at any time, making the entire home a comfortable temperature is difficult. The top floor never gets cool enough in summer. In winter, lower levels can be too cold. And, the cost of heating and cooling is much higher. Some wear warmer clothing during cooler periods. Others use electric heaters or avoid using some rooms.

If you find your unit to be too cool during the summer or the transition period between cooling and heating, you could purchase a small electric heater, wear warmer clothing or use heavier blankets. Unfortunately, there is nothing your building management or condo board can likely do to change this.





Information and resources for the Toronto and GTA condo community

Serving Condominium Residents, Directors and Management



Toronto Condo News Our monthly magazine is what condo dwellers are reading.

Condo Archives Comprehensive condo-focused library you can search for answers to your questions about condo living and condo management.

Condo Resource Guide Vendors and service providers for condominium managers, condominium directors and condominium residents. Condo Resource Guide is Toronto's #1 source for the Condo Professionals you need.

All resources available at
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