

WHAT CONDO DWELLERS ARE READING



TORONTO'S WORST CONDO FIRE

A September 2020 fire at 200 Wellesley St. E. changed how high-rise fires are fought in Toronto.

It started on the 24th floor after a cigarette landed on a balcony igniting hoarded paper and books. The resident wasn't home at the time but his front door was partially open because of debris in the home. Hoarded papers were fuel for the fire. Lights were melting. Aluminum and plastic were dripping from the

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FROM THE EDITOR

Our five-part series earlier this year looking at how the Condominium Authority of Ontario (CAO) and Condominium Authority Tribunal (CAT) have impacted the condo community, and our focus on the challenges from inflation, inadequate reserve funds and low condo fees prepared readers for addressing what we anticipated would be growing challenges in 2023 and 2024.

We have received an unprecedented response in the form of letters, comments, article suggestions and submissions. Through the remainder of this year we will be publishing your insights and practical experiences, and the perspectives of some very smart people including condo directors and those who advise them. These are people putting in the time and work, and making difficult decisions that impact our communities.

Keep your comments, thoughts and suggestions coming.

A PEEK

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NEGOTIATING MANAGEMENT CONTRACTS



Anyone providing condominium management services must have a written contract and deliver services in accordance with the contract. Negotiating these management contracts is one of the most important tasks

of the condo board. The quality of services available to your community depends on these negotiations and the written contract which should identify services to be provided by management and how they are to be evaluated. **Nothing more than what appears in the contract is to be provided, and nothing less.**

Management contracts between one and three years is typical. Services provided can range from basic to comprehensive. Managers may be required to work on site, off-site, or some combination for a specified number of hours. Fees are usually a fixed amount payable monthly. Additional services may be provided on request according to an agreed-upon fee schedule. Some services provided by other parties may be charged to the corporation. While these are the basic terms that should be addressed, much more should be included in the management contract.

***Focusing more on price at the
expense of good management
and a properly functional
community leads to
disagreements and problems***

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CONDO BOARDS & MANAGEMENT

NEGOTIATING MANAGEMENT CONTRACTS... CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

The importance of this contract and what it contains should not be understated. Focusing more on price at the expense of good management and a properly functional community leads to disagreements and problems.



Certain elements of a management contract are universal. This includes the fee, under what situations the fee may change and when, fee schedule for additional services, contract termination date, early termination terms and potential

financial penalties.

Management agreements should identify what is to be done on a day-to-day basis. Duties and responsibilities inclusive of administrative and financial obligations should be incorporated. There may be staffing and other considerations unique to the community.

Contracts should include the role and duties of the manager, performance expectations and performance reviews. Many contracts fail to include these important yet optional items.

A manager should be required to notify the board of violations placed on the property, and conditions where the building or property is known to be unsafe or in violation of any government agency.

Some boards allow the manager to make purchases or enter into contracts without board involvement,

or may specify maximum dollar amounts that don't require authorization. Allowing these smaller financial decisions to be made without board authorization can be more efficient and reduce the burden on all parties.

Another consideration is inspections or site visitations by the management company. It can be helpful to have a fresh set of eyes to identify what others may have missed. The number and frequency of visits should be clearly stated.

The board may desire the right to replace their manager if dissatisfied. If so, this should be stated in the contract along with specific terms necessary to trigger this option. Such a requirement may be desirable within the first 90 days, or after a performance review where specific concerns have not been addressed. Should a replacement manager be necessary, the board may desire the right to interview candidates rather than having one assigned.

A job description can better detail condo board expectations and should exist prior to signing a management contract. It specifies specific requirements of the job, working hours, and tasks the manager is expected to undertake.

Negotiating a good management contract takes time. Failing to take the time to do so is to be avoided.



TORONTO'S WORST CONDO FIRE... CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

ceiling. There was no visibility.

There was no sprinkler system – one of the most effective ways to prevent the spread of fire in a high-rise. The building was constructed prior to 2010 when they were first required. Residents were trapped in their suites and calling 911 while confusing heat and smoke coming through doorways and ducts with fire.

The fire burned out of control for six hours. Two of three firefighters on the floor ran out of air, collapsed and had to be rescued.

Events that day changed how the fire department deploys personnel, how much air they carry, and which trucks arrive on the scene when an active fire is confirmed. Lessons learned that day could very well save your life.

While water now causes more damage than fire, fire is the cause of more fatalities. During 2020, high-rise buildings accounted

for more than half of all fire fatalities.

High-rise residential buildings are constructed so that one unit in a high-rise can be destroyed without affecting any other units or the integrity of the building. This only works if building systems are maintained and residents don't circumvent their protective features.

Major Fires are Rare

Major fires are rare because of modern building safety systems. Concrete walls and floors don't burn. There are fire-alarm systems, fire-rated doors and sprinkler systems. These life safety systems are incorporated in construction codes and provincial fire code regulations. Routine inspections and maintenance are required.

High-rise residential buildings are constructed so



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TORONTO'S WORST CONDO FIRE... CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

that one unit in a high-rise can be destroyed without affecting any other units or the integrity of the building. This only works if building systems are maintained and residents don't circumvent their protective features.

Wind Driven Fires



Wind-driven fires are more problematic in high-rise buildings as wind speed increases with height. They are recognizable by smoke exiting windows with the hallway acting as a fireplace chimney. High-rise fires must be fought indoors rather than from a distance while evacuating hundreds or thousands of residents. Open doors make fires more dangerous.

Heat currents from a fire in one suite travelling down a corridor can kill instantly. A 1995 fire began in a couch in a 5th floor unit of a 30-storey rental building, near Yonge St. and Sheppard Ave. The resident opened his balcony door to vent smoke. Neighbours assisted but were unable to put out the fire. Everyone evacuated and left the suite door open. Wind entering through the open balcony door and blowing through the fire pushed heat and smoke into the hallway. Six people died after being overcome by smoke in the stairwells.

Wind-driven fires travel from windward to leeward

in a building. Open or missing doors and windows create a path for fire to follow. Anyone in the flowpath is in greatest danger while other areas can remain free of smoke and heat. Units on the same side of the building, protected by the same wind that feeds the fire, are safest from smoke and heat. Anyone on the opposite side of the unit on fire are at greatest risk, particularly if they open both a window and door thus creating a new flowpath for the fire.

The unit's door was left open which allowed the fire to spread uncontrolled. Heavy smoke filled the hallways making it impossible for many to escape and most victims succumbed to severe smoke inhalation. The risk of suffocation was too great for stairwells to be used.

Keep Doors Closed at all Times

A January 2022 fire that killed 19, one of the deadliest ever in the United States, was caused by a faulty space heater. The unit's door was left open which allowed the fire to spread uncontrolled. Flames were seen coming out of apartment windows as smoke filled the building. Heavy smoke filled the hallways making it impossible for many to escape and most victims succumbed to severe

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TORONTO'S WORST CONDO FIRE... CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

smoke inhalation. The risk of suffocation was too great for stairwells to be used.

Unit doors, and fire doors in hallways, are designed to delay or prevent the spread of smoke and fire. Had the unit kept their door closed, spread of fire and smoke would have been slower thus allowing many more to escape.

Rules for Dealing with Fires

Rules about how to deal with fires have changed, partially the result of experiments in abandoned high-rises. It is no longer standard practice to evacuate a building by the nearest stairwell.

If a fire alarm sounds, residents should remain in their unit, keep doors and windows closed, and wait for instructions from firefighters through the building's intercom system. This is safer than attempting to evacuate using a stairwell where it is more likely to be overcome by smoke.

If your unit is on fire then leave immediately and close the door behind you but don't lock it. Exit the building by the nearest stairwell. Do not go up to

the roof or to a mid-level terrace from which there may be no escape.

Everyday habits need to change. All unit doors should remain closed except when entering and exiting a unit. There are no exceptions for airing out a unit from cooking odour or smoke of any kind. Doors that don't close properly should be repaired. With hundreds of people living under a single high-rise roof, no single individual should be allowed to jeopardize the safety of others should a fire occur.



Only YOU
can prevent
Condo Fires



SECURITY TRAINING FOR HIGH-RISE COMMUNITIES



Regardless of where you live, home security is a concern. For high-rise communities, building security can be as simple as ensuring all outer doors are locked or installing a basic alarm system. People providing security services may be trained to use access and surveillance technology that incorporates surveillance cameras, and key fobs or access cards. More completely, a hybrid approach to security is advisable involving both technology and people. The chosen approach by any community depends on the size of a property and its location.

Every building has its specific problems, challenges and priorities. What is needed in a downtown luxury building differs from what may be necessary in a suburban community.



Security resources include intercom systems, surveillance cameras, access control devices, alarms and recording systems. Information systems are necessary for knowing who resides in a building, who is visiting and for recording interactions. People can be trained to use and respond to these systems rather than sit and watch

screens waiting for something to happen.

Residential buildings are inherently less secure than office buildings where everyone must show identification. Residents don't like to show identification which leads to a security breach. This can be addressed by using technology to help identify those who live in the building by sight, or by asking for identification. The same applies to deliveries, vendors and service people. Residents who ignore or work around building policies are a problem. There is a lapse in security if the regular person is not at their post, or when a replacement doesn't recognize faces.

The best security systems require a combination of people and technology. People require training in using technology and dealing with a residential community. Confrontations need to be handled properly. Any interpersonal issue, domestic dispute or building intrusion has the potential to turn violent. Even minor disagreements can quickly escalate to verbal or physical assault. De-escalation and knowing when to call police are essential skills for security staff forced to deal with violent or aggressive people. Well-trained security personnel transmit a sense of being calm and genuine, and conveying an interest in what is bothering someone while being respectful, clear and setting boundaries.

Comprehensive security requires a concentric approach. What locks and barriers exist on the perimeter of the property, and are they effective? Is there a glass door where indoor spaces can be seen

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SECURITY TRAINING FOR HIGH-RISE COMMUNITIES ... CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

from the outside? Once the outermost level of security is breached, such as a fence or door, what is the next level of security? Are existing doors and locks adequate? Once an intruder enters through a door into a lobby or hallway, what can be done to stop or deter them?

Concierge and security should be familiar with the building's residents and established procedures. This includes use of security technologies and systems for continuous monitoring. They should have a situational awareness and a plan for most situations. Their focus should be on preventing harm or injury to others or themselves. Property is replaceable.

A good concierge is trained to monitor body language, notice things and ask questions of those they don't recognize while maintaining decorum and without being rude. When an elevator lobby is secured by a door, concierge or security can greet people without recognizing them. If individuals don't have secure access to the elevator, they can't gain access. This blending of people and technology allows a single individual to effectively secure an entire building so long as they remain at their primary station.

If the concierge suspects something improper is occurring in a unit, they alert building management who can look into the issue and provide instructions on how to proceed.

Security is about making residents secure in the belief that their home is safe. This requires a combination of technology and people to meet the goals and priorities established by the condo board.

UNSOLICITED OFFER TO SELL YOUR CONDO

You've received an unsolicited offer to sell your condo. The unit was not for sale but someone wants to live in your building so has taken a more aggressive approach. With a shortage of units for sale, this is happening more frequently and is known as an unsolicited offer.

The prospective buyer is likely sophisticated and knowledgeable. They know what they want and where they want to live. They have likely researched the location, building type, unit layout and amenities. Their search has been narrowed down to one or a few buildings, or possibly specific units. They are now reaching out to you or a real estate agent in the hope of finding a unit to purchase in the building where they want to live.

Identifying and contacting unit owners in high-rise buildings is harder than reaching out to single-family homeowners, so an aggressive buyer is more likely to contact a real estate broker.

Unsolicited offers differ from "buy-for-cash" letters or unsolicited phone calls where there is no actual buyer and an offered selling price.

If you are considering selling your condominium and receive an unsolicited offer, it means someone is very interested in owning your unit. Respond to them quickly before they look elsewhere.





ON A DAY TO BE NAMED

The Condo Act has nearly 300 changes the Ontario Government has yet to enact. These are amendments passed in 2015 that have yet to be proclaimed by the Lieutenant-Governor. The low priority given to condo owner concerns and protections by the provincial government is evident in how both the Condominium Authority of Ontario (CAO) and Condominium Authority Tribunal (CAT) function.

Ontario has failed to follow through on commitments over the past eight years to address practices that increase costs, negatively impact on condominium governance and cause disillusionment in condominium living. Proposed changes to the Condo Act offer minor tweaking rather than changes that would have a more significant positive impact.

Problems begin when owners move into a new condo where fees are too low to maintain the building. Condo boards, fearful or ignorant of the problem fail to raise condo fees to a proper level. Communities where fees are raised get upset at a large and necessary increase in fees. Once a condo board is in place, problems escalate when condo fees remain too low, boards make poor decisions and current systems deter better-qualified people from serving or getting elected as directors. Some of this can be improved upon.

Toronto Condo News has identified measures that would improve condominium governance and management:

- Improve and expand the reporting of and access to reliable data.
- Address misuse of proxies, and have the Condo Authority of Ontario take an active role in discouraging their misuse.
- Prior to any condo election, require director-candidates to speak directly with owners at a meeting
- Eliminate the "compulsory education" requirement for directors.
- Require that reserve fund studies be based on 40-year projections and require that the minimum reserve fund contribution be increased from the current 10 percent to a more reasonable 25 percent or more.
- Encourage condo boards to employ a "professional condo director."
- Resolve the varied issues that deter people from submitting to the Condominium Authority Tribunal, completing the process, and the Tribunal's reluctance to address broader issues that could improve the situation for condominium communities.

See [The Business of Condominium Management](#) which details these recommendations that would provide dramatic and long-term improvements to condominium living and management.



WHAT CAUSES A BUILDING TO COLLAPSE



Buildings rarely collapse without warning.

The May 2023 collapse of a Davenport, Iowa residential building is the second avoidable disaster in recent memory. The mayor of Davenport claims "I don't know that anyone can anticipate a building collapsing," yet many saw this coming.

A structural engineer documented a shaky wall. A masonry company refused to allow its workers onto the site. A city inspector threatened to close some units.


Firefighters were asked to inspect the building, and residents had reported cracks in their floors and walls.

Many saw this coming but nobody ordered residents out, and it was only when a section of the six-story brick, steel and concrete building tumbled to the ground on the afternoon of May 28 that everyone


seemed to connect the dots. Three men were dead, about 50 tenants were left homeless without their possessions, and the city was faced with one of its taller buildings at risk of crumbling in the heart of its downtown.

This was preventable. The owner of the building, the city, engineering companies and construction workers were aware. Yet nobody warned residents.

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WHAT CAUSES A BUILDING TO COLLAPSE... CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

One resident reported the wall was bowing, window frame was pulling away from the wall, crumbling foundation and uneven floor. Management, after seeing the problems, responded "there are no structural deficiencies within the building" and "We have had the building approved by a structural engineer."

City officials knew about crumbling bricks and bulging walls since at least 2021, and threatened to close some units. In February 2023, one company informed the city about deterioration and said its workers would stay away from the site until dangerous conditions were fixed. That same month an engineering company undertook an emergency inspection and recommend needed work. A report that same month states "This will soon cause a large panel of façade to also collapse". Days before the collapse, a masonry company was asked for a quote. That quote was deemed too costly in part because about \$50,000 (US) was included to shore and support the building before workers would be allowed to enter the site.

Less than two days after the partial collapse, the city issued a fine for \$300 for failing to maintain the building in a sound, sanitary or safe condition.

Thus far, Ontario has been spared a similar tragedy. Yet some communities are moving in this direction



and having to contend with problems relating to inadequate maintenance. Garage work gets delayed; elevators are not adequately serviced; water-related problems that include leaks, pressure and temperature abnormalities; and air quality concerns quietly go unaddressed as directors and owners accept underfunded reserve funds incapable of maintaining their home. When a problem can no longer be glossed over, it becomes an immediate concern and more money needs to be spent on repairs than would otherwise have been the case.

Owners can pay now to properly fund their community or pay more later after dealing with inconveniences and costs that could have been avoided.

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INNOCENT OWNER PRINCIPLE AND CAT

As the Condominium Authority Tribunal (CAT) has evolved, one of its fundamental principles is to avoid reimbursing either party for costs even when successful against an opposing party. This differs from legal actions where the court presumes that owners are innocent and should not be financially responsible for costs when the other party is clearly in the wrong.

This can leave condominium owners responsible for costs when an owner pursues an action against the corporation without a realistic chance of success, often by dragging out issues and increasing corporation costs. Some argue it is unfair to impose all these costs on the condominium corporation and “innocent owners”. The CAT’s rules of practice state that no costs are awarded unless there are exceptional circumstances.

The “innocent owner” principle applied by courts awards costs to condominium corporations where the corporation has been successful in enforcing its governing documents. Some argue this same principle should apply to CAT. Rogue owners would be deterred from abusing the CAT process and increasing costs for all owners.

Some condominium corporations are too quick to initiate actions against owners, increase costs by involving legal counsel in what should not be a legal matter, or rely on legal threats to force residents to comply with corporation actions that may not be consistent with governing documents. These are serious risks since the corporation is in a stronger financial position than most owners and some

condo boards don’t always act in the best interests of owners.



While it would be beneficial if rogue owners be accountable for their actions in increasing costs for all owners, it remains equally or more important that owners with legitimate grievances not be deterred by a condominium corporation

choosing to incur legal costs to initiate or defend a Tribunal hearing.



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ONTARIO'S CONDOMINIUM ECOSYSTEM

There is a lot for condominium directors to understand when it comes to managing their high-rise home. Most directors never develop a good understanding of these complexities.

One condo owner has developed a chart he uses to help educate directors in his community.

In the centre of this chart is a broad overview of a condominium corporation's Governing Framework. It identifies legal documents that the corporation creates, adheres to and enforces to facilitate good governance.

These are the corporation's governing documents. Surrounding this Governing Framework are the

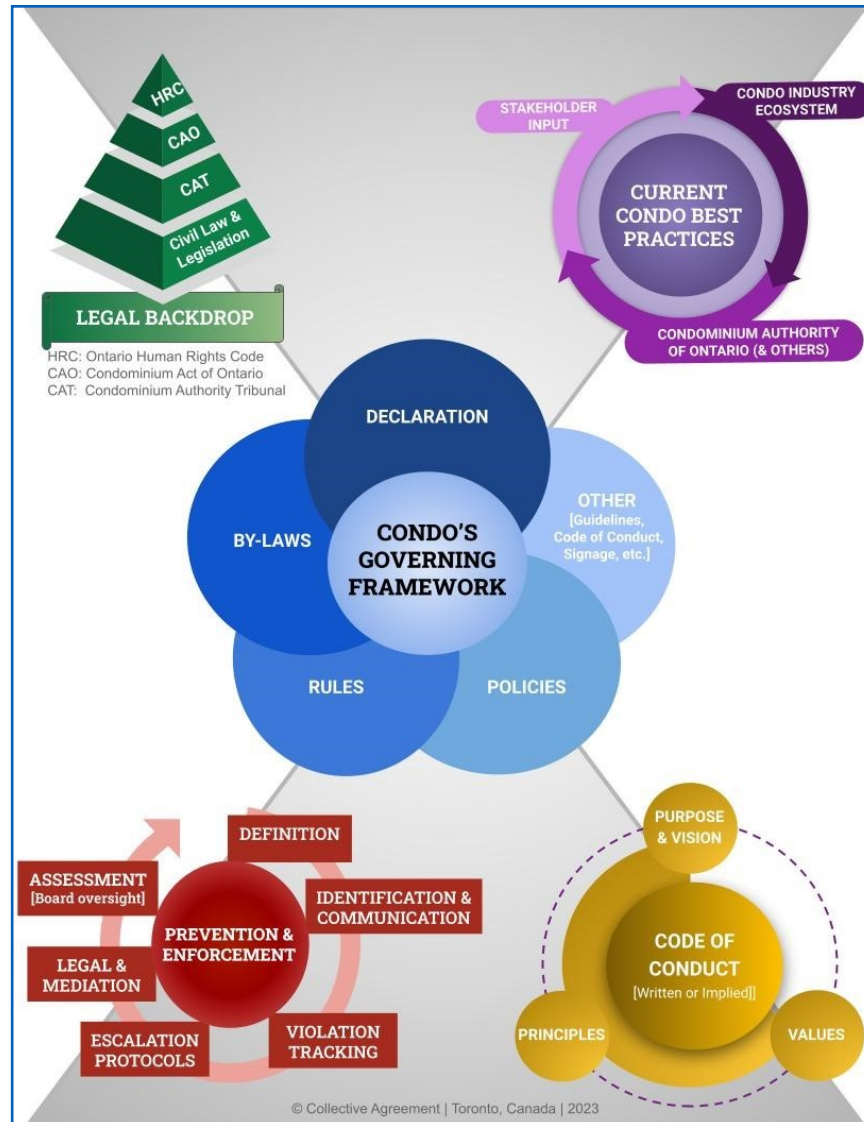
considerations encompassing good governance.

Legal Backdrop
Certain legislation supersedes the corporation's governing documents. At the top of this list is human rights legislation followed by the Condominium Act of Ontario which is enforced, in part, by the Condominium Authority Tribunal.

Any part of the corporation's governing documents inconsistent with this legal backdrop is beyond the corporation's authority.

Current Condo Best Practices

Condominium directors have resources to help them in learning about best practices and how best



CONTINUED PAGE 15....

ONTARIO'S CONDOMINIUM ECOSYSTEM... CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

to deal with any situation that may arise. We question inclusion of Condominium Authority of Ontario since best practices are not part of their mandate. Their Condominium Authority Tribunal does not consider best practices in deciding disputes brought before them. We would include [Toronto Condo News](#) magazine, [Condo Archives](#) and [Condo Resource Guide](#) among the top resources for condominium directors and management.

Prevention and Enforcement

There are numerous ways in which a condo board can seek to prevent problems and enforce their governing documents.

Code of Conduct

This rather vague area represents, perhaps, the hardest and most important way in which condo boards can be effective.

The best condo boards focus on the big picture by identifying what they want to achieve, how to interact with each other and in dealings with owners. This includes what and how they choose to communicate. Trusted and transparent condo boards are effective at this.

Purpose and vision is a precursor to making decisions. Done well, it defines the conduct of condo directors and aids in making correct decisions consistent with a clearly stated vision.

The best condo boards understand this chart and work hard to ensure all sectors are adequately addressed in the governance and management of their community.

Thank you to Bruce Young for providing this chart and assisting with this article.

SCHOOLS IN HIGH-RISE BUILDINGS

Toronto will soon have its first school in a high-rise condominium building.



An elementary school is planned for the third floor of a soon-to-be built waterfront condo building on Lakeshore Blvd. E., east of Yonge St. In a first for the Toronto District School Board, they will not own the land and will be renting space. This is Canada's first elementary school to be located in high-density mixed-use development. A child-care centre is planned for the second floor.

Toronto has struggled to provide schooling in high-density areas. Children have been unable to attend local schools because of a persistent shortage of space while older schools struggle with low enrollment. Land was either unavailable or too expensive in high-density areas. The most affected areas include Yonge-Eglinton, Yonge-Sheppard and the waterfront.

With so many families living in condominiums and high-density urban communities, this approach is long overdue. Renting space allows schools to be built where there is demand. They can expand or close down as needed. Space can be repurposed rather than sitting unused as a community ages.

The school will have access to nearly 2.5 acres of space in the development where children can play.



TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATIONS IN BUILDING MANAGEMENT

Technology constantly marches forward. Here are some of the current trends in high-rise building management.

comfort levels and equipment failures are available for management to analyze and act on. If you think of your building as a living organism, building management software allows for the continuous monitoring of vital signs and the tweaking of systems to improve how they function.

Building management software builds on technological innovations in communications which provide us with internet access, wireless technology, e-mail and other forms of communication. It has become the most effective way to monitor the various mechanical systems in a building and how they interact with each other. This blending of equipment and software allow managers and building staff to monitor everything from air quality to water and security systems. Real-time reporting alerts of irregularities. Data on energy efficiency,

More precisely, building management software is actually a network of micro-computers placed on

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TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATIONS IN BUILDING MANAGEMENT... CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16

equipment and throughout a building to monitor many things including temperature and water flow. Data is reviewed by the system to keep things operating as desired. A dashboard provides management with an overview of all systems and how each is functioning.

Water or leak detection systems are increasingly important. They utilize sensors to detect moisture at which time an immediate alert is sent to building management. They have proven effective in identifying leaks sooner thus preventing more severe and costly damage from hidden or excessive water infiltration. A leak in one unit becomes less likely to damage other units or common areas. Repair and insurance costs are reduced.

Condo management software once referred to a simple electronic database storing information on each building resident. It now utilizes evolving computer and communication technologies to reach its current state – a comprehensive and economical system of records management, communication and facilities management. It incorporates solutions for parking control and parcel management. Today, any inability to maintain proper records, communicate with owners, respond to problems, or manage amenities is a management or people problem. The technology is so economical and easy to use there is no excuse for a community not to do so.

Global warming is impacting buildings of all types. Many areas have enacted regulations and requirements to reduce greenhouse gases and carbon footprints, control water flow and manage the impact of heat radiating off buildings. This will surely change the way many choose to heat and cool their homes. The trend is to increased use of electricity, of which Toronto has ample capacity.

Areas more dependent on gas, and equipment powered by gas, are likely to undergo more dramatic changes. Greater use of internet or WiFi technologies with heat pumps and other systems is expected to improve energy efficiency and reduce your building's carbon footprint.

The rise of electric vehicles has increased demand for charging stations. This requires enhancements in a building infrastructure to provide the volume of electricity required, and parcel it out without impacting on building operations or in-suite activities.

Air purification systems are being improved in response to Covid. There are enhanced filters, and individual-use units for suites.

Building management technologies will no doubt continue to evolve in response to changing needs.





WHAT IT TAKES TO RUN A HYBRID ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The world of meetings has changed dramatically over the past years. What was once thought impossible has become a reality. Homeowners' meetings are now taking place online.

More condos are finding it more convenient and cost-effective to hold governance meetings virtually. They are also conducting elections online to save both time and money rather than using only a paper ballot.

The desire for flexibility is a driving force behind this shift, but not all communities prefer exclusively

virtual meetings.

The good news is, it's possible to have both virtual and in-person voting and meeting simultaneously.

Each community is unique, and if you don't want to force every member to vote and meet virtually, you can take the hybrid route.

What Are Hybrid Meetings?

A hybrid meeting involves a mix of in-person and remote attendees. Remote attendees join the

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WHAT IT TAKES TO RUN A HYBRID ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING... CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18

meeting via a virtual conferencing platform, such as Zoom. A camera installed in the meeting room will typically act as their window into the meeting.

In-person attendees join the meeting and participate as they normally would. Thanks to modern technology, they can easily hear and see the remote participants as if they were right there in the room with them.

Owners are given the choice of voting electronically, either in advance or live during the meeting.

In-person attendees will have the option to cast their vote using paper ballots if they don't feel comfortable doing it electronically.

Why Opt for a Hybrid Meeting?



Firstly, hybrid meetings provide flexibility. If you don't have much space, hybrid meetings are the perfect way

to minimize the number of people physically present in a room.

Participation, on the other hand, tends to increase. People who may not be able to attend in-person can join virtually, leading to quorum and better meeting outcomes.

Hybrid meetings could be more time efficient than fully in-person meetings. Most likely, you will use an electronic voting platform so that both in-person and virtual attendees can cast their votes.

Hybrid Meeting Checklist



1

Determine the meeting format:

Survey your ownership

Choose a service provider:

Hire experts to organize a hybrid meeting

2

3

Have a communication plan:

Introduce the new format

Equip the meeting room:

Use high-quality microphones

4

5

Design meetings for all attendees:

Appoint a moderator for assistance

Leverage electronic voting:

Choose platform with various ballot types

6

7

Establish meeting protocols:

Explain how to vote and participate

Follow-up communication:

Gather participants' feedback

8

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WHAT IT TAKES TO RUN A HYBRID ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING... CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19

Most electronic voting platforms provide options to vote live and well before the actual meeting reducing the time needed during the live in-person meeting.

Pro tip: Find electronic voting providers that accommodate both electronic and paper ballots, proxies, and have safeguards against double registration or voting in a scenario where owners can participate virtually or in-person.

Hybrid Meeting Best Practices

Sound, video and connectivity are all important for a seamless hybrid meeting. Make sure your meeting space is well-lit, with good acoustics and a reliable internet connection. To enhance the hybrid meeting experience, consider using a projector and a 360-degree camera equipped with a microphone. This way, you'll create a seamless and engaging environment for all participants.

In-room technology is only half the picture; meeting moderation also plays a central role. One of the biggest challenges of hybrid meetings is ensuring that virtual attendees feel just as engaged as those who are physically present. Assign someone to moderate the meeting, facilitate interactions and ensure all attendees can hear and understand each other.

To ensure a fair and accurate voting process, the chairperson should verify the eligibility of virtual attendees to vote. This includes confirming the presence of both virtual and in-person attendees who are eligible to cast their vote.

Pro tip: Hybrid meetings present a unique set of challenges. Consider partnering with a reliable service provider who can organize your hybrid AGM from equipment setup to moderation and results.

Recommendations

Hybrid meetings are easy to do poorly and hard to do well. So here are four tips to help you run a successful hybrid meeting:

- Survey your ownership to gauge interest in a hybrid meeting.
- Encourage electronic voting and discourage paper ballots or paper-based submitted proxies. This will streamline the voting process and eliminate the need for physical paperwork.
- Nothing kills a meeting's momentum like waiting to fix a glitch. Assign a moderator to facilitate the meeting and troubleshoot any technical issues that may arise.

Hybrid meetings and voting allow every owner to choose how they want to participate. It's a great option for condos to conduct meetings that meet the needs of all participants. By leveraging technology and providing strong facilitation we can create hybrid meetings where all participants — whether in the room or an ocean away — feel engaged and equal.

Adam Arcuri is CEO at [CondoVoter](https://condovoter.com). [CondoVoter](https://condovoter.com) provides electronic voting to condominium corporations in compliance with Ontario's condominium laws.



COYOTES EVERYWHERE



Coyotes are thriving as we continue to encroach on their space.

More people are reporting interactions with coyotes which are being forced to share their space with us. Some take evening walks carrying a baseball bat or wearing a "coyote vest" with spikes for protection.

Reasons are simple and unavoidable. Toronto, and other Canadian cities, are growing. Coyote living spaces are being taken over by residential housing, commercial buildings and industry. There is less space for them to retreat to.

Coyotes are smart animals that adapt to city life. At one time they located in or near agricultural areas where food and shelter was available. Now it is cities where they find food and shelter. They build their dens under decks, in culverts, and other sheltered spaces. There is plenty of food in the form of rodents, carrion, fruits and vegetables. Dumpsters, garbage cans and waste discarded on the street or in parks provide a plentiful source of food.

Growing cities are better habitats for coyotes. There is more food for them to eat and places for shelter. Many choose to feed them. They are less likely to be hunted and trapped. Overall, their survival rate has doubled. One of the few areas where coyotes choose not to settle is near airports.

Coyotes are territorial. They can be hostile toward pets although attacks on humans are rare. Lethal efforts to control them have failed. It is common

that only the alpha (or lead) coyote breeds. When killed, the group disperses and more tend to reproduce. When trapped or hunted, they often produce larger litters to compensate.

In cities, there is a belief that coyotes are having smaller litters and delaying reproduction so as not to overcrowd their territories.

Coyotes like living in the city and are unlikely to move away. Encounters with them will continue to increase.

Safety Precautions

Avoid approaching coyotes, their den or their young, even if they seem tame, sick or injured.

If you encounter a coyote;

- Avoid turning your back on them and running or walking away. Maintain eye contact and slowly back away.
- Make yourself appear as large or imposing as possible. Flap your jacket or raise your arms.
- Be assertive and try to scare it away. Swing a walking stick, baseball bat or tennis racquet if accessible. Shine a flashlight. Throw a stone or ball in its direction.
- Make loud sounds. Stomp your feet or clap your hands. Use a whistle or horn if available. Yelling at the coyote also serves to alert other people nearby.





CONDO CURRENCY TO MEET ENVIRONMENTAL TARGETS

Canada has made commitments to reduce the country's greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. Meeting these targets will require success at reducing building emissions which account for nearly 40 per cent of energy-related greenhouse gas emissions.

Exceeding these targets is seen as crucial to helping mitigate the effects of climate change and global warming. There is an urgency to accelerate our efforts.

High-rise residential communities have had limited success at getting their communities to meet city and regional targets for improvement in areas such as recycling, waste diversion and energy efficiency.

One approach that has had success elsewhere is to develop an alternative currency that can only be obtained by meeting social and environmental targets, and providing desirable ways for it to be used. Let us call this Condo Currency that could be issued by the city or province.

Communities would earn this currency by meeting certain targets consistent with regional goals. Communities can do a better job at ensuring items deposited as recycling are not contaminated. They can reduce waste disposal by encouraging residents to "regift" items they no longer need. Energy use can be reduced by upgrading building systems, energy efficient lighting and using less water. Communities can reduce heating, cooling and lighting of spaces when unused.

As a community meets specific targets, they receive

Condo Currency which can be used for further improvements. This could reduce the cost of replacing boilers; installing a building automation system, leak detection technology or efficient lighting systems; or closing down the trash chute. All help to further reduce a building's environmental footprint and greenhouse emissions. Some communities may use these funds to install electric vehicle charging stations. Perhaps this currency could be used to obtain the services of a consultant to advise on improving building operations. Vendors may choose to accept this currency as partial payment for their services.

This approach would help communities to enter the cycle of continuous improvement that is necessary to achieve and maintain environmental targets. Each community decides how best to achieve the desired goals including education and motivation of residents in what is required of them. Communities that are successful at achieving environmental targets directly benefit from their efforts.

Alternate currencies have been tested elsewhere and found to be effective motivation to achieve environmental targets. They begin the process of positive reinforcement that can encourage communities to take a more proactive approach to achieving our environmental targets.



THE COST OF DISORGANIZATION



There is no disputing the benefits of high-rise condominium living. Convenience, no-maintenance amenities and socialization are at the top of the list. The condo board puts in many hours to make the high-rise home enjoyable for everyone.

Keeping everything in good condition requires more effort than most realize. There are contracts to monitor, read and approve. Engineering reports need to be reviewed. Project and contractor quotes are solicited and considered. Budgets are prepared, invoices approved, meetings attended and meeting minutes produced. New directors quickly learn that there is much more to condominium management than they realized. Demands on condo directors exceed their available time.

Many communities operate in a disorganized manner at great cost. Primary problems are lack of good records which slow down information gathering. Decision making slows down and quality of decisions degrade. Consider what occurs at board meetings. An agenda is created. Material is gathered and distributed. Something new raised at a meeting requires research and deliberation in order to make an informed decision. Far too often, necessary information is just not available, so boards create action items in an attempt to obtain the information they require which can take weeks or months.

Finding information that should exist is a constant challenge. That reserve fund study from three years ago. Meeting minutes about continuing water leaks that began five years ago. Days pass from when a

condominium manager is asked to find documentation to when it is searched for and eventually found. It can take weeks before a required document has been found even if it had been sent to multiple people dozens of times in the past. Digging through filing cabinets, storage boxes and e-mails, or reviewing board meeting minutes is laborious and time consuming. This should all be unnecessary simply to re-share information.

Many communities lack necessary information on their building. Prior maintenance and repair histories, reports on problems, past board decisions and reasoning may all be lost in a vast disorganized storage system that is impossible to sift through. Boards are forced to revisit matters previously discussed and decided on without benefit of now inaccessible records. Projects move slowly and poorer decisions are made because records are unavailable. Problems compound as board members and condominium managers change with no way to transfer their knowledge.

There is a misconception that condo fees can never go down. If boards were more organized, this would be possible. Fewer employees repeatedly searching for the same information leaves less time to do actual work. Boards would make better decisions if they had access to better information from their internal records. When equipment fails, knowing if it is under warranty could save on repair and replacement costs. Lack of records makes it impossible to know if work was done by subpar vendors.

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VISITOR PARKING NOT FOR OWNERS/RESIDENTS

It can be convenient or lucrative to utilize visitor parking rather than use an assigned space for the unit. Increasingly, residents are choosing not to own a vehicle and prefer to rely on public transit. Rather than go unused, they may rent their parking space to someone in need of it. On those occasions when a car is needed by a resident without access to their parking space, they require temporary parking and may choose to rely on spaces reserved for visitors.

Visitor parking exists to be used by guests of those who reside in the building. When spaces are taken up by resident vehicles, they are unavailable for their intended use.

High-rise communities have a limited number of parking spaces for use by visitors. Among the rules that may be in effect are 1) Owners can only park in

a parking space they own or lease; and 2) Owners can not park on any portion of the common elements including visitor parking spaces. The combined intent of these rules is to restrict use of visitor parking to actual visitors and guests.

Visitor parking is intended for the temporary, short-term or infrequent use of those who are guests of residents which may include contractors and health care workers.

Visitor parking is maintained through condo fees and should remain accessible for their intended purpose rather than monopolized by those in need of "extra" or more convenient parking.



THE COST OF DISORGANIZATION... CONTINUED FROM PAGE 23

Condo boards should have more insight into, and control over, their expenses. It should be easier to plan and track projects, review expenditures and make better decisions. Less time should be spent on maintenance and more time planning improvements.

Imagine how much faster things would proceed, and decisions made, if records were better organized and in a central place so that all information could be found in minutes rather than hours, days or weeks. Some of this is achieved by making information available to owners through

condo management software or a website.

Solutions are available. Information available to owners and residents can be organized and made available using condo management software or apps. Information intended for the board and management can be maintained with proper password security. Time taken to properly organize information and records can potentially save thousands of dollars monthly by reducing service calls, freeing up condominium manager time from fielding information requests, leveraging warranty coverage, and better decisions.



MOTION FOR OWNERS TO DISCUSS EXPENDITURES



As a homeowner, I tried to put forth a motion in Other Business at an AGM and was told I wasn't allowed.

Is this true?

The motion was;

"Be it resolved that the Board of Directors have townhall meetings with members if a potential expense exceeds \$50k."

Your expertise is appreciated.

Response from Toronto Condo News

As a condominium owner, you have certain rights. When it comes to the Annual General Meeting, you

have the right to propose items to be addressed or discussed at the meeting. The Board makes final decisions about what is to be addressed at the meeting and distributes an Agenda.

At the meeting, owners do not have the right to change an agenda by putting forth a motion for the Condo Board to consider, discuss and vote on. These are matters solely determined by the Condo Board.

The motion you propose is problematic. Owners have the right to vote for and elect directors that serve on the Condo Board. Their role is to make decisions on behalf of the community. The Condo Board does not have the right to pass along their obligation to vote on motions relating to the management of the community. Condo owners do not have the right to restrict the Condo Board's authority in ways that are inconsistent with the Condo Act.

The motion you propose, to require the Condo Board to hold town hall meetings and to discuss expenses exceeding \$50,000 with owners, is inconsistent with the Condo Act and thus inappropriate based on our general understanding. While there are times where a town hall meeting or other form of communication is appropriate for the Condo Board to discuss matters with the community, these decisions are at the discretion of the Condo Board.

From a practical perspective, what you propose is dangerous and can lead to gridlock. The building collapse in Surfside Florida where nearly 100 people lost their lives was a situation where owners were unwilling to approve necessary expenditures for building repairs. The Condo Act in Ontario prevents such a situation from occurring. Your proposed motion would create such a situation.

If there is lack of trust in the Condo Board to make such a decision, the best course of action is to elect directors that you do trust.



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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