

# WHAT CONDO DWELLERS ARE READING

## OVERDOSING ON DIGITAL



People have a need to speak and meet in-person. During the pandemic, when this need was taken away, people sought out ways for direct interaction.

Many have programmed themselves to go through their day on autopilot. They wear earbuds and listen to music or podcasts while selecting groceries in the supermarket. They sit in their chair playing Wordle, Quordle and Octordle with a level of efficiency once reserved for work.

With the advent of self-checkout in so many stores, we can easily

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## FROM THE EDITOR .....

It has become increasingly clear that our interest in all things digital has consequences which worsened during the pandemic. Large segments of society are now overstressed when forced to interact with others and at even the slightest indication of controversy.

**Overdosing on Digital**, our feature article, looks at this trend and how it has impacted on our condominium communities where we encouraged isolationism by closing off access to common areas and activities. Meetings were, and continue to be, conducted virtually when most really want this loneliness, isolation and virtual nonsense to end.

Long after restrictions have eased, communities perpetuate this unnatural situation by restricting the ability of individuals to socialize and congregate. Digital contact is not, and never has been a practical alternative to direct contact. It's time to recognize and reverse the damage this has caused.

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# Package Management Solutions



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**MAIL ROOM PROCEDURES AND ETIQUETTE**

A mail room is the most frequently used space in a residential building as residents check mail on a nearly daily basis. As a central area of the building, many mail rooms include a bulletin board or electronic monitor for communicating with residents.



**How Mail Delivery Works**



Mail is delivered by an employee of Canada Post. Only they have access to the back area mail room to insert mail in private mailboxes. This back area and the mailbox are inaccessible to

building management or employees. Larger items, those requiring a signature on delivery, and anything delivered by a private delivery service are not to be left in a mailbox or mail room.

The vast amount of mail is delivered and retrieved without problem. The most common problems to occur are misdelivered mail and handling of unwanted mail.

**Unwanted Mail**

Unwanted mail can be flyers and other unsolicited materials, or

**CONTINUED PAGE 4 ...**



## MAIL ROOM PROCEDURES AND ETIQUETTE... CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

misdelivered mail.

Unwanted mail, after being removed from the mailbox, should be taken to the unit for disposal. If a waste or recycling bin is provided in the mail room area, unwanted items should be disposed of in the bin.

Under no circumstances should unwanted mail be left on the floor, ledges or table in any common area. If your community has a rule against this, as is likely, unit owners may be put on notice that a repeat improper disposal offense could result in a chargeback for cleaning or other costs resulting from these actions.

### Misdelivered Mail



Misdelivered mail is that which is delivered to an incorrect address by

Canada Post. In some buildings this can be returned to the concierge as misdelivered mail. They will contact the appropriate individual if they reside in the building, or return it to the postal carrier. Some communities allow misdelivered mail to be left on a ledge in the mailroom for others to retrieve. If no other options exist, write "misdelivered" on the front of the envelope and push to the back of the empty mailbox for retrieval by the postal carrier.

Discarding or destruction of misdelivered mail, while not necessarily illegal, is disrespectful. Everyone has their mail misdelivered from time to time. Treat someone else's mail as you would like your personal mail to be treated if mistakenly

delivered elsewhere. Return it to the postal system so it can be delivered to its intended recipient.

### Improperly Delivered Mail



Certain services require a signature to confirm receipt of mail or packages. One example of this

is Express Mail which is used to deliver time sensitive or important documents such as passports. It is not uncommon for the postal carrier to misdeliver these items by failing to obtain a signature.

Government and other agencies charge consumers a premium for their use of signature-required postal services, yet there is no way to verify the recipient of this mail when delivered by Canada Post without a signature being obtained. If you truly require proof of delivery, it is best to utilize a private delivery service which ensures a signature is provided when the appropriate service is paid for by the sender.

Condo management has no control over how residents handle misdelivered mail nor how Canada Post operates. They can advise residents of how to dispose of unwanted mail and how best to return misdelivered mail.

### Private Delivery Services

Private delivery services are more secure and reliable than postal services. They are more diligent in obtaining a signature prior to releasing items. If

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## MAIL ROOM PROCEDURES AND ETIQUETTE... CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

items are misdelivered, their tracking systems allow an item to be found, retrieved and properly delivered.

Private delivery services are the preferred choice for valuable packages and important documents.

Private delivery services do not have access to building mailboxes.

In buildings where private delivery services are not accepted, residents must be home at the time packages are delivered or make arrangements for an alternate delivery location.

Most communities accept deliveries from private delivery services. They may accept packages, including signature-required or larger package deliveries from the postal service. Once accepted, these packages will be stored and

residents informed on their arrival. Condo management software and applications, such as [UpperBee](#), provide technology for managing package deliveries.

Increasingly popular for dealing with deliveries from private delivery services is the use of secure smart parcel lockers such as those provided by [Coinamatic](#). Packages can be delivered and retrieved without involving concierge/security. Residents are informed electronically when a package arrives for them and provided with retrieval instructions.

Our increasingly wired and electronic society still and will always require a way to securely receive items. Residential buildings failing to provide a secure system of receiving mail and packages likely struggles with additional safety and security concerns.



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OVERDOSING ON DIGITAL... CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

get through the day without interacting with a single individual. Deliveries are left at the door to be retrieved after the vehicle has departed and never having to thank or converse with the driver. Not being in the proximity of or speaking with a single individual has become easy with the automation that comes from digital technology. New technologies promise more of the same.

This is the future many of us are moving toward and embracing. The conveniences of technology come at a cost. Loblaws is testing automated and driverless delivery vehicles. Staffing shortages are likely to be addressed through automation. Shopping apps will soon allow you to browse store aisles before placing orders from your couch. Efforts to reach a person, increasingly, end in failure as employment for people disappear. Each evolution of automation and digitization takes us further away from interacting with people.

During the pandemic, people were desperate for human interaction. Holiday rituals, work, entertainment and school were all done in isolation despite the prevalence of Zoom. Some described this as the "new normal". Anything and everything we need to do was conducted on the phone, computer and internet from the comfort of our home. Yet everyone was miserable. We had forgotten that what we need is not digital technology.

Miniaturized screen images are no replacement for people or reality. Spend too much time indoors looking at electronic screens and we feel the need for diversions. During the pandemic this meant long walks, baking, puzzles and outdoor activities. Outdoor dining became popular, and any excuse to talk with someone while outside. We stood on sidewalks and met in the park, brought lawn chairs into parking lots, and walked for hours in the snow.

We set up heaters in garages and invited friends to visit.

In our high-rise communities we did the opposite. We encouraged isolationism by closing off access to common areas. Elevators were restricted to one or two people at a time. Meetings were, and continue to be, conducted virtually when most really want this loneliness, isolation and virtual nonsense to end. Long after restrictions have eased, some high-rise communities choose to perpetuate this unnatural situation by restricting the ability for individuals to socialize and congregate. Some communities remain unwilling to conduct meetings in person despite the damage it causes to communities and individuals.

Personal conversations, not through electronic devices, are essential to our development. Without direct interactions we struggle with more substance abuse, diabetes, heart disease and suicide. Our high-rise communities have lost the collaboration and smarter choices that come with in-person meetings and socializing.

What we need are real experiences. Meeting in person, group activities and opportunities to socialize need to take precedence over virtual experiences. Its time our high-rise communities revert back to the open communities they were intended to be.



## GREENER GRASS

### *Grass and Lawn Care*

Healthy grass! Lush lawns! These are visible signs of a healthy and prosperous community. Developers depend on the appeal of grass and parkland when selling properties.

Healthy grass, and grass roots, depends on soil composition and irrigation. Landscape professionals advise on seeding and feeding grass, and dealing with weeds. They understand when it is best to water lawns, frequency and amount of water. They care for your grass to ensure it keeps looking its best.

Healthy lawns provide tangible benefits. Air quality improves as carbon dioxide and other airborne pollutants – soot, dust, car exhaust – are absorbed. Water runoff is reduced as it is absorbed into the ground and filters contaminants. Strong and healthy roots help anchor soil to the ground and protect against erosion. On a hot day, grassy areas are cooler than exposed soil, concrete or asphalt.

When your chosen variety of grass is appropriate for local conditions, maintenance is easy. Mow and provide an inch or so of water weekly. Fertilize a few times during the year. Periodic seeding increases grass density and fills in thinner areas.

An area with full sun and good irrigation can support varieties of grass that differ from shaded areas. Choosing the right variety of grass seed requires consideration of climate, precipitation, lighting, local pests, and the amount of wear your turf will endure.



Winter is hard on grass.

Salt used on roads and walkways can damage it. Grass goes dormant during hot summers but recovers if not fertilized during this time.

Lawns in high-rise communities are subject to heavy use. Even light foot traffic on a frozen or wet lawn, by pets and people, can damage root structures and compact the soil. As the weather warms and everyone emerges from winter, lawns are most fragile. Using grassy areas for aerobics, sunbathing, playing and dog walking place stress on the lawn. Grass requires protection if it is to remain green and lush through summer.

As appealing as it is to have a grassy expanse for recreation and relaxation, the more activity on a lawn, the harder it is to maintain.

Growing demands for outdoor space require greater care for these spaces to remain usable.





# CONDO CROWDING

Condominium buildings are housing more people than they are designed to support.

Elevators are overcrowded, break down frequently and require servicing. Exercise rooms are too small and there is inadequate outdoor space.

Once of the reasons for this is that young adults are living with their parents for longer. In 1971, more than 90 percent of those in their early twenties had moved out of the family home. By 2021, 35 percent were still at home with many in their mid-30s.

Condo fees intended to support two older adults must now also support their adult children that have yet to move out. There is more crowding, noise, utilities use and garbage to contend with.

Suite occupancy rules are intended to protect all condo residents, help to prevent overcrowding and not having condo owners subsidize higher occupancy suites. Too many using common or parking areas may be problematic. Units with more residents use more utilities, generate more trash, create more noise and odour, and cause more wear on common areas. Elevator systems get more heavily used and frequently out of service thus requiring more maintenance and repairs. There may be safety and lifestyle

considerations.

Condo by-laws may limit how many can reside in a condo suite – perhaps two people in a one-bedroom suite and four people in a two-bedroom suite. This may be a hard rule with no exceptions or a soft rule that can be overridden with approval. There may be higher condo fees for units with more people than allowed to compensate for the cost of increased occupancy. Renovations that add or remove a bedroom from original construction are unlikely to impact on allowable residency.

Occupancy exceeding what is allowed results in heavier use of utilities and common areas, and additional costs that should appropriately be charged to higher occupancy suites.

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## RESPONDING TO RESIDENT CONCERNS



Responding to resident concerns and enforcing the corporation's rules is a part of every condominium manager's job.

In any community of hundreds of people, problems are to be expected. When nobody is around, some will engage in improper behaviour. Others will complain. Not all complaints will come from people who are calm or speak clearly. There may be demands to immediately correct a problem when other priorities take precedence.

The role of condominium manager is to accept concerns calmly, not react to aggression or unreasonableness, and help resolve problems.

### Address Concerns Promptly

Not all concerns can or should be addressed quickly. They should be addressed with a positive tone and in a reasonable period of time. Listen to what someone has to say, reassure them the issue will be addressed, and identify the next steps. Remind residents that more urgent issues take precedence. Avoid deferring resolution for more than a couple of weeks without extenuating circumstances.

Concerns and complaints should be formally logged. Note when the issue was first brought to management's attention, by whom and maintain communication. Records of management actions or responses, and those of the resident or other

involved parties should be retained. Condo Management Software is the easiest way to maintain these records and ensure all parties are updated.

### Never Make Promises

Listen to the resident, take time to obtain facts, and offer an estimated timeline for resolution. Never make promises when others are involved in addressing a concern. Speaking to others while obtaining facts, and reaching out for expertise or assistance from employees or contacts takes time. All have different priorities and commitments, and may not be able to respond to you as quickly as desired. It is better to avoid making promises beyond your control.

**The role of condominium manager is to accept concerns calmly, not react to aggression or unreasonableness, and help resolve problems**

### Maintain Contact with the Resident

Don't allow residents to feel you have forgotten them or their concern. Provide an update whenever new information is available. If the corporation decides to take action, inform of what action will be taken and when.

The best condominium managers know the job involves more than maintaining physical infrastructure. They maintain a good relationship with residents by being responsive to their concerns. They communicate frequently, appropriately and in a respectful manner. Problems and concerns are always addressed in a timely, consistent and fair manner.



# COURT-APPOINTED ADMINISTRATOR

The last resort for a damaged and dysfunctional condominium community is a court-appointed administrator. A Superior Court of Justice judge will make this appointment to fix the extreme circumstances – political, social or financial – that needs to be corrected.

This is the remedy of last resort when owners have been found unable to self-govern. It is difficult to obtain, and intended to save a condominium corporation from the worst form of governance. It is a warning to owners that they must change or face even more dire consequences. In most situations, this requires significantly increasing condo fees, dramatically reducing expenses, or both. It is likely there is a high degree of mistrust between condo directors and owners that must be resolved.

When directors elected to manage the affairs of the corporation have failed abysmally, an administrator replaces all Board members and is empowered to make some or all decisions on behalf of the corporation. Their compensation is determined by the court and paid by the condominium corporation. If the community was a profit-making enterprise, this court-appointed individual would likely be dealing with the threat of bankruptcy.

Indicators of extreme circumstances in need of a court-appointed administrator:

- Operating deficit in the hundreds of thousands of dollars

- Mortgages in the millions of dollars
- Illegal use of reserve funds to pay expenditures other than major repairs and/or replacement
- Failure to undertake necessary repairs and maintenance
- Underfunded reserve fund
- Misuse of operating fund
- Uncollected common expense arrears
- Unaudited financial statements
- Unaddressed city work orders
- Unpaid water charges
- Frequent meeting requisitions to remove directors

Lesser concerns that can signify growing problems include verbal and physical threats, lack of adequate security, murders, widespread graffiti, silencing of owners during elections and proxy fraud.

Requests for an administrator are not taken lightly by the court. If granted, the court determines the role and powers of the administrator based on identified problems in the affairs of the condominium corporation:

- Recognized inability to manage the corporation
- Significant or substantial misconduct or mismanagement
- Inability to bring order to the affairs of the corporation
- A struggle within the corporation among competing groups that impedes proper

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## COURT-APPOINTED ADMINISTRATOR... CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

- governance
- A reasonable prospect that appointing an administrator will bring order to the affairs of the corporation
- Costs and benefits of appointing an administrator being reasonable based on the circumstances


The length of an administrator's appointment, their powers and authority are determined by the court. A board of directors may lose all authority during the period an administrator is in control. Owners or directors can lose authority to determine a proper level of condo fees or decide on how these funds are utilized. In short, powers of the board of directors can be suspended along with the right of owners to elect directors.

Terminating the administrator can be as difficult as their appointment. The court needs to be convinced that problems are resolved possibly including a corporation's creditors, fire department or other city services, and even an engineering service if the building's structure has become compromised due to failures in

maintenance or repairs.

The best approach to dealing with an administrator is to not require one. Deal with problems when they are minor, ensure condo fees are at a proper level to ensure maintenance and repairs are being undertaken, and maintain a fully funded reserve fund.










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## CLEAR THE HALLS



High-rise condominium hallways are no place for shoes, boots, strollers, boot trays or other household items.

They are unsightly and give a bad impression to those visiting. More importantly, they are a danger and don't belong in public spaces.

Personal items become obstacles others need to work around when stored in common hallways.

The fire department is not pleased when these items are left in hallways. Should there be a fire, these personal items get in the way of saving or protecting people and property.

Cleaning staff should not have to work around or move personal items when cleaning common hallways and walls. This takes more of their time. It costs more to work around or move these items. Security gets involved. Some items get damaged, lost or misplaced when handled by multiple people.

Personal items belong in your personal living space. Those that don't fit in your home or locker don't belong in hallways and may be discarded without notice.

## OBTAINING OWNER NAMES AND ADDRESSES

Ontario condominium corporations are required to maintain a list of registered owners and a list of tenants.

These lists include, for each unit, the owner's address for service. Neither list includes telephone numbers or e-mail addresses.

Owners are entitled to access a list of registered owners and their mailing address for service for the corporation where they own property. They are not entitled to obtain e-mail addresses, phone numbers or a list of tenants.

At one time it was common for all phone numbers to be published in a telephone book. Today's view of privacy prevents owners from obtaining phone numbers or e-mail addresses for their neighbours in a building. This makes it unnecessarily difficult for residents to reach each other for any reason including addressing common concerns or social purposes. It allows the condominium corporation to be the only entity able to reach out to any and all owners and residents in a practical manner.

Arguably, this is an archaic practice that revisions to the Condo Act can address if government authorities desire to make it easier for condo residents to associate with each other.



## FOUR STAGES OF RETIREMENT



For those nearing or considering retirement, there are four stages to achieving an enjoyable, rewarding and stress-free retirement.

Prior to retirement, know how much you need to fund this period of your life. Some like to travel. Others split their time at various owned properties. Perhaps a rental property has to be maintained. There may be a desire to leave money for family and charities when it comes time to move on from this world.

**“Rule of 4”** is an approach to determine how much money is needed. It states that you can comfortably withdraw four percent of your savings in your first year of retirement and adjust that amount for inflation each year without risking running out of money for at least 30 years. While some feel this approach is overly simplistic, it does offer a good starting point for retirement financial planning. The goal is to reduce the risk of outliving your assets.

Assuming you expect to be able to live off \$50,000 annually during retirement, divide this number by four percent to determine the necessary value of your investment portfolio. In this case it is \$1.25 million. Some consider four percent to be too low an expected return. At five percent, your investment portfolio should be valued at \$1.0 million to fund your retirement.

If your investment portfolio is not sufficient to get you through this period in your life, it may be necessary to work during retirement or reduce annual expenditures.

Beyond the financial aspect of retirement, transitioning from spending most of your time at work to not working is a big adjustment. Dr. Riley Moynes, in his TEDx talks, describes four key phases of retirement.

### Vacation Phase

Wake up when you want and do what you want with no set routine. While ideal at first, most tire of it after a few years. There are only so many cruises, resort vacations, or trips to Florida before most want something more out of retirement.

### Lost Phase

Newer retirees can struggle with the loss of a routine, sense of identity and purpose that came from relationships when working. Some struggle with fear, anxiety or depression.

### Experimentation

Finding ways to make life meaningful once again when seeking ways to contribute. You may try volunteering, taking up hobbies, joining a club or caring for grandchildren. Many choose to downsize from a larger home and consider high-rise condominium living. Living space on a single floor, wider doorways and hallways, fewer bills, lower home costs, and in-building social activities are just some of the benefits. Another consideration is self-sufficiency without assistance, and not having to consider a retirement home until later in life.

### Reinvention and Rewire

If you have successfully proceeded through the earlier stages, Dr. Moynes describes these as “the happiest people he’s ever met”.



# NATURALLY OCCURRING RETIREMENT COMMUNITIES

Seniors lack the type of housing they desire and which is most appropriate for them.

Most don't want to live in a long-term care facility or retirement home. They prefer to reside in a community, with access to the services they require, to remain happy, healthy, safe and independent.

Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs) are buildings where many aged 50 and up have chosen to age in place and now contain a significant number of older adults.

The NORC Innovation Centre (NIC), run by the University Health Network (UHN) is helping residents establish support programs to facilitate aging with exercise classes, discussions on pain management and caregiving, and social activities such as coffee and photography clubs. Health and supportive services are brought to residents so they can continue living independently at home. NIC's goal is to bring residents together, help them choose services that fit their interests, and connect with outside health-care services.

NORCs are rare in Canada where restricting ownership or tenancy by age is mostly not allowed. They are more common in the USA including New York. Communities for seniors are often described as "55 plus" where ownership or tenancy is restricted to those over 55 years old. Services for seniors naturally spring up around these communities.



UHN surveys found that a large number of residents in older communities lack a support network. As

they age, they gravitate to apartments and condominium buildings in urban areas. Ontario has 1,941 apartment and condominium buildings, housing 217,000 seniors, that qualify as NORCs. That is more than long-term-care and retirement homes combined according to the National Institute on Aging. This represents 58 percent of Toronto NORCs.

When older adults live in the same area, it is easier to deliver care and services to them as a group.

One Kingston-area service operated by Oasis Senior Supportive Living with Queen's University focuses on social connections, exercise and nutrition to support four local NORCs by offering a drop-in space. These NORCs are home to tenants of all ages. The Oasis program focuses on friendship and wellbeing of older adults. Their programs are unique to each building and include arts, community meals, exercise classes, board games and guest speakers. Technology support is popular and supported by student volunteers. Programs that are offered get decided by community residents. A coordinator is tasked with ensuring that desired programming takes place. During the

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## NATURALLY OCCURRING RETIREMENT COMMUNITIES... CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

pandemic, when common areas were closed, a few seniors took chairs into their parking lot and conversed. More joined in each week. This became a weekly event.



Oasis and Queen's University research shows that aging in the community is possible and that their programs

offer a positive impact. There was a measurable improvement in physical activity and emotional wellbeing. Loneliness and incidence of falls both dropped. Fewer went to emergency departments or were admitted to a hospital. Residents were less likely to be injured from a fall or to require home care.

Whatever you choose to call them, NORCs or 55+ retirement communities, high-rise condominium buildings are ideal for aging in place. Despite various restrictions making it harder for these communities to develop, they are occurring anyway. Recognizing their need and practicality is important. So is the need to develop services and programs to support aging populations so there is less demand for retirement homes and hospitals dealing with age-related concerns. It is easier and more economical for health services to be provided in these communities rather than forcing the infirm and frail to travel for medical care.

One London walkable community centred around a shopping mall grew to a population of 3,000, 2,500 of which were over 65. Up to 800 residents fell each year and required medical care. Over 1,400

residents suffered from memory impairment, depression, loneliness and social isolation. Many were unable to attend their medical appointments.

The Cherryhill Healthy Ageing Program was a pilot project to combat these problems. They found that condominium managers were calling 911 as their only option for assisting residents even when hospital or emergency care was not required. The mall provided space for health information, and to manage social services including a volunteer-based check-in service for older residents. Other companies and government organizations got involved. Out of this came a blueprint for a NORC with medical and social supports to the Ontario Ministry of Health called "A Health Care Model for Community Seniors".

The drawback of Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities is that they can also naturally un-occur. As tenancy or ownership passes on to younger generations, interest in these programs is less. Intentional creation and maintaining of retirement communities may offer a better approach to ensuring care and services remain available and accessible to individuals as they age.





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# CONDOMINIUM MANAGER CORE COMPETENCIES

Condominium managers are licensed professionals working in an evolving and fast-paced environment. Their success depends on condo boards and owners having confidence in them to manage their home and investment.

Responding to concerns in writing without speaking is a failure in applying these core competencies.

## Building Inspections

During a regular building inspection, a manager notices that an area of a hallway is particularly cold on one floor. On another floor they notice trash in



The Condominium Manager Regulatory Authority of Ontario (CMRAO) identifies 79 competencies to be mastered. Some practical examples help to explain the relevancy of these competencies.

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## Dealing with Resident Concerns

A condominium manager is the primary contact when a unit owner or resident has a concern. The manager listens, and hopefully responds, to service requests, complaints, problems, concerns and other issues. When the unit owner is angry or upset, the manager is expected to remain calm, listen attentively and express empathy. These interpersonal skills are represented in the following competencies:

### Core Competencies – Interpersonal Skills

- Demonstrate a professional presence
- Manage expectations in an empathetic manner
- Engage in active listening
- Facilitate communication by demonstrating courtesy and consideration



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## CONDOMINIUM MANAGER CORE COMPETENCIES... CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16

the hallway and stacked in the trash room. Some doors are not fully closing.



The manager then obtains industry expertise to assess the HVAC system for issues, directs cleaning staff to do a better job in specific areas of the building, and undertakes measures to repair doors and/or closing systems. This will likely involve interaction with contractors. Depending on the situation, residents may be asked to keep doors closed and dispose of their trash in an appropriate manner.

### Core Competencies – Physical Building

- Conduct general inspections of the property to identify maintenance and repair requirements
- Manage inspections, testing, maintenance, repair and replacement obligations
- Analyze and present quotations and contracts to the Board of Directors to allow for effective decisions

### Core Competencies – Interpersonal Skills

- Adapt communication strategies to suit different audiences

Allowing the physical infrastructure to deteriorate and fall into disrepair, without informing the Board of Directors, can occur when the manager fails to undertake regular building inspections.

### **Renovation Projects**

A condominium corporation has decided to refurbish its front lobby and party room. One board member has a family member who is a general contractor that is interested in doing the

work. The condominium manager is asked to speak with him about the project.

This situation is fraught with conflict. The condominium manager politely tells the board member that their relative can submit a bid for the contract, and advises the board member to disclose their relationship to the rest of the board. The condominium manager also advises that they have an ethical responsibility to ensure the board is aware of this relationship.

### Core Competencies – Ethical Responsibilities

- Honesty and integrity
- Recognize and disclose real and perceived conflicts of interest
- Recognize and act in the best interests of the condominium corporation

The job of condominium manager is one that requires trust and confidence. This can only be achieved by managers that are competent, capable, knowledgeable, honest and transparent.

The complete list of condominium manager core competencies established by the CMRAO can be found at <https://cmrao.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/CompetencyProfileConsultationReportEN.pdf> beginning on page 16.







# DANGEROUS DOG REGISTRY



A Toronto condo resident has been charged with criminal negligence causing bodily harm, failing to muzzle a dangerous dog, and allowing it to run free. She and her partner have a history of failing to ignore dog control officers while allowing their dogs to scare and injure neighbours.

Animals may be seized and assessed by Animal Services. Dogs under a dangerous dog order must be licensed, be on a leash and muzzled when out of their home. Owners may be required to obtain additional training on how to handle their dog.

As of March 2024, 450 dogs were under dangerous dog orders in the city, 15 of which were responsible for serious attacks. German shepherds and American bulldogs are most frequently listed in the database followed by Labrador retrievers, Rottweilers, Boxers, Mastiffs and Cane Corsos.

There has been an increase in dogs attacking and biting people and other dogs. The problem is irresponsible dog owners who fail to care about the conduct of their pet. In response, Toronto city council is making it easier for people to get more information about dangerous dogs in the city.

Owners not in compliance with a dangerous dog order could face a fine of up to \$615. A court issued fine could rise to \$100,000 upon conviction.

More than 60 percent of high-rise residents own a pet according to available data, accounting for more than 30 percent of a building's population.

The city has approved a new dangerous dog registry with information about dog attacks to include the dog's name, picture, breed, how severe the bite was and the first three digits of the postal code where it resides. A sign warning of a dangerous dog must be posted where it resides. The owner's name or address will not be listed.

Existing rules regarding dangerous dogs make dog owners responsible if their dog attacks someone — even criminally if the attack is serious enough.



## INCREASE IN REQUISITION MEETINGS



There seems to be an increase in requisition meetings over the past two years. Prior to the pandemic, few had heard of a requisition meeting and fewer understood the process.

Requisition meetings suggest that a condo board has lost the confidence of those who elected them.

The right to requisition a meeting and process for doing this has not changed for more than 20 years. What has changed is that condo owner rights have become better understood. **Toronto Condo News** has made condominium owners more aware of their rights including calling a requisition meeting. Google has made this information more easily obtained.

Owners frustrated with little to no useful information from their board or management have had enough. Many have elected directors that fail to ensure owners are adequately informed about what is occurring in their home. These owners may have purchased a condominium thinking there would be social activities and new friends, only to find themselves isolated and not knowing their neighbours.

Meeting minutes, the only required vehicle for informing of board activities, are intentionally composed to obfuscate. Virtual annual general meetings have removed yet another outlet for voicing concerns and hearing from their board. Communities may be hit with higher monthly condo fees and special assessments because prior boards have been ineffective or worse. While owners have

little or no control over board activities, a requisition meeting is one of the few ways they can voice dissatisfaction.

Weak condominium managers contribute to the problem when they provide confusing or no communication, and fail to respond appropriately to service requests and concerns.

Neither the condo board or management has an obligation to be effective in their communications to residents. Yet, they fail at this task to their peril. Increasingly, condo owners frustrated with what they perceive to be poor management push for change.

Good governance requires good communication. The best managed communities have established ongoing communications in the form of a newsletter, town hall meetings and e-mail systems. They rely on various tools to educate and inform residents and owners. Investments in improving communications ensure all resident-initiated contacts receive proper follow up, and allow management to be more responsive to resident concerns. There is an understanding that condo residents need to be educated on their rights and informed of what is occurring in their community.

Interest in requisition meetings is unlikely to decline in communities where condo boards and management fail to address the underlying reasons and concerns.



# APARTMENT AND CONDO SECURITY

Is your apartment or condo secure?

Apartment and condo security can be as effective as you make it. Do not leave the responsibility for your safety and security solely in the hands of others.

Reduce your risk by following personal safety and crime prevention strategies.

## HELPFUL SAFETY HINTS

- Keep a record of your valuables, storing only what you need or regularly use in your residence.
- Identify your property by using a Trace Identified pen ([www.traceidentified.com](http://www.traceidentified.com)).
- If you notice burnt out lights on the property, report them to the building superintendent or management immediately.
- Be a good neighbour - report suspicious activity to the police and advise the building superintendent or management. If you see a stranger carrying items out of a neighbour's unit CALL 9 -1-1.

## IF A CRIME HAS OCCURRED

- Call Emergency Services (9-1-1) if there is a crime in progress or an immediate threat to the safety of people or property.
- Do NOT enter your unit if the door is opened - the criminal may still be inside. Use your cell or neighbour's phone to call the police.
- Do NOT touch anything or clean up until the

police have inspected for evidence.

- Note the licence plate number of any suspicious vehicle.
- Note the description of any suspicious person(s).

## LOBBY SECURITY

- Watch for strangers hanging around entry vestibules.
- Do NOT buzz in or let anyone you do not know follow you into the building. Refer them to security or the building superintendent.
- Ensure that the main outer doors remain locked at all times.
- Make sure that only your first initial and last name appear on the lobby directory, doorbell, mailbox and phone directory.

## ELEVATOR SECURITY

- Look who is in the elevator before you enter. If someone on the elevator makes you nervous – do NOT get on - take the next one.
- Get off the elevator if someone makes you feel uncomfortable.
- Whenever possible, stand near the control panel with your back against the side wall. In the event that someone touches or bothers you, run your hand over the control panel for the purpose of depressing as many floors as possible. This will cause the elevator to stop and the doors open, which should interrupt any attack.

CONTINUED PAGE 21 ....



## APARTMENT AND CONDO SECURITY... CONTINUED FROM PAGE 20

### DOOR SECURITY

- Always make sure that your unit or apartment has been re-keyed (if not a new lock installed) before you move in.
- Make sure that a good quality one-inch deadbolt lock on the door and a security strike plate on the door frame has been installed, as locks with key cylinders in the doorknob can be easily forced.
- Keep your door locked, even when taking out the garbage or doing laundry.
- NEVER ignore a door knock or open your door to strangers. Burglars will sometimes target units by knocking on doors first.
- When responding to the door knock, ask "Who is it?" and look through the peep hole with the door still locked. Only open the door if you know the person or are satisfied they are someone you were expecting. Otherwise say "Go away! I'm calling the police".
- NEVER rely on chain locks - they provide poor security. Inquire about installing a wide-angle viewer instead of a regular peep-hole.
- If you lose your keys, have the locks re-keyed immediately.
- NEVER leave notes on your door or on the lobby directory telling people that you are away.

### SLIDING DOOR SECURITY

- Keep balcony doors locked at all times when not in use.
- Secure sliding glass doors with commercially available bars or locks, or put a wooden dowel or broom handle in the door track.
- Consider inserting screws through the centre of the upper track of the door frame in the gap between the top of the door and the frame

where the door sits in the locked position to prevent it from being lifted up and out.

### WINDOW SECURITY FOR GROUND FLOOR & BALCONY WINDOWS

- Place a stick in the track of sliding windows and inside the "maintenance gap" at the top of the window to prevent it from being lifted up and out.
- For extra security consider "pinning" the windows where the frames overlap after checking with building Management. Drill a hole through both frames (stopping short of the outside) and insert a security pin or double-headed nail.
- Consider taking further precautions by drilling a series of holes, which allows the window to be fixed in a number of open positions. Be careful not to make the opening so large that a criminal could squeeze through or reach in and remove the nail or screw.

### UNDERGROUND SECURITY

- Look around before entering the garage - be AWARE if someone follows you into the underground garage.
- If you encounter a suspicious situation or person, while in the garage, get out as soon as possible.
- If you are inside of your vehicle and unable to leave, ensure that your doors are locked and "HONK" your horn to attract attention.
- Lock your vehicle and remember to remove/hide any valuables.
- Have your keys ready when walking to your vehicle and always check inside prior to entering, including the back seat.

CONTINUED PAGE 22 ....



## WORRY SURVEY

Canadians on average spend 15 hours a week worrying about things according to

Scotiabank's Worry Poll. Financial concerns top the list with people worrying about how to pay for daily expenses, handle debt and cope with a lack of savings. The average number of hours each week that we spend worrying about finances has increased quarterly since 2021.

More than 25 percent of Canadians are so stressed about finances, according to the survey, they are losing sleep. Women are more stressed than men, and younger generations are more stressed than baby boomers.

It seems that we spend more time worrying about things and less time fixing what can be changed. Work-life balance now means working fewer hours and from home. Is it a surprise that those wanting this lifestyle don't have enough money? Others take on massive debt to own a home they can't afford then worry about paying the mortgage. That coveted work-life balance everyone wants is

expected to come without loss of income.

In the middle of all this are condo boards trying to do what is impossible. They are unable to cover the cost of maintaining the shared high-rise home while keeping fees lower and more affordable than is reasonable. The consequence of this is that over half of all condominium corporations are estimated to be collecting too little in condo fees and will likely have to impose one or more special assessments to keep their building livable as they age.

Condo owners continue to want nice and well-maintained amenities, enhanced security and other luxuries without being aware of what it costs to maintain their home, and the need for higher condo fees. For many communities, special assessments appear to be the only way to do everything required to maintain a home that is modern and well maintained.



### APARTMENT AND CONDO SECURITY... CONTINUED FROM PAGE 21

#### GOING ON VACATION

- Inform a trusted neighbour of your departure and return dates.
- Where possible, cancel or redirect your mail and deliveries or have a neighbour collect any items.
- Set your lights to come on and off at various

intervals.

For more information on crime prevention, [visit the Toronto Police website](#).

Thank you to **Toronto Police Services** for providing this information which is [available on their website](#).

## CONVERTING TO ELECTRIC STOVES



At one time gas cooking was considered a hard-to-obtain luxury feature in high-rise buildings. Today it is becoming recognized as harmful and a

cause of poor air quality. daily concentrations of nitrogen dioxide and a nearly 43 percent drop in daily concentrations of carbon monoxide.

Research is showing that cooking with natural gas is bad for your health and the environment. A recent study has linked natural gas usage to an increase in asthma risk among children.

Converting from a gas stove to electric may require an electrical upgrade. Electric and induction stoves require a 240-volt outlet which is more than a standard electrical outlet. It may be necessary to upgrade the electrical panel in your unit to handle the extra electrical load. If your building does not have the electrical capacity to handle more heavy-duty appliances, a building-wide electrical upgrade may be required.

cause of poor air quality.

Electric stoves are cheaper to purchase and operate. There is less risk of a gas leak or shutdown.

Studies are showing that residents who traded gas stoves for electric induction saw improved air quality compared with their neighbors. Households with electric ovens showed a 35 percent decrease in

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# SECURITY, SAFETY & FRAUD



## VIDEO DOORBELLS AND IMPROPER USE OF PARKING SPACES

Enforcement to ensure parking spaces are not misused also plays a role in high-rise condominium building safety.

It is not illegal to have a door bell camera (video doorbell) and there are good reasons for doing so. In a condominium building, there are considerations about how it can and should be done, and rules governing its use. See [Video Doorbells Conflict with Right to Privacy](#) and [Video Doorbells](#) for articles we have published on this topic.

With regard to how parking spaces are utilized, you have identified some common problems with residents failing to properly use and maintain their parking spaces. More troubling are safety and structural concerns arising from improper use of parking spaces. All condominium corporations have the authority, right and sometimes legal obligation to ensure parking spaces are utilized as intended. Not all condo boards choose to do so until forced by some authority such as the Condominium Authority Tribunal or Fire Department. By this time, they have spent unnecessary time and money seeking to justify their prior failure to act or simply paying a fine for allowing a safety infraction. It is safer, more economical and less time consuming for a condo board to ensure parking spaces are utilized as intended than deal with the litany of problems arising from improper use.

Proactive condo boards have rules, policies and procedures for addressing both these issues. The absence of rules or enforcement promotes a less hospitable and unsafe living environment and higher maintenance or repair costs. **Toronto Condo News** publishes periodic articles about proper use of parking spaces and maintaining of parking areas.

Thank you for your suggestions. We will look at publishing a more focused article on those minor parking area infractions that are discourteous and problematic to communities.



Is It legal to have a door bell camera in a condo building?

Management is reluctant to

install cameras in hallways for security and address ongoing damage to carpets.

I would love to see an article about those who fail to park within their assigned area and/or use the space to store personal items such as baby carriages, motorcycles, bicycles and junk, and those who create oil stains that damage the property.

J. D.

### Response from Toronto Condo News

Video doorbells are a relatively new technology that, when used properly, have a role to play in ensuring condominium building safety and security.



## MANIPULATION OF CONDO ELECTIONS

Our building superintendent is also a director in our condominium corporation. When up for re-election she had access to owner phone numbers and contacted them to sign proxies on her behalf.

When I ran as a candidate for director, my letter to owners declaring my candidacy was not distributed as part of the Annual General Meeting (AGM) package. Only that of the superintendent was included.

There appear to be some unethical business practices in this process. How do you suggest we address these concerns?

L. P.



### Response from Toronto Condo News

It seems that your condominium board has chosen to commingle the roles of director and superintendent. While this is not illegal, it is not a best practice and can lead to problems such as you have described.

You are suggesting that elections in your condominium corporation have been manipulated. The superintendent/director utilized corporation records to contact owners by telephone, and asked them to come to the office to complete a proxy form. Neither condo directors, management or staff are to influence condo elections. You further state that candidate profiles were not distributed to owners except for that of the superintendent/director.

There are actions you can take if your condo elections have been manipulated or if condo directors exceed their authority. These are concerns you can bring to the [Condominium Authority of Ontario](#) for advice on how to proceed.

I would encourage you to follow whatever advice is provided by the Condominium Authority of Ontario which may involve making a submission to the Tribunal. While this may be a lot of work, it may be the best way to address the abuses you have described.





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.

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