

TEMPORARILY CLOSED

As a precautionary measure in response to the coronavirus, we have elected to close common area spaces until further notice.





Vince Bennett, RCM
President,
Bendale Property Management

COVID-19 – Impact on Management & Our Industry

The on-set of the global COVID-19 pandemic struck the world like a bad dream at the beginning of 2020. As news and the virus spread worldwide, our communities started to shut down like a light switching off. Without any time to prepare or plan, services were ordered to shut down, businesses to close, and it seemed as though the world was placed on hold for most.

This was not the case in the condominium industry – as an essential service, we kept working. As news spread and our governments took swift and appropriate action to close many operations, our condominiums also started to close amenities, enhance the distribution of information and regu-

lar updates, and implement their own protocols and safety precautions.

Almost instantaneously, managers shifted their focus to crafting notices, safety protocols and scrambling to source gloves, disinfectants, hand sanitizer and other personal protective equipment to protect residents, staff, and visitors to buildings. All this while continuing to perform their operational obligations and duties to keep their buildings running safely and smoothly.

The workloads of both managers and support staff increased dramatically. When generic notices and protocols were insufficient, managers were busy modifying notices to

meet their boards and communities' requests. Communications, suggestions, requests, email traffic, text messages, and telephone calls increased by threefold for a long period of time.

With only essential service providers permitted to operate, many projects, both planned and unplanned, were postponed until both labour and material became accessible again. For many, this meant prolonged inconvenience and, in some cases, further property damage. Even the simplest tasks became problematic as some essential service providers elected to close as staying safe and operational became challenging.



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In time, business and service providers were slowly permitted to resume operations and the reality of how management would respond to service requests, repairs, maintenance and undertake projects quickly set in. For many businesses starting back up, it was (and still is) a slow and tedious process. Every business and service provider had to implement and execute safety protocols to protect their staff and customers. For many re-openings resulted in increased costs of personal protection equipment, as well as additional administration.

While we have slowly progressed through the pandemic, service providers and trades continue to be short-staffed and have difficulty finding qualified staff. With so much uncertainty, some trades have reported they are modifying their workloads and accepting only certain projects at present.

Many are not committing to projects in the distant future because acquiring resources continues to be a struggle. These factors have created a situation where the demand for work exceeds the supply of service providers, ultimately leaving many of us waiting for tasks and

projects to be completed or even started.

Prices will inevitably start to rise. With a lag in production due to shutdowns, many service providers are waiting for material ordered months ago, only to find out that they will still be waiting for weeks ahead. Not only is production behind for special-order items, but the demand for basic building material has sky-rocketed, creating material supply shortages, ultimately resulting in increased costs.

The uncertainty has left us in a challenging position where it is difficult to communicate effectively concerning repairs, maintenance, and planned projects. Frustrations run high when service requests take longer than 'normal,' and project dates continue to get pushed along into the colder months.

It is crucial, and I believe our responsibility as managers, to educate and communicate with our residents about our industry's issues. Remind your residents that we are committed to ensuring that our residents' health and safety is our top priority and that work will be completed as a resources permit.

The impact of COVID-19 on our industry and the construction industry

is real. We must stay committed to working hard and continue to adjust to the realities and challenges the pandemic has imposed on the condominium (and construction) industry.

Condominium managers and support staff were fortunate to be considered essential services and continued to be fully employed during this crisis. The pandemic significantly impacts our workload; responding to our clients' needs and requests has been challenging.

Managers, support staff, and all building staff committed to keeping their condominium communities operating safely should be commended for their additional hard work and dedication during this very difficult time.

If there was ever a time to be understanding and to support one another, this is it. We are all in this together. ■

Vince Bennett, RCM, is the President of Bendale (Property Management), serving southeastern Ontario. Vince manages a vast portfolio of Condominium Corporations and currently serves on the ACO Board of Directors. bendale.ca



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