





Vince Bennett, RCM
President
Bendale Property Management

Is the Pandemic Really Over?

For many of us, we feel as though the pandemic is ‘coming to an end.’ We can dine in restaurants with friends, malls are packed with unmasked people without social distancing requirements, and our buildings lift or eliminate restrictions in common elements. Generally, our day-to-day lives have somewhat returned to normal.

This isn’t entirely true for condominium managers. Managers are still faced with additional workloads with continued delayed lead times on material, labour shortages, increased costs of material and labour, and a general lack of interest from some service providers. Some service providers who offered a vast array of services have reduced their scope and are now focused on more specific services. In some cases, they ‘downsized’ their operations, leaving us with fewer options. This has caused an increase in the costs of many services as service providers know they may have an advantage with little or no competition. It has proven challenging to acquire multiple or competitive estimates, especially on smaller projects. All of this weighs heavily on managers and adds to the already stressful position that we’re in.

It is reasonable that we can expect these issues to continue for the foreseeable

future, perhaps the next few years. So, what can we do to manage the expectations of our owners (residents) and boards? Now more than ever, we need to communicate – and regularly! We need to educate our Boards on the reality that it is difficult, and sometimes not practical or even possible, to obtain pricing for some jobs. You may want to consider increasing your single-sourcing spending limits or entering into contracts on a time and material basis (make sure, if you do this, that you have all of your rates and markups in a contract).

When communicating with your owners and boards, include comparative information or examples of what is happening in the market; for example, suppose you are due for a generator replacement, and your board is considering delaying. In that case, it is essential to explain that the average lead time for a generator could be 42-62 weeks. That means it will be at least a year from when the board approves the contract before the generator is even available. The project’s cost will likely not be less in a year, and lead times may not improve. With that said, you may also discuss deferring projects that may be less critical, such as interior refurbish-

ment – especially if your corporation is considering borrowing funds at today’s high-interest rates. If you are about to start a project, explain to your residents that work schedules are likely to change.

Providing your residents with ongoing updates, whether specific to their unit or a building-wide project, will help minimize frustrations. Be forthcoming with information and explain to residents that things are taking longer than they typically might, and do not make commitments for things that are out of your control. Always provide your residents and owners with the information they need to hear as soon as possible, regardless of whether it is ‘good or bad.’

I would encourage you to share industry-related articles with residents and extract and share relevant information from seminars, blogs, and podcasts – the more knowledge you can share, the more informed, prepared and receptive your residents and Boards will be. ■

Vince Bennett, RCM, is the President of Bendale Property Management, servicing Southeastern Ontario. Vince manages a vast portfolio of Condominium Corporations and is a past ACMO Board member. bendale.ca