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Dorothy Church, RCM
Property Manager
Condominium Management Group

We Are Essential to Each Other!

Condominium managers and their teams, including contractors, are often not thought of when “Essential Service Providers” are discussed. As such, they have felt excluded from pandemic recognition of essential workers. However, we know that the work of managing and caring for condominiums and their residents has not gone away. In fact, it has been complicated with supply-chain constraints, lack of resources, and navigating Public Health Guidelines, leaving condominium managers and their teams unable to meet the expectations of our important clients.

Condominiums don’t take care of themselves, and with numbers down and masks coming off, the stress of the pandemic is far from over for managers,

site staff and contractors. With continued supply and demand issues, our service levels continue to be affected, and we cannot meet our clients’ expectations.

It’s Beyond Our Control

Condominium managers and their teams are service providers! We do not take pleasure in saying “no” or “we do not know” or “we do not have a date” or apologizing for being unable to service our clients. But we have been at the receiving end of frustrated and, at times, aggressive and stressed out clients. We wish we did not have labour and supply delays and could quickly provide our services. We used to deliver good news to our clients with a smile. Now, we want to keep that mask on

just to hide our expression of defeat or disappointment.

Condominium Corporations need to implement Workplace Harassment Policies to support staff when delivering disappointing news of delays in repairs and services. Managers and owners of contracting companies are spending more time keeping the spirits of their site staff and workers positive. Keeping the team confident and appreciated while condominium managers and service company owners are emotionally and physically exhausted has become a real problem.

Due to the pandemic, condominium managers have struggled to keep up with daily changes and enforcement of municipal, provincial and federal restrictions.

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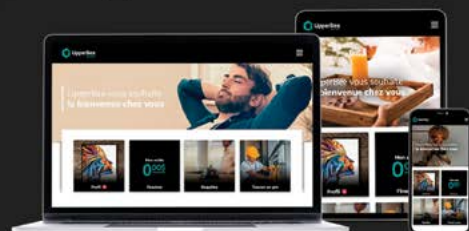


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All while simultaneously fulfilling our regular professional demands. Managers have been over-extended to ensure our boards, building staff, contractors, and owners have the resources and emotional support they need.

Additional Stresses

The freedom convoy protests in Ottawa further extended condominium management professionals by forcing us to employ additional security and updated maintenance schedules. Buildings in affected areas were inaccessible and inundated with noise and safety complaints. This included supporting residents in their senior years, found sitting on their walkers in the concrete high-rise stairwells to get away from the sound of horns, reading a book or for a few minutes of peace. Many were left unable to leave their homes to get simple needs such as groceries, and dogs that never made a sound were barking due to stress.

Long Term Repercussions

So what are our industry's current and long-term repercussions for condominium managers? As things return to normal, management is expected to pick up where we left off in March 2019 by providing the same level and delivery of services. But how can we when we are told that supply and labour are, at best, 12 to 18 months behind? Contractors do not have the staff or material and are over-extended and unable to perform even simple work requests and

quotes. Maintenance and repairs requiring materials such as glass and metals are scarce. Everyday items like door hinges for common area doors are eight months away.

Costs have escalated to the point where budgets are not meeting the financial needs of the current fiscal operating expenses. Current reserve funds will not be sufficient, and updates currently being performed every three years will significantly increase fees in the next fiscal year. Reserve fund investment options make it challenging to meet long-range forecasts due to current economic stress. Condominium managers need to meet the repairs and maintenance requirements with client satisfaction at the centre of these efforts. However, take pause and consider the quality of the work provided and the feasibility of promises made. As many new fly-by-night contractors can cause more harm than good, proceed with caution.

Management services along with labour and material services have increased substantially. Owners are voicing their discontent and putting pressure on their boards after being denied services and benefits, including recreational facilities they have paid for with no credit to their monthly condo fees.

Let's not forget our volunteer condominium board members and their wellness; they certainly have done their part to support owners and management. You cannot help but wonder why one would volunteer to be on a condominium board; it's not always

easy. Let's face it; we chose to be professional condominium managers, and it is an honour to be looking out for their best interests. But the industry is in for a shake-up in the next few years. We need to invest and educate those in the industry and ensure they are supported.

We are in This Together

The emotional relationship between managers and their teams has become stronger and more supportive, which is needed as we continue to work together to address so much uncertainty resulting from the pandemic.

Now, it has not been all doom and gloom. Thankfully, we cannot use the same brush to paint a picture of everyone. I witnessed firsthand how condominium communities joined together to help and support each other. Neighbours were extending a hand by shopping for those in isolation, escorting those who felt unsafe to a store, and forming a support group to check in on each other. The support of many owners and board members who learned to read eyes rather than smiles hidden under a mask has been the drive behind our daily commitment.

We are essential in an industry built on trust and respect. Stay focused and supportive, and reach out for help. It's how we can do what we do! ■

Dorothy Church, RCM, OLCM, is a property manager with Condominium Management Group in Ottawa and is a proud member of ACMO and CCI. condogroup.ca

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