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condominium manager

Summer 2023

Reserve funds suffering from construction inflation

Considering the termination of a condominium corporation?

Managing at each stage of a condo's life cycle

Managing New Builds vs Old Condos

Canada Post Publication Agreement Number 40011809

ACMO

Magazine Theme

There are many differences between managing a property recently handed over from a developer to a new condominium corporation and managing an ageing, well-established condominium community. In this issue, we will delve into those differences and what needs to be considered to manage both effectively.

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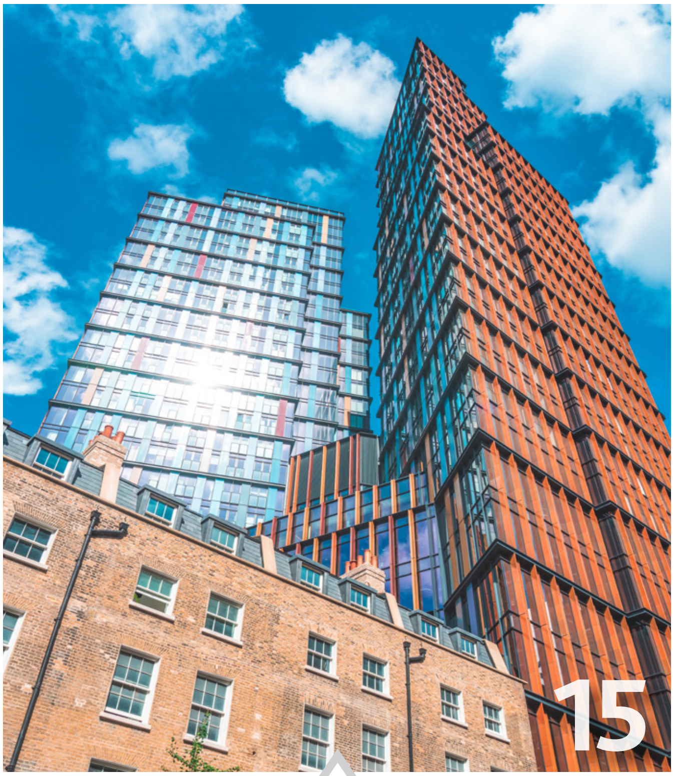

The life cycle of a condominium corporation comes with unique challenges in managing each stage. Learn more about what's required for a newly registered condominium to a decades-old one on page 15.

Features

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Core Values

ACMO is committed to the recognition, promotion and support of Professional Condominium Managers across Ontario, through education, member services, public awareness and a strict adherence to the highest ethical standards.

CM Condominium Manager magazine is the flagship quarterly publication of the Association of Condominium Managers of Ontario (ACMO) and for more than 30 years has served as the leading source of in-depth coverage of industry news, issues, information, education and best practices for condominium management professionals and service providers.

CM Condominium Manager is a controlled circulation professional trade publication distributed free of charge to members of ACMO.

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Message from the **President**

Knowledge is the Foundation of Excellence

I am honoured and excited to introduce myself as our association's new President.

Having served in various capacities within our esteemed organization, I am eager to continue our work to elevate the condominium management industry and serve our members through the next phase of ACMO's development.

Over the next couple of years, I intend to focus my efforts on three key priorities: advanced education, improved networking, and membership growth.

Knowledge is the foundation of excellence in condominium management. I hope to continue expanding our educational offering by growing our portfolio of advanced, specialized certificate courses tailored to the evolving needs of our industry. These courses will enhance our current members' skills and serve as continuing education credits for the Condominium Management Regulatory Authority of Ontario (CMRAO), which we hope will bring the next generation of managers into our organization.

Our association thrives on the connections we build within our community. With the help of our staff at ACMO, I hope to continue developing our networking events to create opportunities for our members to forge valuable relationships, share experiences, and learn from one another. We aim to introduce new formats, including live trade show demos and designated spaces for new managers to connect with industry experts.

A growing membership is crucial to the vitality of our association. I am dedicated to promoting our industry to attract new talent and broaden our membership base. By attending job fairs, creating promotional materials, and constantly striving to improve our offering, we will reach out to potential new members and showcase condominium management's rewarding career opportunities.

I would also like to take the opportunity to thank the excellent staff at ACMO, without whom none of these initiatives would ever come close to fruition. Their effort and commitment are remarkable, and we owe them our gratitude.

Together, I believe we can significantly impact the condominium management industry in Ontario. I am eager to work with you all as we strive to create a more robust, dynamic, and prosperous future for our association and its members. ■

Eric Plant, RCM
ACMO President

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Eric Plant, RCM

ACMO

Snapshot

A quick glance at what's happening with ACMO and the condominium industry.

Safety and Security in Condominiums

As outlined in our joint statement on January 12, 2023, the Association of Condominium Managers of Ontario (ACMO), the Canadian Condominium Institute's (CCI) Toronto Chapter, and the Community Associations Institute (CAI) Canadian Chapter continue to work together to ensure that the condominium industry is better equipped to manage concerns relating to violence and/or mental health in communities.

We thank all interested candidates that responded to our call for volunteers. Based on the responses received, we have struck three committees:

1. Legislation Committee: To review appropriate opportunities for legislative reform to better protect personal safety in condominiums and educate government agencies about how best to minimize risk for condominium communities.
2. Resources Committee: To identify and promote appropriate resources relating to mental health and conflict de-escalation to support condominium corporations in the future. This may include better educating other organizations about the unique challenges in condominiums. The committee may also identify missing resources that should be developed.
3. Policy Committee: To review and identify best practices and template policies which will improve governance and proactively support condominium corporations.

We are very pleased to welcome the following volunteer committee members to work on this important issue:

Legislation Committee

Jeronim Dyrmishi, Synapse Property Management Inc.
Antoni Casalinuovo, Elia Associates PC
John Resendes, Condominium Director
Chris Poland, Malvern Condominium Property Management
Jacqueline Miller, Condominium Director
Nancy Houle, Davidson Condo Law
Denise Lash, Lash Condo Law
Dean McCabe, Meritus Group
Deborah Howden, Shibley Righton
Bill Thompson, Condominium Director

Photo: Supplied

Armand Conant, Shibley Righton LLP Resources Committee

Benjamin Tabesh, Condor Security Inc.
Murray Johnson, Crossbridge Condominium Services Ltd.
Shauna Grant, Reid Management
Sandhya Patel, Condominium Director
Harry Nielsen, Waters Edge Property Management Inc
Joe Hill, Lionheart Property Management
Simon DeSilva-Naimji, Delcondo
Jennifer Ricci, ICC Property Management Ltd
Joy Mathews, Rutherford and Mathews

Policy Committee

Quintin Johnstone, Samsonshield Inc.
Joel Dekter, Regal Security Inc.
Roger Tickner, Tickner & Associates Inc.
Aldo Carinci, iSource Solutions Inc.
Lisa Robles, Condominium Director
Mahmood Shabani, Online Property Management Inc
Bradley Chaplick, Horlick Levitt Di Lella LLP
Laura Lee, Duka Consulting
Darya Molodyko, Delcondo
Scott Hundey, MVP Properties
Jason Reid, National Life Safety Group
Alana Phelps, Crossbridge Condominium Services

We are also seeking involvement from 211.ca and the Toronto Police Services, but do not have these members confirmed yet.

Bill 91, Less Red Tape, Stronger Economy Act, 2023

On April 3, 2023, the government introduced the Bill 91, Less Red Tape, Stronger Economy Act, 2023. Among other things, the bill includes proposed amendments to the *Condominium Act, 1998* (Condo Act) to enhance flexibility for condominium corporations (condos) to implement certain virtual processes. If passed, the proposed changes would replace the temporary legislative framework for virtual processes, including virtual meetings, which was enacted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and which expires on September 30, 2023.

If passed, the proposed changes would, unless the condo's governing documents specify otherwise:

- Enable condos to hold virtual or hybrid meetings, and to conduct voting (e.g., for elections) virtually or in hybrid form.
- Better facilitate the sending of notices or other documents by electronic means.

You can find the proposed changes, as well additional information about the Bill 91, Less Red Tape, Stronger Economy Act, 2023, at www.ola.org/en/legislative-business/bills/parliament-43/session-1/bill-91.

ACMO AGM and New Board of Directors.

On May 3, 2023, ACMO held its Annual General Meeting. The membership was well represented, with 93 individuals, 77 of whom were voting members, participating in the video conference and 235 members participating via proxy for a total of 312 members, far exceeding the requirements for meeting quorum.

There were five open positions on the board of directors to be filled through an election process. All nominees had the opportunity to introduce themselves and give a 2-minute presentation on how ACMO can remain viable and relevant to the members in light of the challenges facing the industry. Attendees voted for their choice through electronic means and quickly learned the results within a few minutes.

The following members were elected to ACMO's Board of Directors at the Annual General Meeting on Wednesday, May 3, 2023:

- *Juliet Atha, RCM*
- *Val Khomenko, RCM*

- *Craig McMillan, RCM*
- *Eric Plant, RCM*
- *John Recker, RCM*

These directors join the following board members currently serving their 3-year term:

- *Courtney Cartmill, RCM*
- *Mark Daye, RCM*
- *Katherine Gow, RCM*
- *Ashlee Henry, RCM*
- *Melissa Kirkaldie, RCM*
- *Catherine Murdock, RCM*
- *Van Smith, RCM*
- *Sean Wilde, RCM*

Thank you to all the enthusiastic and talented RCMs who accepted nominations to the board and participated in the nomination process.

The ACMO Board of Directors wishes to extend thanks and appreciation to Laure Lee, RCM and Daniel Perez-Arteaga, RCM, who finished their terms of service with the ACMO board.

Welcome New ACMO Members

ACMO extends a warm welcome to our newest members who have chosen to elevate their careers or business by joining our professional community. We look forward to a mutually prosperous relationship.

Individual Members

Monie Alahdab
Vicky Amos
Riddhi Bhut
Elona Braushi
Brittney Cassis
Jessica Chow
Paolo De Leo
Racquel Di Fazio
Tania Faria
Nicole Kreutzberg
Kelment Lleshanaku
Stacey Malcolm
Florin Marculescu
Yvonne Martin
Alon Meyer
Julia Newbury
Stephanie Piercey
Caroline Vandenberg

Corporate Members

Summa Property Management

Associate Members

Advance Security Services Co.
Atlas Group Corp.
Blue Diamond Pools & Landscaping
Building Design Solutions Ltd.
Chirco Bros. Paving Inc.
City Wide Facility Solutions Toronto West
Corporate Protection & Investigative Services
Flexpost Inc. Canada
GTA Restoration Corp.
Interserv Safety Solutions Inc.
J. McBride & Sons Ltd.
Palladium Energy Group
Panopticon Solutions
Pivot Security Services
Skylon Construction Corp.
Smart Cleaning Ltd.
Splendid Group Enterprises Inc.
TeneraPro
Thermokill Inc.
True Services Inc.

Congratulations New RCMs

ACMO wishes to recognize those members who recently achieved their RCM designation and have demonstrated a commitment to professionalism and a higher standard of condominium management. Congratulations!

Irfan Ali, RCM
Sophy Lee, RCM
Yanjun Luo, RCM
Yadunath Mattai, RCM
Eleanor (Bing Shu) Shi, RCM

New ACMO Certificate Course A Hit!

On March 29th, 105 individuals gathered online to participate in the latest ACMO Certificate Program offering on the topic of Advanced Communication & Conflict Management. The highly interactive course was developed and delivered on behalf of ACMO by Marc Bhalla, a lawyer and Chartered Mediator and Adjudicator who has been working in the condominium space for more than 20 years.

Participants learned a variety of practical skills and techniques to address conflict, including how to establish healthy boundaries, effective communication tips, develop active listening skills, recognize personal bias, and develop de-escalation techniques for individual interactions and board and owner meetings.

The course was well received, with participants rating their overall satisfaction as 9.2 out of 10. Advanced Communication & Conflict Management is a mandatory course under the new RCM requirements, so it will likely be repeated in the fall for the benefit of those who were unable to attend.

The following condominium managers successfully obtained their Advanced Communication and Conflict Management Certificate:

Howard Abbey
Babajide Paul Adigun
Monie Alahdab
Rita Amato
Joseph A. Annan
Babak Ardalan
Bishnu Aryal
Juliet Atha
John Balog
Gentian Bane
Cassandre Beacock
Michael Bouchard
Gerald Bourdeau
Lissa Breault
Jonathan Bull
Anne Burgoon
Bryan Burleigh
Danielle Casha
Fidel Cassar
Gezim Cela
Nancey Charron
Richard Chen
Henry Kwok Leung Cheung
Cynthia L. Chung
Evan Clinansmith
Carrie Cowton
Julie Crow
Paolo De Leo
Josee Deslongchamps
Erika Elbert
Michael Feherty
Paulette Forsythe
Pamela Fowler
Marcello Galeota
Josie Gallucci
Cristina Gambino
Rob Gillooly
Katherine Gow
Taulant Gramshi
Catherine Greig
Roopali Gulati
Sara Hicks
Katsiaryna Hopka
Wayne Howell
Scott C. Hundey
Olesya Islamova
Maria Janjicek
Jennifer Johnston
Beverly Jolicoeur
Michelle Joy
Mark Jules
Jennifer Kelley
Sheila Krivsky
Faith Lafosse-Marsh
Sheila L. Lafrance
Eduart Lako
Ginger Lebrun
Laura Lee
Selena Livingstone
Sheila Macdonald
Stacey Malcolm
Donna Marinacci
Tia Marttala
Yadunath Mattai
Jamie Mcarthur
Denise Mcasey
Keren Mcdonald
Sokol Meta
Ermelindo Mici
Melissa Minor
Darya Molodyko
Kelly Mota
Yasmeen Nurmohamed
Adina Oita
Ganna Oreshyna
Kaveh Oskoui
Evelyn Y M Pai
George Prifti
Olha Pulnyeva
David Rampino
Rocco Rampino
Muhammad Shujaat Randhawa
Maria Rasile
Adriana Ravar
John Christopher Recker
William G. Robinson
Michael Royston
Karen Rubin
Sylvia Schinker
Shelley Seaby
Gowri Shakthi
Trevor Sone
Adelina Sottile
Jie (Sandy) Sun
Harkanwal S. Thind
Ambrose Thompson
Laurent Trembley
Artan Tushe
Eli Ushamirsky
Christopher Verkuyl
Daniel Webb
Lisa Wilson
Cristal Zak

John Damaren, RCM
Vice President, Community Development & Governance, FirstService Residential

The Differences Between Managing New & Old Condominiums

As a tenured condominium manager in Ontario, I have had the opportunity to manage all types and ages of condominium corporations, including Ontario's oldest corporation, Peel Condominium Corporation No. 1, a 37-unit townhouse community in Brampton, registered in late 1967. If the same condo were built today, it would likely include a 300-unit stacked townhouse site on the same property. Another interesting fact about this community is that several original purchasers still lived in their units, and the board president was about to resign after serving 45 years. That type of experience is tough to replace.

While there are certainly differences in managing older housing stock vs. new, there are also many similarities. As most managers may already know, the administration of an old or new condominium does not change. The requirement to produce PICs, ICUs, NOICs, status certificates, budgets, AGM packages, annual filings with CAO, reserve fund studies, insurance renewals, board meeting preparation, and more still exists whether your corporation is 30 units or 1000, 2 years old or 40. The difference is only in the frequency of some of the abovementioned tasks.

The life cycle of a condominium corporation comes with unique challenges in managing each stage.

Newly Registered Condominiums

A property becomes a condominium corporation on the day that the declarant registers the declaration and description. The declarant will appoint the first board of directors within ten days after the registration. This board is responsible for passing bylaws and calling a turnover meeting. A property manager will work with this board as if it was a board that the unit owners elected. The board will also be responsible for providing direction to the manager and approving invoices per the provisions set out in the signed management agreement. The manager will likely coordinate move-ins in buildings with elevators, set up owner's records, collect maintenance fees and deal with maintenance and repairs. The manager must work collaboratively with the declarant to ensure they do not make repairs covered under warranty. The board of directors are typically professionals associated with the declarant; therefore, their learning curve is not that great.

Post Turnover Meeting

At the turnover meeting, the first board will resign, and the new owners now have a chance to elect their chosen


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board of directors. At times, leading up to the turnover meeting, a manager may work with a shadow board, which may also have representation from the declarant. This board is not elected and has no authority. They aim to work with the management company to understand how a condominium should function and to put forward candidates to form the eventual board elected at the turnover meeting.

During the first few years after the turnover meeting, a manager will be busy expediting the performance audit, facilitating the first reserve fund study, and learning about the building and its residents' needs. Many challenges arise during this period, including dealing with owners that may not be familiar with condominium living and may require more assistance understanding the rules and regulations. Additionally, any issues that arise are usually the responsibility of the developer or builder. It can be challenging to get timely resolutions from them within the timelines expected by the community. Keeping an open dialogue with the declarant is imperative. Many condominiums regularly see tenancy rates of post 80%, which means that the majority of owners are investors. A tool that is critical to new condominiums, and with all condominiums in general, is communication. Whether it be an owner or a tenant, a manager must ensure constant communication to be successful. Many tools can be used, including mass communication through electronic means.

A manager does not get to hand-pick the board of directors and, therefore, must be prepared to work with members that might be very new to serving on boards or, in some cases, already have tenure from work in other communities. Being organized, watching critical deadlines and having strong communication skills will form the basis for a successful manager/board relationship.

Another challenge in this period is the 2nd year budget. A reserve fund study is completed in the first year and will be implemented at the beginning of the second year. If you are lucky enough to have a surplus in the first year and a contribution of at least 20%, then your problems won't be severe versus a large deficit and a 10 – 15% contribution. Most condominiums reserve contributions will jump 25 – 30% in the second year, which can conflict with why some members ran for the board to control maintenance fees. Once again, working closely with the board to ensure they understand that you didn't cause the problem and that you are offering solutions can assist greatly.

3 to 15-year-old Condominium Corporations

During this period, there will be maintenance and repairs; however, most replacement expenses do not start until year 15, when sealants start failing. A manager and board work together to create rules and policies to serve the community during this period. It is the time to shape the future community. Once again, the three skills essential to management are required – Organization, communication and common sense. Preparing for board meetings, creating meaningful board packages and working with residents to educate them on condominium living is essential.

Post 15-year-old Condominiums

This is the time when the long-term repair and replacement cycle begins. A manager and board's focus shifts from community building to managing the reserve fund. However, boards and managers with project management skills will likely excel in this environment. Communicating with residents when requiring access to their units, or having them relocate their vehicles during an underground repair project, must be timely and meaningful to ensure they do their part to make a project successful.

As you can see from the above, each condominium corporation does have its own lifecycle. Changing your management style to be most effective is essential for a manager to adapt to the cycles. The three skills boards and managers require to manage during these times effectively do not change – Organization, communication and common sense. ■

John Damaren, RCM, is the Vice President, Community Development & Governance, at FirstService Residential and oversees all facets of developer consulting in addition to successfully onboarding all new clients. He also is responsible for governance and adherence to applicable legislation. John has been an RCM for 23 years with 32-plus years of experience in condominium management. John has been awarded ACMO's Manager of the Year and President's Awards, and served six years on ACMO's Board, including two years as president, co-chaired two Annual Condominium Conferences, chaired the Certification & Standards Committee, and served on several ACMO committees.
fsresidential.com

Ryan Haley
Director of Common Elements,
Tarion

Navigating Tarion & Warranty Protections for Condominium Common Elements

In Ontario, every new residential condominium built and sold comes with a seven-year warranty that starts on the condominium corporation's registration date.

For that reason, it is important for you as a condominium manager to be aware of the age of your condominium, as certain warranties and protection may still apply to the common elements.

Warranty coverage is limited and specific to the first, second, and seven-year anniversaries following the date of registration. It is important to remember that the warranty is the vendor/builder's warranty, and Tarion's role is to ensure that buyers of new homes and condominiums receive the coverage they are entitled to under their vendor/builder's warranty.

While condo managers are typically hired by the condominium's owner-elected board of directors, sometimes the condominium manager is initially retained by the builder and stays on after the turnover of the common elements to the board of directors. Regardless of your situation, it is critical for you as a condo manager to understand the unit and common element boundaries and be familiar with the Tarion process to ensure you are providing the best service to your employer.

The Warranty Process

Tarion relies on the registered declaration when determining unit and common element boundary disputes. Ownership and maintenance for heating, plumbing, electrical systems, elevators, and amenity areas may be similar for both new and old condominiums. Still, condominium managers must be aware of these components' ownership structure and ensure that regular maintenance is completed to protect them. You should also be aware that, while a unit owner may be responsible for maintenance of an exclusive use balcony or replacement of HVAC filters, sometimes the declaration will stipulate, or a by-law may have been passed, that the condominium corporation is responsible for maintenance even though the unit owner owns HVAC components.

Each condominium project is assigned to a Warranty Services Coordinator and a Warranty Services Representative. Once Tarion receives a registered or amended declaration, they will attempt to reach out to the condominium corporation representative to determine whom the condominium corporation has appointed as a designate responsible for Tarion-related matters. Common element claims must be submitted to Tarion within the


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applicable warranty period based on the registration date or the amended declaration date for phased condominium projects. Once the issue has been brought forward to Tarion as a claim, Tarion may need to review the declaration or condominium by-laws to determine whether the issue is covered within the unit or the common element warranty.

To help you as a condo manager, Tarion offers presentations to condominium corporation representatives on the warranty process and critical things to look out for when handling concerns related to common elements. These often include the condominium manager, performance auditors, and board members.

The Performance Audit

A performance auditor should be hired no sooner than six months after registration of the condominium corporation so that they can complete and submit a Performance Audit to Tarion before the end of the first year of warranty coverage (i.e., the first anniversary date after registration). If a condominium project was built in phases, then a separate Performance Audit must be completed for each portion of the phased condominium corporation in accordance with their amended registration dates.

Performance audits are to be submitted to Tarion with a Performance Audit Tracking Summary (PATS). A performance audit can be submitted to commonelements@tarion.com or through the condominium corporation's MyHome account, an online portal that allows unit owners and corporations to manage their warranties online. Condominium corporations can use MyHome to submit warranty forms, send Tarion documents, receive updates about the warranty, receive email alerts about important warranty deadlines, and manage the Performance Audit Tracking Summary (CE PATS).

The builder repair period is 18 months, starting from the first anniversary of the condominium corporation registration date. While in the builder repair period, a second-year performance audit may be submitted before the second anniversary of the condominium corporation's registration date. The vendor/builder would then have the balance of the repair period to complete the additional items added by the second-year performance audit. During the builder repair period, Tarion may recommend that common element meetings be completed to ensure that all parties are communicating and that repairs are completed in a timely manner.

Conciliation Inspection

If you or the condominium corporation do not feel that the builder has addressed the issues after the repair period has ended, you can ask Tarion for assistance and a conciliation inspection by submitting a Request for Conciliation form. There is a 60-day window to submit this form, which should only include the outstanding and unresolved items from the first- and second-year performance audits.

As a condo manager, please be aware that if a form is not received, Tarion will consider all reported items from the first- and second-year performance audit to be resolved, and the claim will be considered resolved.

Should a request for conciliation is made by the condominium corporation, a fee will be collected, a conciliation inspection will be scheduled, and the vendor/builder will receive a final 90-day builder repair period to address the items prior to the conciliation inspection being conducted. Once conciliation has been requested, Tarion would recommend a common element meeting should take place if one has not already happened.

Find Out More

We encourage you to review the new Tarion.com section for Condominium Corporations and their designates for more information regarding the common element claims process and how to ensure your condo's common elements get the protection they are entitled to. If you have any questions, please send them to commonelements@tarion.com. ■

Ryan Haley has been with Tarion for 15 years and has experience in both Freehold and Condominium claims resolution. He is currently the Director of Common Elements. The Common Element team works closely with condominium corporations, vendors and builders, consultants, condominium managers and other parties to help give condominium buyers consumer protection and confidence that their condominiums are properly built. Tarion.com

Sonia Ojha
Manager of Membership Development,
ACMO

Is Networking Really Essential?

Are you among the minority unsure about the benefits of networking? Is it just another meeting you're expected to attend? Would you rather be doing "real" work? You may ask yourself these questions every time you're at one of these networking events, sitting in the corner on your phone.

Now consider a few questions: How did you get that family doctor you love? How did you find the last honest plumber when you couldn't find the cause of a leak under your sink? Did you ask your neighbour or a friend? Or did you just use Google? Most of us get our services from our personal networks, not the Yellow Pages!

We need to do the same with our professional lives. By attending condo-related events, you will meet and get to know key people within your industry. You will meet influencers within the condo industry who can introduce you to other people and opportunities. The connections you make during a networking event will provide information, referrals, or opportunities for the future. This is particularly helpful if you're trying to find that next great employee, advance in your own career, get your continuing education points, or maybe you need a new service provider. Networking isn't just crucial in today's business world; it's necessary!

How to Network

Shrewd professionals realize that while there will always be a place for cold calling, it may not be the most effective way to get the best connections.

Networking is a tool; as the name says, it's net-WORKING, not net-SITTING. It takes time and effort, but well worth the work you put in. Don't attend networking events and just sit in a corner and not interact with the other attendees; that wastes your time. When attending an event, at the very least, take the time to introduce yourself to everyone at your table and ask what they do and how you can help them. Can you help to introduce them to someone in the room? Are they looking for a particular company or service? I am a serial networker, and when I meet people and learn a bit about their business, I try to proactively tell them that "you should meet this connection of mine." I do this with great intent, as it will be hard for the person to refuse you in return if you ask for an introduction to someone. This give-and-take is what networking is all about. If you help someone, they will be more apt to assist you in return; networking must benefit both parties involved.

Strategic Networking

Make sure to do your research before joining too many groups or associations. Are they relevant to your industry? Are they legitimate organizations? You may even want to try a few before joining; most will have non-member rates like ACMO. Start with one or two, it may be tempting to join everything, but you will quickly realize that a better strategy is to target your efforts, not to mention your valuable time, towards the groups that best fit your professional requirements and perhaps your personal pursuits.

Don't expect to attend one event and think connections and key contacts will pour in. Networking is like dating; you wouldn't get married after your first date. Building rapport and a professional relationship takes time and effort, but through good networking, your professional relationships will be based on a solid foundation and will be long-lasting. The point of networking events is to leave with connections, not business.

Also, don't discount the people you meet with whom you don't do business. I have often been introduced to the "right" person by a connection I had made while networking. The importance and value of a referral network are HUGE! Even though I may not be able to use your services, I may have a very robust network and know someone who does. Within your networking contacts, you will develop a list of people you trust and see regularly. Think of your referral network as your feet on the street! The old saying, "It's not about WHAT you know but WHO you know," still holds true!

Be a strategic networker and not a business card blackjack dealer! Don't automatically hand out your business cards to all. Pretend your business card is a $20 bill and become a miser. Take a second to think about where the business cards you are given end up! Your card will likely go in the recycling bin unless I've made a connection with you. Like all professionals, I don't have the time to connect with everyone, but the connections I make are usually with professionals I've "clicked" with!

Become an Expert Networker

Become that person who knows everyone and is always ready to help. Once you join a networking group, becoming an active participating member is essential. The most successful networker offers something of value to their fellow group members rather than just using the association or group to further their own goals. This could be sharing their valuable contacts, becoming a mentor to someone, or being a subject matter expert, for example.

Online Networking

Is there such a thing? Absolutely! Zoom and Teams meetings are the norms nowadays, so use those events to set up more one-on-one meetings. Social Media can also be an unexpectedly valuable tool! I typically use it to be my authentic self when following up with my contacts or trying to start or further a connection. When you post something on LinkedIn, for example, how grateful are you when one of your contacts likes it or, even better, comments on it? Commenting and liking posts is a great way to let a contact get to know you better professionally.

Volunteering & Networking

Volunteering is a great way to organically and authentically build deeper rapport. Whether with a local charity for personal reasons or volunteering to be on ACMO's Board of Directors or one of our many committees, you will most likely be volunteering with people with which you have something in common. Whatever the reason, it is a great way to connect even more meaningfully, as typically, because it is usually a smaller group, connections are generally deeper.

Networking & Mental Health

Can networking help support positive mental health? – One of the unforeseen outcomes of a global pandemic has been the rapidly increasing number of mental health issues in the workplace or for the many still working remotely or in hybrid roles at home. This sudden isolation has intensified feelings of being disconnected and alone. Most leaders feel they must make the hard decisions on their own, but connecting with peers can be a profoundly positive experience. Awareness that others have similar experiences and feelings can be a tremendous support. They can relate to what you are going through and will most likely have an answer or at least be able to point you in the right direction to resolve whatever issue.

A sense of belonging is perhaps one of the best and most compelling reasons to network. Being a part of an active community of like-minded professionals offers a sense of being part of something bigger than yourself.

Start Networking Now!

Joining an organization like ACMO allows you to develop new connections and exponentially expand your reach. One of the most valuable things ACMO offers our members is the opportunity to network. Why not practice your networking skills at the next educational luncheon, golf tournament, or Condo Conference? What better way to do that than to meet key influencers in your industry and make lasting, mutually beneficial connections?

Not a member yet? Contact ACMO to learn more about the many benefits of membership, including networking opportunities. We look forward to connecting with you at an event soon! ■

Sonia Ojha joined ACMO, as the Manager of Membership Development, in February 2023, bringing her membership expertise from nearly 14 years at the local Chamber of Commerce. Sonia is an admitted serial networker and gives her free time to the Canadian Cancer Society and Big Brothers Big Sisters Foundation. Sonia looks forward to connecting with everyone at ACMO's many networking opportunities! She can be reached at sojha@acmo.org. acmo.org


Enhancing Condominium Properties with Stunning Summer Landscaping

John Bontje is the Manager of the Landscape Management and Snow Removal Division of Salivan Landscape and has over 35 years of landscaping experience. He is a graduate of the Horticulture Program at Guelph University.

Salivan Landscape, celebrating its 100th year anniversary, have helped countless property managers, business owners, and homeowners transform their property to reflect each client's unique personality or branding.

With the summer season fast approaching, Salivan Landscape's trusted experts have put together some helpful tips and advice to help your property transition from spring to summer.

SALIVAN'S APPROACH TO SEASONAL CHANGES

At Salivan Landscape, we have a step-by-step approach for all seasons. We start planning for the landscape season in

February/March. In addition, we offer a wide variety of in-house services, such as seasonal flower displays, lawn care and landscape construction, to our clients.

Salivan provides a guide for you to follow so that you and your landscape contractor can be ready for the season to come.

As the temperature rises and the days become longer, summer arrives with its vibrant energy and beauty. For condominium properties, the summer season presents an excellent opportunity to enhance the aesthetics and overall appeal of the landscape. Well-planned and maintained summer landscaping can transform a condominium property into a serene oasis for residents to enjoy. This article will explore various landscaping ideas and tips that can help create a stunning summer landscape for condominium properties.

Strategic Plant Selection

Choosing the right plants is crucial for creating a visually appealing landscape. Opt for plants that thrive in your region's climate and that provide interest all summer long by way of growth habit, leaving colour and blooms for creating an inviting and lively atmosphere.

Outdoor Seating and Gathering Areas

To encourage socialization and outdoor activities, incorporate comfortable seating and gathering areas throughout the condominium property. Arrange benches, picnic tables, and patio sets in shaded spots or near attractive focal points, such as garden beds or water features. These spaces can serve as gathering points for residents to relax, read, socialize, or host small events during the summer months.

Lighting and Ambiance

Extend the enjoyment of the summer landscape into the evening hours by incorporating strategic lighting. Install soft, warm lighting along walkways, around trees, and near seating areas to create a cozy and inviting ambiance. Consider using energy-efficient LED lights or solar-powered options for sustainable illumination. Properly placed lighting can transform the landscape into an enchanting retreat, allowing residents to enjoy the outdoors even after sunset.

Efficient Irrigation Systems

To ensure the health and vitality of your summer landscape, it's essential to implement efficient irrigation systems. Consider installing drip irrigation or smart irrigation systems that directly deliver targeted water to the plants' root zones, minimizing water waste. Set timers to water plants during the cooler hours of the day to prevent excessive evaporation. Regularly inspect and maintain the irrigation system to ensure optimal performance and water conservation.

Proper Maintenance and Pruning

Regular maintenance is key to preserving the beauty of the summer landscape. Create a maintenance schedule to include tasks such as mowing the lawn, weeding garden beds, and trimming shrubs and trees. Deadheading and pruning flowering plants after their blooms have faded promote healthy growth and encourage further blooming. Regularly remove dead or diseased plants to maintain a tidy and vibrant landscape throughout summer.

Removing weeds is another vital part of making and keeping your gardens looking good all summer. Many types of weeds thrive in the summer heat and encourage insects to move in. Weeds are easiest to pull when they are young and small. It's important to stop weeds from producing seeds.

With Dandelions being one of the first weeds to flower and go to seed, it is very important to have a weed control program for your lawn in place. A single Dandelion can produce up to 2000 seeds per year. We recommend applying at least two Fiesta weed control product applications to your lawn. Fiesta does not kill every type of weed, but if your lawn is on a program, it will quickly reduce the number of weeds in your lawn.

Pests and Disease

Our crews are made aware of the fact that at certain times over the course of the summer, different insects or diseases are active. They are always looking for signs like half-eaten leaves from insects or developing brown or yellow spots from disease. Any problems they notice are discussed with management, and appropriate action will be taken to remedy the problem. We work closely with an Arborist, who will put together a pest management program for your property to ensure that the damage to your trees and shrubs is kept to a minimum.

Conclusion

By implementing these landscaping ideas and tips, condominium properties can elevate their outdoor spaces into inviting and visually stunning summer landscapes. Strategic plant selection, including water features, the creation of comfortable seating areas, efficient irrigation systems, proper maintenance, and well-thought-out lighting, can collectively enhance the property's overall appeal. With a well-designed and maintained summer landscape, condominium residents can revel in the beauty of nature, fostering a sense of community. ■

Thomas Kortko, RCM
Vice President of Operations,
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Management

The Challenges & Rewards
of Managing Aging Townhome Communities

Working in the industry over the past 25 years, I have managed many condominium communities that vary in age, condition, scale and design. Each has been a different experience. A considerable amount of my time has been with older townhome communities constructed in the 1970s and 80s. Due to their age and decisions and choices made over the past 40-50 years, these communities have unique experiences that provide us with a wealth of knowledge and perspectives from past successes and failures that newer communities cannot offer and shouldn't be ignored. An awareness of outcomes from past approaches and methods is critical to ensure success and a bright future for all communities. This article outlines some challenges experienced along with proven solutions that can be challenging but also very rewarding.

When older communities were constructed, they did not benefit from the decades of cumulative condominium experience that we have access to now. It was indeed the "wild west," with the first corporations, boards and various industry professionals planning a future with limited experience and few points of reference. As a result, every day was a new adventure. Many assumptions were made based on poorly prepared declarations, bylaws and rules that continued to evolve and expand in recognition. I have had the privilege to work with directors involved in these formative years who took on the task with the best of intentions. However, some choices were made because of their limited experience and lack of guidance, resulting in unanticipated consequences and damage. At the same time, many communities started out strong and have stayed that way for their entire history. These should be seen as role models to study and follow.

From a lack of past experience came a limited vision for these communities' future; some did not perceive or consider long-term outcomes from their decisions. When looking to the future, progressive boards seek and obtain advice from professionals and weigh their options with quality and cost at the forefront. For example, where many misguided townhome communities fail is with their roofs. In the 1980s, many townhouses installed two layers of shingles to save money but did not realize that the added weight on the roof deck dramatically reduced roof life span. These projects also had minimal legislative support as contributions to Reserve Funds were meagre, with many boards unwilling to exceed an unrealistically low 10% of annual operating budgets. Sadly, others occasionally made selfish decisions for personal or political gain. This was detrimental to the corporation's future and often resulted in the deferral of critical maintenance or modifications to minimize increases in operational costs.

Other communities took a more progressive approach to learning new methods to challenge the status quo. They were instrumental in the evolution of their communities and the industry. These boards took a more balanced approach with services and costs, recognizing the importance of investing in the

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present for a prosperous future. They were the first corporations to embrace Reserve Fund Studies before they were mandatory in 2001 and did not face the steep increases many struggled with when the requirement was introduced. Over their lifetimes, these communities have continued to change to ensure they never do the "same old, same old," always considering new options that will ensure their continued prosperity.

The outcomes from actions taken by older condo communities were often not fully realized until the mid to late 1990s. This is when I began my career and witnessed some negative impacts. I was given the daunting task of finding viable solutions, many of which were costly, aggressive in scope, and had to be completed in the immediate future. However, these situations also presented an opportunity to learn and implement positive changes to ensure a better, more sustainable future. With most projects, limited funding due to low maintenance fees was the most immediate challenge. Many communities did not have a long-term plan and could not effectively undertake major projects without sacrificing the project scope and/or quality of materials. With the introduction of Reserve Fund Studies, over the last 20 years, the narrative has changed from "we have lots to do, but no money" to "we have the money, so what do we want to do next?" This was revolutionary, with many positive results for communities that had stagnated for years due to limited funds and vision and were now forced to evolve and grow. This enabled older communities to remain competitive with newer communities, particularly given their advantages, including large open spaces, swimming pools, tennis courts, etc., and amenities that are less frequent in newer condo communities.

These collective histories of older condo communities provide us with a significant knowledge base to learn from and avoid past errors. It is crucial to reflect on this history when planning and making decisions for the future of our communities and to consider these best practices:

- Do your utmost to foster a sense of community so everyone appreciates we are "in it together."
- Ensure budgets are not fee-centric and meet the community's long-term needs and expectations.
- Funding options and loans, once considered taboo for many, have become commonplace and are effective solutions.
- Recognize labour and material limitations in the present economy and plan for the future.
- Encourage education and discuss experiences with your directors. Some boards are now multi-generational in older communities, and their knowledge can be invaluable.
- Continue to expand your experience in the field and take advantage of resources and continuing education opportunities offered by ACMO and other reputable organizations.
- Learn from everyone everywhere; much of my experience has come from the least likely sources.
- Understand your legal limitations as a property manager and understand when you should seek and recommend expertise from other industry professionals.
- Maintain a sustainable balance between physical site time and administrative requirements.
- Be aware of the increasing time required for reporting to various institutions as their scope and jurisdictions expand.
- Understand and appreciate that the right path is not always the easiest but will yield the best results.

Learning from our past, it is clear that our communities' evolution is never ending, change is inevitable, and managers must be prepared. We will continue to learn from our missteps and our successes and those made by others. From these experiences, I look forward to being a partner with change, will never stand in the way of progress, and will never stop asking questions to make the best decisions for the communities we proudly serve. ■

Thomas Kortko, RCM, is a Vice President of Operations at Maple Ridge Community Management – An Associa® Company, where he has worked since entering the industry in 1997. Thomas draws experience from a diverse personal and work history and oversees the management of industrial, low and high-rise residential properties.
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Thomas Inrig, RCM
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Today's Actions are Tomorrow's Results

Long-term performance, efficiency and the overall quality of a condominium strongly correlate with specific actions and procedures put in place early in a building's life. From inception, a condominium must be guided in the right direction, and its future market value may be traced back to the actions taken or not taken during the pre-turnover period and the first couple of years following registration.

In terms of maintaining the physical building, one of the most important tasks early on is ensuring the physical chemistry of the water in all closed loops is within an acceptable range defined by a water treatment specialist. The water in a closed loop must be clean and chemically treated from the beginning to ensure all mechanical components that come in contact with that water remain functioning as designed throughout their expected life. It is not uncommon for the water to be out of range or "dirty." Still, no action is taken because the board of directors blames the developer, and the developer claims they did what was required pre-turnover. The consequences of this willful blindness will be a premature failure of main building components resulting in unexpected capital projects and yearly operating fund deficits.

Damage and deterioration should be expected to the building's boilers, pumps, pipes, heat exchangers, air bleeders, in-suite fan coils and heat pump units if dirty water perpetually flows through the system. Managing that building can become a nightmare when heat or air conditioning is compromised inside the units, and the corporation is responsible for repairing it. If you manage a building pre-turnover, review and confirm that the water tests are within the acceptable range before the corporation is registered and handed over.

Property managers should ensure that the service contracts are carried out as defined in the executed contract. Catching performance deficiencies relating to service contracts early on in a building's life is extremely important to prevent extensive damage to mechanical components further down the road. Have your performance audit engineer verify that the HVAC contractor completes the service according to their contract. Just because the tags on the mechanical system are signed and dated, it doesn't mean they actually did the job. Have the engineer crack some bolts to see if it is physically serviced per the contract. Your engineer can decipher if mechanical components are being maintained by doing a quick investigation. Eliminating bad service contracts early on is integral for the health of your building.

Section 112 of Ontario's *Condominium Act 1998* ("the Act") permits

a corporation to terminate certain agreements by resolution of the board within one year of the turnover meeting by providing sixty days written notice. Although there are several caveats to be considered before leaning on Section 112, the performance of all vendors engaged by the developer needs to be evaluated before the Section 112 deadline expires.

When engaging new contractors, the most critical condition that needs to be in a contract is the right to terminate with 30 days' notice. Managers need to be aware that some large companies purposely draft contracts that are difficult to get out of. Before sending any contract to the board, cross out any ambiguous termination clause and write "termination by either party with 30 days' notice." They will not be happy but will agree to make the changes if it means getting the contract.

Inexperienced directors think that spending a lot of money on maintenance in the first couple of years is unnecessary because a building is new. That couldn't be further from the truth. Many components of a building need to be serviced annually to keep warranties intact. This includes servicing pressure relief valves, mixing valves and changing filters in specific components. It is strongly recommended that a plumber be engaged by the corporation immediately after registration. Not only will the corporation stay on top of warranty-related services, but the corporation's plumber will have a chance to meet and ask the developer's plumber questions about installation. The developer's plumber will be on-site frequently for the first couple of years, and it could be misconstrued that all necessary plumbing tasks are being completed, which is simply not true.

Understanding what is required regarding maintenance and communicating that to the board of directors can be challenging. For instance, most people don't realize how accumulated dirt and grease can deteriorate garage floor membranes. The flow of greases and oils into cracks in the membrane allows for a breakdown of the adhesive bond, propagating localized failure to the membrane. A limited approach to garage floor cleaning (only cleaning once a year, or worse, not at all) may result in the membrane failing at an accelerated rate. Furthermore, the material warranties may be voided if the maintenance instructions are not followed, and you can bet those instructions call for regular cleaning.

A symptom of a poor start is common element fees increasing exponentially year after year. When due diligence on the part of the property manager and the board of directors is not conducted from the beginning, mechanical systems will break down prematurely, warranties will be voided, and essential tasks will fall through the cracks.

Fees will always go up, but a predictable, linear fee slope can be achieved by putting in the required effort and time and paying attention to the details right from the beginning. Remember, today's actions are tomorrow's results. ■

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The End of the Line

The Termination of a Condominium Corporation

As condominium buildings age and land values continue to escalate, some condominium corporations are now considering the possibility of selling all the units and common elements of their condominium site when approached by condo developers with an agreement of purchase and sale.

This is an opportunity for unit owners who face ongoing special assessments in aging properties to realize often higher than market value prices from developers who are often willing to pay those higher prices.

Although developers are free to negotiate the purchase of individual units with each unit owner with the objective of eventually purchasing all the units in a condominium corporation, this process would likely be more time-consuming, and a developer may not necessarily be successful in acquiring all the units.

The most common approach taken by developers in purchasing an existing condominium site is with the purchase of the entire property under Section 124 of the *Condominium Act* (the "Act"), where the board of directors of a condominium corporation will proceed with obtaining the requisite votes from the unit owners to proceed with the sale.

Preliminary Steps

Firstly, if considering an offer from a developer, it is important to get feedback from the unit owners to determine whether there is any interest. Section 124 of the Act requires that 80% of the unit owners agree to the sale, so it is vital to determine whether that would be achievable before taking any further steps.

The Agreement of Purchase and Sale from the Developer

Once the board determines interest from the owners, the board can consider entering into a "conditional" Agreement of Purchase of Sale once reviewed by the corporation's legal counsel. The Agreement must be conditional on the corporation obtaining the requisite voting and consent requirements under Section 124. The board may want to consider asking the developer to pay the costs of the lawyer's review of the Agreement and the costs relating to the calling and holding of the meeting to vote on the sale.

Section 124 – The Process and Voting/Consent

The board must call an owners' meeting for voting to authorize the sale of the property. This can be a special owners'

meeting or added to the agenda of another owners' meeting, such as the annual general meeting.

To authorize the sale of the property, 80 percent of the units must vote in favour of the sale. In addition, consent is required from 80 percent of those having registered claims against the property as of the date of the meeting. The consents can be obtained after the meeting date.

The Owners Who Vote "No" to the Sale

Section 125 of the Act provides that once the 80 percent vote is achieved, a dissenting owner may, within 30 days of the vote, submit to mediation of a dispute over the property's fair market value. The process to be followed for the mediation is in accordance with Section 132 of the Act.

The dissenting owner must give the corporation notice of intention to dispute within 10 days after the vote authorizing the sale.

The owner who serves this notice of intention is entitled to receive from the proceeds of the sale –the amount the owner would have received if the sale price had been fair market value as determined by arbitration.

If the corporation does not have the funds that the owner is entitled to from the sale proceeds, the corporation is still required to pay that amount to the owner who served the notice of intention to the deficiency (meaning all owners pay from their shares of the proceeds).

It is important to note that there is no mechanism under the Act for an owner to dispute the actual sale. The process under Section 125 is only with respect to the sale price.

What Happens to the Sale Proceeds?

The Agreement of Purchase and Sale will usually provide for the payment of one sum on the closing date, which would be distributed to the owners in accordance with the proportionate share of the common element interest set out in the Schedule to the Declaration, which sets out each unit's common expense proportion and common element proportionate share (usually Schedule D). Sometimes the proportion share of common expenses and common element interest are the same – but sometimes, they may differ. It is essential to check this Schedule and bring it to the owners' attention at the time of the vote to approve the sale.

Section 127(2) The Process of Termination of the Condominium

Section 127 outlines the process for terminating the condominium corporation and the condominium plan. The registration on the title of the Notice of Termination does this.

Section 129 Distribution of Assets – the Reserve Fund

When the condominium corporation is terminated, all assets will be used to pay all claims against the corporation. The remainder will be paid to owners in the same proportions as their proportionate share of common interest.

Unless the Agreement of Purchase and Sale provides otherwise, any balance in the Reserve Fund on termination will then be distributed to the owners.

Other Ways to Terminate a Condominium Corporation

The *Condominium Act* provides other ways to terminate a condominium corporation other than where there is a sale. There may be instances, for example, where there is one owner of all the units who no longer wants to operate the property as a condominium corporation. Or perhaps owners would rather operate as a co-ownership rather than a condominium (this poses many challenges). There may also be situations where there is substantial damage to the condominium, and the owners no longer want to proceed with the condominium structure. The *Condominium Act* sets out the mechanism for other termination procedures, including by court order, under Sections 122, 123 and 128 of the Act.

It may be that we start seeing more condominiums that are approaching the forty-year-old mark begin the sale process, given that developers are looking for properties in locations with a lack of development sites. Ultimately, this is a win-win for not just the condominium developers but for owners who may walk away with a great return on their investments. ■

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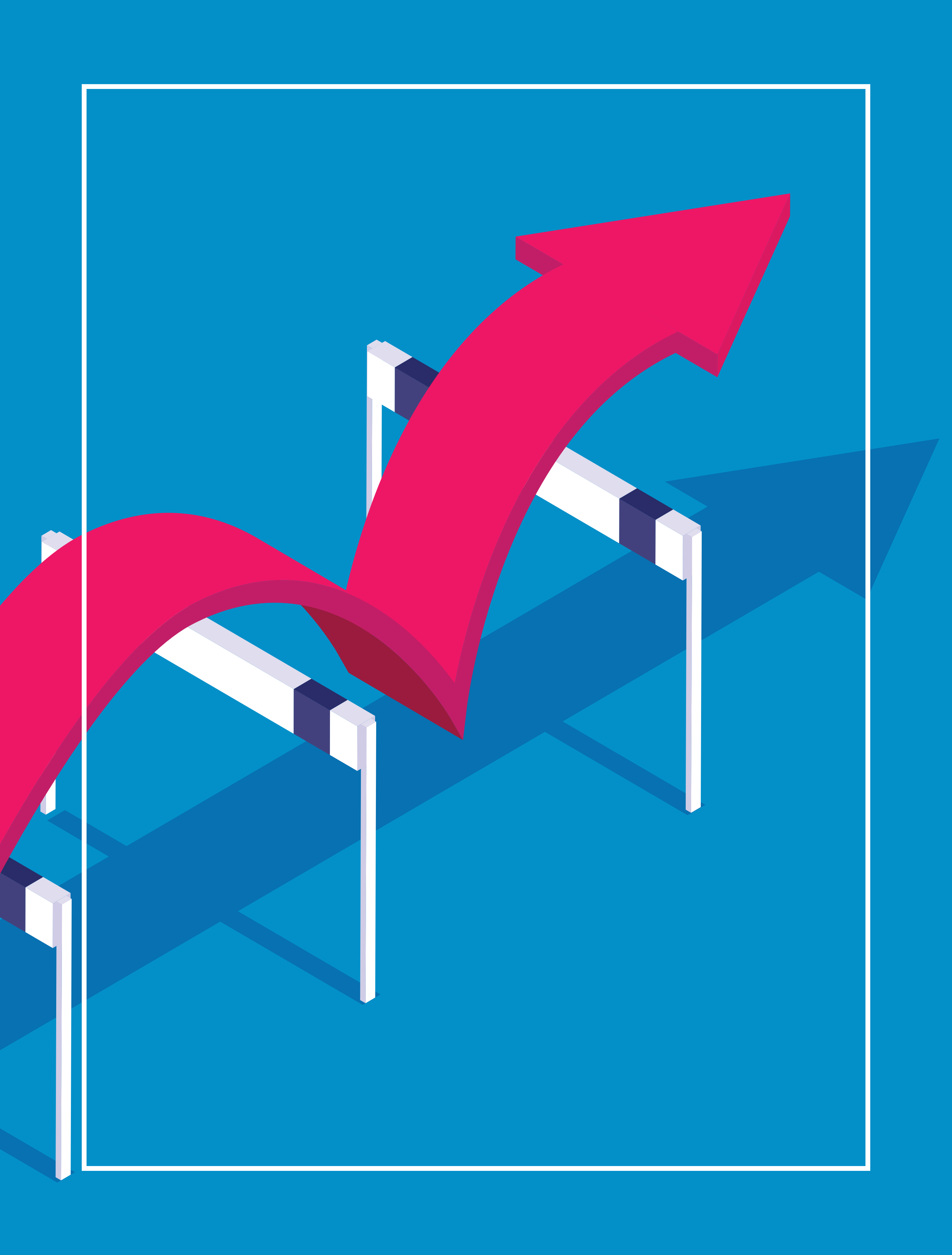

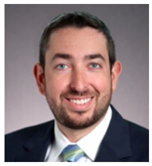

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Important Legal Steps for New Condominiums

Like newborn babies, a newly registered condominium corporation quickly goes through a number of developmental milestones, on its way to becoming a fully functioning building. Many of these milestones occur within the one-year period following either registration (i.e. when the building becomes a condominium by the registration of its declaration and description), or turnover (i.e. when the new owners of the building take control of the board of directors). This article summarizes some of these key developments.

Completing the Turn-over Meeting

Initially following the registration of a condominium, the board of directors is appointed by the declarant. The declarant-controlled board serves until the declarant has transferred ownership of majority of the units, at which time section 43 of the *Condominium Act, 1998* (the "Act") requires it to call a meeting of owners to elect a new board. This "turnover meeting" must be called within 21 days after the declarant ceases to be the owner of the majority of the units. If the board does not call the meeting within the 21-day period, any owner or mortgagee can call the meeting.

The turn-over meeting triggers a requirement for the declarant to turn over certain basic records to the condominium, including copies of all agreements entered into by the corporation (or the declarant on behalf of the corporation), insurance policies and certificates, bills of sale, and records related to units or employees of the condominium. After the turn-over meeting, the declarant has 30 days to deliver a second set of documents, including warranties, architectural/engineering plans, the standard unit schedule, and certain financial records.

Completing the Performance Audit

A second important task for newly created condominiums is the completion of the performance audit. The condominium must, after being declared, retain an engineer or an architect to conduct a performance audit of the common elements. The performance audit inspects the common elements to identify any construction deficiencies. These deficiencies can range from minor matters (such as a poor paint job) to major (such as water penetration or structural issues).

Subsection 44(2) of the Act requires the performance audit to be conducted between 6 and 10 months after the registration of the condominium. The condominium must pay for the performance audit, and the cost forms part of the condominium's first-year budget.

The engineer or architect conducting the performance audit must submit their report to the board and also file the report with the Tarion Warranty Corporation. Completing the performance audit and submitting the report to Tarion within the required timeline is crucial as it will allow the condominium to make a claim to Tarion for any warranted common element deficiencies.

Conversely, if the performance audit is not completed or the report is not filed with Tarion, the condominium will lose its warranty protection for any construction deficiencies (*i.e.,* it must pay to fix these itself).

Collecting Shortfalls Under the First-year Budget

Pursuant to section 75 of the Act, the declarant is accountable to the condominium for the budget for the first year following its registration.

The declarant is required to pay the condominium the amount by which the total amount of common expenses incurred exceeds the total budgeted amount. The declarant must also pay the condominium the amount by which the total amount of fees, charges, rents and other revenue related to the use of the common elements is less than the budgeted amount.

Once the board has received the audited financial statement from its auditor for its first year, it has 30 days to notify the declarant in writing of any shortfalls between the budgeted common expenses and revenue and the actual common expenses and revenue collected. The declarant then has 30 days to reimburse the condominium.

Carrying Out a Reserve Fund Study and Developing a Reserve Fund Plan

The condominium must also conduct a reserve fund study within one year following registration. The study aims to ensure that the amount of common expenses contributed to the reserve fund is sufficient to cover the expected future costs of the major repair and replacement of the common elements.

Once the board obtains the results of the reserve fund study, it must propose a plan for the future funding of the reserve fund. The board must develop the reserve fund plan within 120 days of receiving the reserve fund study.

Within 15 days of proposing a plan, the board must send a notice to the owners containing (i) a summary of the reserve fund study, (ii) a summary of the proposed plan and (iii) a statement indicating the areas where the proposed plan differs from the study. A copy of this notice, along with a copy of the study and the plan, must also be sent to the condominium's auditor.

Reviewing the Condominium's Agreements

The Act allows condominiums to terminate certain agreements entered into by the declarant on its behalf. This is intended to prevent the condominium from being bound to agreements entered into by the declarant where it does not feel that the terms are fair or that the services to be provided are required. The post-turnover owner-controlled board should, together with management and its legal advisors, review each of the agreements to which the condominium is a party in order to determine whether these agreements should be terminated.

The agreements to be reviewed include management agreements (which may be terminated under section 111 of the Act), agreements with third parties for goods, services, or facilities to be provided to the corporation, and lease agreements for the common elements (which may be terminated under section 112 of the Act). If the board determines that any of these agreements are to be terminated, it must provide at least 60 days' written notice to the other party or parties to the agreement.

There are also some limited circumstances where shared facilities agreements or reciprocal agreements can be amended by court order under section 113 of the Act.

The above are just a few of the important issues facing a new condominium. It is critical that new condominiums build an appropriate team of professionals to guide them through these issues. Navigating these issues successfully should put the condominium on the path to a healthy and successful future! ■

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CWB Maxium Financial

New and Old, Different but the Same

Despite the age of a condominium corporation, the common issue is that financial shortfalls directly affect the individual owners within the community. When inflation and interest rates surpass income growth for most individuals, overcoming this challenge is more difficult.

Having a duty to repair sometimes means boards must make decisions that can directly cause hardship to some within the community. Condo boards may struggle to make unpopular decisions, which puts increased pressure on condominium managers to guide them through the planning process. Condominium managers that do this effectively recognize the importance of communication throughout the process with the boards, professionals, and owners.

Sometimes, financial challenges prevent necessary work from moving forward, creating longer-term and more complicated issues for the future. We need to work to avoid this situation to protect the corporation long-term. A well-maintained building is essential, as it will help maintain real estate values, improve resident safety & comfort, and run more efficiently, potentially reducing future costs.

Because there are limited financial options, the key is understanding how the potential solutions are applied differently throughout the lifecycle of a building. Here are some examples to consider.

Consumer Price Inflation

New builds have a unique inflationary challenge in the current market. First-year budgets are typically prepared years before registration and include some inflationary adjustment year-over-year. In recent years, inflation has been much higher than could have reasonably been predicted. Although the Declarant is responsible for the first-year deficit that might result, new condominiums may have to increase their operating budgets even more significantly than current inflation.

Older condominiums struggle with inflation differently. Their equipment may not be running as efficiently, meaning that spiking utility costs can drastically impact the budget. There may be long-term staff retention costs because salaries must adjust to the current market. Contract renewals may see more significant increases than what has been expected historically.

Despite the underlying issue, the right solution to address inflationary pressures on operating costs is to increase condo fees while also seeking to address long-term cost-saving opportunities that do not compromise service quality.

Understanding the major contributing factors to the budget overall (by expense category) and which individual expenses drive the increases is essential. This will help focus on which cost-saving opportunities are meaningful and assist with developing clear owner communication about current and future plans.

Construction Deficiencies, Warranty & Litigation

New builds have protection through the performance audit and TARION warranty process. Older condominiums may also experience issues with original construction deficiencies that are outside of warranty periods or relate to recent major capital repair projects. New and old alike could experience upfront costs to address the underlying issue before the corporation can hold responsible parties accountable.

To best consider what options exist, the first step is to get realistic about the work required, the timeline for project completion, the length of any legal or warranty process that could result in financial recovery, and whether the corporation has any room within the existing budget or financial position to minimize the impact. One additional point of consideration is what occurs if cost recovery is achieved. There is no option for a corporation to return any condo fees already collected to the owners.

It would be best if you relied on your experts to communicate with each other throughout this process so that the moving pieces can align and develop the best strategy. Fee increases, special assessments, and loans (or a combination of the three) can be tailored to fit unique circumstances.

Construction Price Inflation & Reserve Fund Planning

Construction price inflation has been unbelievable from 2020 to 2023, but inflation related explicitly to major construction projects has greatly surpassed the consumer price index for many years.

Older condominiums face these pressures to execute major repairs today as they go through their building renewal cycle. Projects are far more expensive than could have been anticipated through previous savings plans. There are considerable shortfalls in today's projects, plus adjustments to future costs in their overall reserve fund plan.

New builds face these pressures to set their future repair plans up for success. First, they need to adjust a first-year contribution based on a percentage of their operating budget (which history tells us is never enough) when they receive the first-year RFS. Then they continue to feel the pressure year over year when updates are done to the study revealing the most expensive projects – often occurring in years 30 to 45, which fall just outside of the first few reserve fund study updates. New condominiums will feel this pinch for 9+ years!

Older condominiums have three options – special assessment, loan, or project deferral. Each scenario has pros and cons, which may include increased condo fees. Consider the actual cost of each scenario, the impact on condo fees, and the community's ability to absorb high unexpected costs.

Deferral often is not the best solution, but considering it as an option helps to guide the decisions better. It may not even be an option if you have a failed building component with an urgent repair need. Even if it is possible to defer, there are always costs to consider, such as future inflation, maintenance, and running inefficient building components.

New builds only have the option to increase condo fees. A best practice is to try and address the future shortfall as early as possible. Most reserve fund planners will be able to provide the board with tables showing 45-60 years of expenses so that the building renewal cycle can be captured in the first reserve fund study. The earlier you bring the funding level to the correct place, the more stable the condo fees will be in the future.

What About New(ish) or Conversions?

New(ish) condos or conversions have the added challenge of combining some or all of these issues simultaneously. Getting the right advice early on or as soon as you realize a concern is even more critical in these cases.

Throughout the planning process, we should always ask ourselves how best to communicate with the owners. These conversations are not always easy, but being well-prepared for the discussions goes a long way. Even if the condominium is early in planning, owners must be advised of what is known and the estimated financial impacts. Consulting with the owners early on ensures that the final plan adopted by the corporation includes any specific feedback for community members. ■

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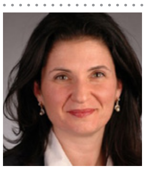
Can Condos Deal with the Coming Reserve Fund Shock?

Construction price inflation has been significantly higher than consumer inflation over the last three years. Reserve fund study updates completed this year and in 2024-2025 will have to reflect this significant increase in costs even for those projects that are in the distant future.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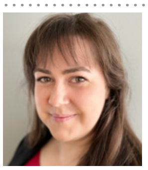
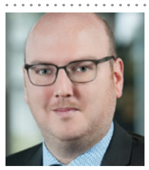

Stephanie Robinson


Sally Thompson


Justin Tudor

The resulting increases in contributions will be difficult for boards to implement and unit owners to accommodate, especially given other financial pressures related to consumer price inflation and increasing mortgage rates. Condominiums already behind on their reserve funding will find that this compounds their problems.

Every condo is going to face a significant contribution increase, usually in the range of 30% to 50%, at their next update, and the reality is that the new fees may not be affordable for all unit owners. Those condos that are currently well-funded will fare better than their under-funded peers. Those with substantial projects that cannot be deferred in the near term may face even more significant increases and special assessments.

As reserve fund planners who work throughout the province, we are very concerned with the distressing impact of these cost increases on our clients. Successful condos will face the new reality head-on, but this will not be easy.

According to Statistics Canada, Construction Price Index for new residential construction has raced ahead of the consumer price index per Table 1. This index is not a perfect match to the type of work planned in a reserve fund study, but it is more representative than Consumer Price Index.

Reserve fund study providers typically maintain their own database, including the cost to waterproof and repair parking garages, replace windows, replace HVAC equipment, etc. These databases get updated using various sources, including recently tendered work, budget confirmation with contractors and/or suppliers and project costs at other condominiums.

We are finding that the cost of window replacement, often the most expensive project in a reserve fund study, has increased by about 10-15%+ annually over the past three years. The price of other construction materials such as wood, concrete repairs, roofing, sealants, coatings, and paving has surged by 50-100%, though it appears that the prices have stopped racing ahead in some areas, and a few have even fallen from their peak. HVAC equipment replacement cost has escalated significantly; however, many clients are deferring the work due to long delivery timelines, reducing the amount of data available to know where pricing is going. Contractors routinely seek extras or deposits related to supplier cost increases and material availability. Labour costs are also up, but not as much as material costs.

A combination of factors drives up pricing, such as labour shortages due to the retirement of baby-boomer workers, global factors like the Ukraine war, climatic disasters that impact international material suppliers, and political tensions. And more recently, the mandate by the provincial government to construct 1.5 million new residential homes in the next decade. All these factors are influencing contractors to build risk factors into their bids.

There are some actions a corporation can take to minimize reserve fund spending:

- Complete all available energy-saving projects, both capital and operating. The resultant savings can go towards your reserve contribution.
- Complete proactive maintenance for all building components. Fix leaks promptly to avoid more widespread deterioration. Seal cracks in the pavement to reduce damage to the supporting fill, possibly allowing for the deferral of pavement replacement by many years. Don't cut corners on maintenance, especially not essential programs like HVAC equipment servicing, chemical treatment of your heating loop and cooling tower, or regularly washing your parking garage membrane.
- Collaborate with your consultant to defer what you can if it helps keep your contribution down, but don't delay things you shouldn't. For example, you might defer a major garage renewal by completing a minor repair program in the near term; but don't just postpone the major renewal and ignore the garage because this can result in accelerated structural deterioration. Similarly, you might be able to defer window replacement by retrofitting the windows; don't ignore the windows, leaving owners with drafty and leaky windows that they can't open.
- Be careful about doing unnecessary work. For example, when changing your hot water piping, you might also be tempted to replace the cold-water piping while the walls are open. While bundling projects together can sometimes save costs in the overall life of the building, money might be better spent

Table 1: Comparison of the Consumer Price Index and the Construction Price Index

Year	Consumer Price Index Ontario	Construction Price Index Toronto	Construction Price Index Ottawa
2020	0.7%	7.6%	9.9%
2021	5.2%	25.7%	24.5%
2022	6%	21.9%	11.4%

investigating the condition of the cold pipes. It might be that their complete replacement could be deferred until the next time the hot water pipes need to be replaced.

- Don't assume that the lowest-cost engineering proposal will result in the lowest-cost overall project. Designing a simple but expensive project will always take less effort than engineering a more cost-effective but detailed, smaller project. For example, it is often easier to design for the replacement of a component than design for repairs – but the cost to repair is much less than the cost to replace. You may have saved a few dollars upfront on your consulting costs, but you might overspend on the construction work as a result.

While the board can elect to phase in a required increase, we support the Professional Engineers Ontario Guideline recommendation that this phasing be restricted to three years. This allows the reserve fund to catch up with market changes before completing the subsequent study. More extended phase-in periods defer excessive contributions onto future owners, and this has been shown to result in financial failure and/or serious physical decline over time.

We expect the significant increases in common expenses to create unrest amongst the owners, especially given that many owners are also renewing their mortgages at much higher interest rates. Some may be forced to sell. Requisitions to remove boards will occur.

Boards must be proactive to help the owners understand what is happening and warn owners that this industry-wide shift is coming. Explain that the issue is not isolated to your building. You might consider having your reserve fund study provider present at a town hall session so they can answer the unit owners' questions directly.

Once a board has received a study showing the significant increase, this information should be provided on status certificates. In the case of a large increase, a corporation might be wise to consult with its legal counsel about whether it is appropriate to wait for the study to be finalized before modifying the notice.

Boards ask if we expect prices to fall back to levels seen before the pandemic. It is essential to understand that this is a question of significant deflation, not just a reduced inflation rate. Price deflation is possible for certain items where severe supply-chain constraints have driven demand far ahead of supply but should not be expected for most prices that flow into a reserve fund study.

Governments are working hard to reduce inflation. Their primary focus is on consumer spending, but the same initiatives should help reduce the rate of inflation for construction projects in the future. Fourth-quarter inflation in 2022 has already slowed for the Ottawa region. Toronto is showing no signs of slowing and is at greater risk, given the pressure to build new homes. We will all have to wait and watch to know how long this high inflation will continue – but we don't have to wait to plan accordingly. ■

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Stop Throwing Money Out the Window!

By Thomas Noël

2023 will be an important year for townhouses, row houses, low-rise condominiums, and the fight against greenhouse gas emissions. This year, generous grants are available to replace old windows with new, state-of-the-art, energy-efficient ones.

Thomas Noël

Residential and commercial buildings account for 18% of total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in Canada[1]. Residential windows account for up to 35% of home heat loss during the heating season[2]. By changing old windows for “Most Efficient Energy Star Certified” windows, total home energy use could be reduced by 9%, and GHG emissions could be lowered by more than five megatones[3].

The best-rated windows for 2023, those Most Efficient Energy Star Certified (ER of ≥40 with U-Factor of ≤ 1.05 (0.18)), are made from cellular PVC as per Natural Resources Canada (NRCan) website[4]. Cellular PVC windows have the highest Energy Rating (ER) number of all residential windows in Canada, according to the NRCan website[5].

Why Does All This Matter?

The federal government, in conjunction with Enbridge Gas, launched an ambitious grant program to retrofit existing townhouses, row houses and low-rise condominium buildings (three storeys or less) with energy-efficient windows. By replacing old windows with new, more energy-efficient ones, homeowners can save money on heating costs and lower GHG emissions, thus helping Canada reach its climate objectives as laid out in the 2015 Paris Agreement.

Since Canada’s present emissions trajectory for GHG emissions is projected to be 742Mt by 2030, well above the target of 523 Mt[6], the federal government has decided to expedite and expand the eligibility for grants for different types of homes for Ontario. In January of 2023, NRCan formed a joint venture with Enbridge Gas and is now offering grants of up to $10,000 in Ontario under the Home Efficiency Rebate Plus (HER+) program. Eligible types of dwellings under the HER+ program are:

- Single and semi-detached homes
- Row housing
- Townhomes
- Low-rise, multi-unit residential buildings (MURBs) that are three storeys or less with a footprint not exceeding 600 m^2.
- The unit must be heated with natural gas provided by Enbridge Gas and have an individual gas meter.

Where to Start?

Contact a reputable window and door company for a quote on energy-efficient windows. The company will connect you with a credible energy advisor who will pre-qualify the property and conduct an initial energy assessment for each unit. The condo board will be provided with an NRCan corporate form to sign to receive the rebate directly from Enbridge Gas. The condo board is encouraged to pay directly for the energy assessment for each unit since it can receive $600 back from Enbridge Gas for the assessment on top of the window rebates.

The energy advisor will also have the condo homeowner sign an agreement transferring the rebates to the condominium corporation.

The HER+ grants offer up to $325 per window opening if the old window is replaced with a Most Efficient Energy Star Certified window registered on the NRCan website. Please note that the window must be made in Canada to be eligible for the grant.

Once the work is completed, a post-retrofit energy assessment is required. The window company will provide an invoice for each condo unit showing that the windows have been paid in full. After the post-retrofit energy assessment, the energy advisor will submit all the paperwork on the condo board's behalf to obtain the rebates. The rebate cheques are issued approximately 90-120 days after the registered energy advisor has submitted the post-retrofit results to Enbridge Gas via their portal.

So, stop throwing money out the window and inform your condo board directors of the grant opportunities available to them. An informed property manager will help the condo board save money and help reduce Canada's GHG emissions! ■

Thomas Noël is the director of the Nordik Windows and Doors condominium division, the largest window and door replacement company in Ontario for the residential sector, including townhouses and condominium complexes four storeys or less. Thomas sits on the Expert Advisory Council for Windows for the Ministry of Natural Resources Canada (NRCan). He has advised on the launch of the $2.6 billion Canada Greener Homes Grant and the Home Efficiency Rebate Plus program. Nordik.com

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Electric Vehicle Mayhem:
Navigating EV Charging Solutions

By Steve Hubbard

Electric vehicles (EVs) are coming and fast! EVs are a common sight today, and the federal government's plan includes making 100% of new passenger vehicles sold in Canada electric by 2035, so we will see them more and more.


Steve Hubbard

While gas stations are abundant, Electric Vehicle Charging Systems (EVCS) are in short supply, so the federal government has introduced the Zero Emission Vehicle Infrastructure Program (ZEVIP) to help fund the installation of EVCS across the country. The funding is available via various delivery organizations and can cover up to 50% of project costs to install EVCS in commercial, industrial and multi-unit residential buildings (MURBs), including condominiums.

Since an estimated 80% of EV charging will be done overnight at home, condo corporations must be prepared with an action plan beyond simply installing 1 or 2 chargers. Consider how your residents will charge in 2035 when 100% of new passenger vehicles sold are electric. Condo boards and property managers should consider getting started on building a long-term strategy around EV charging and consider the following list of issues:

1. Your building may not have enough power, and you don't want to have breakers trip and potentially having vital building equipment offline.

Solution: Have a professional firm with engineers & electricians on staff conduct a building power study to understand your building and its requirements fully. The study should look at historical hourly data and peak hydro consumption to determine how much power is available for EVCS. A resident survey could gauge owner interest in owning EVs.

2. So you don't have enough power?

Solution: Look for contractors with experience in offering networked (grant-eligible) EVCS that use software and hardware for dynamic power load management. Connected EVCS can allow power to be shared and maximize the power available to chargers so that owners wake up in the morning with sufficient EV range.

Tip from an expert: *Val Khomenko, Regional Condominium Manager at ICON Property Management, suggests: "It's critical to think carefully with a long-term view regarding EV Charging. Too many pitfalls exist to be trapped into proprietary tech that might not be available or scalable down the road."*

3. How do we get reimbursed for charging (cost of hydro) and manage the chargers?

Solution: Good solutions for EVCS should include a software package that offers the following to eliminate burdens for boards or management:

- Remote monitoring, control and customer support that deals directly with end-users;
- Energy metering & billing so users pay for their charge with an app or RFID card, and reconciliation & payment is done automatically for the board regularly;
- Scalability so that as more owners adopt EVCS, they can be added and appropriately commissioned and easy to code, giving users as much power as safely possible;
- Flexible access control so that only eligible users can charge, and ideally, it has the flexibility to make the chargers available to the public for revenue generation if that's of interest;
- Open source so that the board is not locked to a system they can't change

down the road. Look for OCPP (Open Charge Point Protocol) compliant solutions; and

- Cell/wifi/ethernet connections allow the system to communicate with the cloud to do what it's meant to do.

4. 50% Government Grants – How do we access them?

Solution: A reputable company with experience. If a contractor can't handle the paperwork with the condo to procure the grants or their system isn't eligible, you might want to think twice. Government grants cover up to 50% of total project costs, including any electrical infrastructure (panels, transformers, breakers), the chargers, commissioning, electrical work and permits, engineering, project management etc.

5. How do we know it's safe?

Solution: Ensure your contractor involves the Electrical Safety Authority (ESA) throughout the process. ESA should ensure the system meets all Canadian Standards Association (CSA) requirements like cUL or cETL. This is important as ESA will review the hardware, software, and electrical design to ensure everything is safe and sound.

6. How do we choose the best contractor?

Solution: First, the contractor should be able to do all of the above. Electrical contractors may know how to install, but that doesn't mean they know EV charging software solutions or payment and reconciliation options. The contractor should be able to provide you with multiple, safe, grant-eligible solutions to get you started with charging on-site. Choose a specialist with references from other condo boards or clients and a good business history. Consultation is key!

7. How to compare quotes with so many solutions?

Solution: As mentioned above, you must consult each contractor invited to propose an EVCS for the condo. Take your time, conduct interviews, ask questions referring to the points above and don't focus on pricing until you understand the proposal in detail. With grants covering up to 50% of project costs, you don't want to leave money on the table. If the long-term strategy involves adding transformers, sub-panels, and traditional electrical equipment to expand the system, why not install it now at a considerable discount?

Tip from an expert: *Melody Brown, Property Manager at Condominium Management Group, says, "Consult legal counsel throughout the process. Once you have initial quotes, you will need to determine whether you need to involve owner approval. Your contractor will need to work closely with you on this." She also stresses that rebates can take time to process, so boards and management must plan accordingly.*

The main focus should be finding reasonable turn-key solutions that don't burden management or board members with additional work. A solution without software, for example, may require an alternate payment reconciliation solution that can be highly cumbersome. ■

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Image 1: Building revitalization project in progress.

Building Revitalization

A Proposition to Add Value Through a Holistic Approach

By Sathya Ramachandran

Residential properties are an important asset, whether owned as a primary residence or an investment. When they are condominium properties, several people with varying interests influence the decisions to maintain the common elements that impact the asset's value.

Sathya Ramachandranner

Given the extreme climatic conditions and constant challenges from the weather, the buildings in Canada consistently experience aging and a need for ongoing maintenance, mid-life service repairs and renewals, and end-of-life replacements to their elements. Inadequate maintenance and failure to repair, renew and replace aged components contribute to depreciating property values. Reserve Fund Studies, as mandated by Ontario's *Condominium Act of 1998*, provide a streamlined process involving an engineering firm advising condo boards to anticipate the need for repairs, renewals and replacements and an estimated capital cost for each of the required measures. Benefits of a reserve fund study, whether in projecting the anticipated capital expenses for several years down the line, establishing the annual contribution to the reserve fund from unit owners, monitoring the cash flow and initiating a capital project, are critical. Nevertheless, beyond its ability to forecast significant expenses and facilitate capital projects, Reserve Fund Studies are often used as a planning tool that may inadvertently limit the potential of a property to increase its value.

Checklist Approach

An essential stage for any capital project is planning, which includes the review of the needs, feasibility, timing, impact, and value addition. A common approach with condo boards in planning a capital project is based directly on the forecasted expense in the Reserve Fund Study tables and cash flow models. Depending on the type, magnitude and scope of work, a condo board may decide to engage a consultant with a request for proposal to develop a design or obtain a quote from a contractor. This approach addresses the identified requirements in the reserve fund study, somewhat like tick-

Photos: Supplied

ing boxes in a checklist. Through the years, however, the outcome of such an approach may be a patchwork final product. This is particularly unfavourable in the case of building envelope assemblies, where the patchwork is highly visible and may contribute to poor curb appeal.

Holistic Approach

A revitalization requires a holistic approach by taking a step back to evaluate and strategize options by combining, sequencing, and phasing various projects. For instance, as with every property, the joint sealant, doors and windows, roof assembly, waterproofing membrane, traffic coating, and certain types of cladding require a mid-service life renewal and replacement within the 30-year projection of a reserve fund study, in addition to the periodic repairs and maintenance activities. Instead of dealing with them as individual components, the projects can be combined or phased and sequenced through multiple years by staggering the timing of the work. For example, building envelope assemblies experience varying levels of aging depending on their exposure to elements depending on the building elevation. Phasing the building envelope projects with similar jobs can provide an opportunity for a revitalization that can add value in terms of long-term durability, improved aesthetics, energy conservation, user experience, occupant comfort, cost savings and possibly climate resilience.

Aesthetics

The architectural style of buildings consistently evolves, influenced mainly by the cultural and technological changes that shape our world, leading to new designs. Such changes have been rapid in recent times due to the swift evolution of technology. Now, the immediate need is for curbing and adapting to climate change. Buildings that are at mid-life no longer reflect the current trends in design, which, when combined with aging, appear outdated, especially amid new developments. A significant benefit of a building revitalization, particularly that of a building envelope, is to update and elevate its aesthetics, which can immediately increase the property's value. Such projects can benefit immensely from visualization techniques using computer-aided 3D models and graphics during the conceptual phases.

Energy Conservation

In this era of climate change, the need for decarbonization and energy conservation plays a primary role. One of the main contributors to energy consumption in a building is spatial heating, which, when improved by reducing the heat loss through the building envelope, can directly impact energy conservation. Traditionally, the focus has been on energy efficiency measures in generating and distributing heat to reduce energy consumption within buildings. Lately, the focus has been on the deep energy retrofit of existing buildings, with building envelope retrofits at the epicentre. Such retrofit provides an opportunity to reduce heat loss during the winter months by increasing insulation, thermal bridges, and air leakage.

On the other hand, it also provides an opportunity to reduce the energy consumption for spatial cooling during summer months by reducing the heat gain through glazing assemblies. In addition, other systems can be implemented when the projects are planned with a holistic approach. For example, using building solar panels can help supplement the energy demand.

Images 2-3: Visualization of a building envelope revitalization project aiding in updating the architectural style.

Occupant Comfort and User Experience

Another significant benefit of retrofitting the building envelope is the associated improvement in occupant comfort. For instance, when adequate retrofitting measures are taken to reduce air leakage through the building envelope, residents experience fewer cold drafts during winter, reduced outside pollutants, and overall indoor air quality improvement. In addition, the ventilation and cooling, supplemented with the proper choice of glazing and solar control, can limit overheating issues during summer. Limiting solar heat gain also provides a benefit in reducing solar glare during summer months.

Long-Term Durability and Resilience

Regardless of the challenge posed by the extreme climatic conditions in Canada, it is paramount that the long-term functioning of a building and its components are achieved to reduce the impact on the environment. Replacing a structure or its components means a significant addition to the carbon emission, regardless of the extent of sustainable measures taken during its construction. Extending the life of a building is the better solution. A holistic approach can best achieve this, as a checklist approach results in patchwork

Images 4-5: Deep energy retrofit project targeting 60% energy use and 85% greenhouse gas emission reduction nearing completion.

and a continued cycle of repairs, renewals and replacements.

From a layperson's perspective, the building envelope may seem like a composition of individual assemblies and components arranged and secured to one another that can be removed and reinstalled without affecting the integrity of the adjacent components. In fact, they are overlapped and are tied to each other for multiple layers of a critical barrier separating the interior from the exterior. The interface details connecting two different assemblies or assemblies that penetrate another assembly tend to cause premature failures and aging issues. To avoid issues related to inadequate tie-ins, considering the other benefits discussed above, a holistic approach can significantly improve long-term performance.

With the changing climate, more extreme weather patterns are expected, requiring a more robust performance of building assemblies and components. The current industry practices have rapidly evolved toward achieving climate change resilience. A holistic building revitalization project would allow capturing the recent change in industry practices, whereas a checklist approach may restrict employing such practices.

Cost Effectiveness

Embarking on a building revitalization project with a holistic approach may appear costly, but in the long run, it may cost less when several factors are considered. Building revitalization projects, when targeted to improve energy conservation, will pay off through reduced energy demand and operational costs. In addition, construction costs can be reduced by approximately 20% in a building revitalization project when the number of phases is reduced from three to two.

Informed Decision

The buildings built in the 1980s and 90s are no longer suitable for current needs, not just from an architectural style perspective but also from their performance standpoint. Continued operation of the low-performing buildings is detrimental to the environment and does not support the climate action plan. Operating and maintaining old and aging buildings with poor performance characteristics can be challenging to manage, particularly when employing the checklist approach. Residents may feel like they are constantly in a construction zone, dealing with constant repairs, renewals and replacements. A building revitalization project can significantly enhance and update a building, thus adding significant value. Taking a step back to evaluate and make an informed decision in choosing a building revitalization project versus ticking the checklist off the reserve fund study is the preferred path. ■

Sathya Ramachandran, OAA, AAA, AANB, NSAA, AAPEI, B.Arch., M.A.Sc., is a registered Architect with advanced education in building science and over 21 years of experience in research and consulting for projects built across North America. He is the Director of Building Science practice in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton area at EXP Services Inc. He has extensive experience providing consultation and adding value to condominium properties across Canada.
exp.com

Image 6: Partial but holistic approach to building envelope retrofit updating the architectural style and improving the user experience by increasing daylight through the balconies.

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Dear ACMO...

We're taking a page from Dear Abby and Ann Landers and give you CM Magazine's latest feature, "Dear ACMO," an advice column where you can anonymously ask any question or share a difficult situation relating to condominium management. We will find an appropriate expert in the field and publish an answer with some advice in CM Magazine. Your full name or company will never be shared!

Email your questions or situations that you need advice on to editor@acmo.org. Or mail your questions to the Association of Condominium Managers of Ontario, c/o Editor, 2121 Argentia Road, Suite 101, Mississauga ON, L5N 2X4.

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condominium manager
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Ellen Mahon, RCM

Designation(s): OLCM, RCM
Company: Crossbridge Condominium Services Ltd.
Year entered the profession: 1995
Year RCM obtained: November 6, 2003

Mentor(s) in the industry: This was a tough question to answer. I have met many people that have impressed me and those in this industry I admire. However, when thinking about the person who really influenced me, I think of Don Feggi. Don was one of my first managers, and he gave me the confidence and the freedom to get my hands dirty and learn the business. Don is no longer with us, but I think of him often and am forever grateful for his guidance, leadership, and, most importantly, friendship.

What path brought you to a career as a condominium manager? Like most of us, I came to condo management by accident. I was a new Mother looking to get back into the workforce. I had an Aunt who was a Site Administrator, and her company was looking to fill a part-time position. I had no idea what a condominium was, but I went for the interview and was offered the job. What a ride it has been, from my first day wondering what language the Superintendent spoke to me (riser, what the heck is a riser!) to my current role as the Training Manager at Crossbridge. I have been blessed by the incredible people I have met over the years. It turned out to be the perfect career for me.

How has your membership in ACMO helped you in your career? My first position as a condominium manager came with a caveat, they wanted an RCM, and that's where it all began. To this day, I have maintained friendships that started with the courses I attended at Humber College. From meeting the perfect contractor at one of the many events sponsored by ACMO to allowing me to teach the ACMO courses in-house for many years, the benefits of belonging to ACMO have afforded me so many opportunities. They have supported me in my steady progression throughout my career.

As an RCM, I must go above and beyond the expectations of a general licensee to maintain my designation, and I believe that RCMs will continue to be recognized as being above the crowd.

What is one must-have skill for a condominium manager? Why? In my opinion, the one must-have skill for a condominium manager is knowing when to remain silent. Developing good listening skills is about taking in what someone is saying to you and not talking at them. It's about showing compassion and empathy, trying to get to the root cause of the issue, and developing the right solutions. If you are the one talking, you are not listening and will not be part of the solution.

Tell us about a personal success story on the job. With 28 years under my belt, it's hard to pick just one personal success story, so I'll return to my first one. As I said earlier, my first job was as a Site Administrator, and I was utterly overwhelmed on my first day. To add to my jitters, the Vice-President of the Board visited me, and boy-oh-boy, was she intimidating. She made it very clear that she would have her eyes on my every move, and if I didn't live up to her expectations, I would be gone! Looking back, I wonder how I managed to get up and come to work the next day! Step by step, over time, I was able to gain her confidence, and she became one of my biggest supporters. The personal satisfaction of turning a negative into a positive continues to drive me to this day.

What's your biggest challenge as a manager? There are so many different challenges we see daily, but the biggest challenge in my mind is time. There never seems to be enough of it!

What's your favourite part of the job? My favourite part of the job is that every day brings something different. I have never heard anyone in our industry say they are bored. Every new situation

brings with it an opportunity for us to utilize our skills and make a direct impact on the lives of those we work for. How cool is that!

Best business advice you ever received. The best advice I ever received was to know your topic and develop a process to complete the job. I had the pleasure of working with a director obsessed with process and an avid researcher: she critiqued every email, management report, and everything I presented. Initially, I was none too happy with what I considered at the time to be micro-management. However, after working with her for several years, I became a convert. Taking the time to understand your subject truly and then putting a plan in place to achieve a goal is the advice that resonates with me today. I can still hear her voice when I get stuck, "What's the process, Ellen? What are the steps we need to take?"

Answer this statement – I am an RCM because… I worked hard to achieve the designation and am very proud of this achievement. ACMO positioned the designation as a badge of excellence and commitment to the condominium industry. As an RCM, I must go above and beyond the expectations of a general licensee to maintain my designation, and I believe that RCMs will continue to be recognized as being above the crowd.

Where do you see yourself in five years? Hopefully, on a beach somewhere. I have been in the industry for 28 years and came to the industry in my early thirties, so my five-year plan is retirement!

What recent project that you completed can we highlight? As the Training Manager at Crossbridge, I am tasked with developing and delivering training material. I have just recently completed a series of tutorials that supplement our Standard Operating Procedures. These tutorials are designed to provide detailed step-by-step instructions for the many regulated forms that are now part of our daily lives. Passing along the skills and knowledge I have learned over the past 28 years has always been my way of giving back to our industry, and in my current role, I get to do this every day. ■

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Shining a light on an ACMO 2000 Certified Management Firm choosing to offer a higher standard of service to elevate their business.

Earlier this month, the Meritus Group underwent our ACMO 2000 recertification audit, and I wanted to take this opportunity to share with you why we feel it is important to support this corporate designation.

Dean McCabe

Condominium owners and boards deserve to know that their manager and management company are committed to meeting more than the bare minimum standard required to practice in our profession.

Like the RCM designation, the ACMO2000 program is designed to show the industry, the clients and the owners whom we interact with that we are committed to setting and voluntarily meeting higher standards and that we have processes and policies in place to benefit our staff and clients as we deal with the diverse issues that arise in our complex profession.

Inviting a third-party ACMO 2000 auditor to visit your office and sites and review your corporate documents can be an unnerving process – but it is a process that benefits every aspect of your operations by motivating every department to meet more than just minimum standards.

Clients may request the designation as part of an RFP process when selecting a service provider in the same way that they may ask for an RCM manager to represent them, but more and more managers are looking for companies that are striving to improve and evolve. They want to join a team that reflects their commitment to continued education and evolution. We proudly share our certification with potential clients and future candidates seeking to join our team.

ACMO 2000 is not part of our operations every 3 years; it is part of our monthly operations. Getting ACMO 2000 certified is part of a commitment to the organization and the profession; being ACMO 2000 is so much more. It is using the process to grow and improve as a company. It improves your services and relationships with all stakeholders and says we are committed to organizational maturity and growth.

Dean McCabe, RCM, is the President and Founder of Meritus Group Management Inc. and has been a property manager for over 28 years. Dean has been a member of the Board of Directors of ACMO and past President of the association for three terms.