

How Safe is Your Workplace?

It is now several months Bill 168, an amendment to the Occupational Health and Safety Act came into effect. This Bill clearly defines violence and harassment and requires all condominium corporations, regardless of the number of in-house employees, to be proactive in assessing the risk of workplace violence and harassment and to develop policies and procedures for dealing with it.

This means that Boards must develop and implement a program containing measures that, among other things, assess and control the risk of workplace violence or harassment; provide a complaint filing mechanism, provide emergency assistance

in cases of workplace violence; discipline offenders and allow employees to refuse unsafe work.

We suggest that Boards who have not already complied with this new legislation do so immediately either with the assistance of their corporation's lawyer or by searching the Internet for document preparation and implementation checklists. Even Boards who have existing OHSA policies in place are advised ensure that they comply with Bill 168.

Once completed, these documents must be disseminated, reviewed and enforced in the manner dictated by Bill 168. For further information, contact info@bill168.ca

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Are You Housing a Hoarder?

On September 24th of this year an apartment fire displaced more than 1,200 residents in downtown Toronto. What made this fire newsworthy was not just the damage caused but the fact that the suspected cause was associated with

resident 'hoarders'.

As evidenced by television reality programs, hoarding is a growing problem. We suggest that boards seek advice from their lawyer for establishing a policy to deal with potential hoarders. It

might even be necessary to elicit the assistance of the local fire department.

Remember, it is the Board's responsibility to ensure the safety of its residents, staff and visitors.

Bill 168 Insights

- If you haven't done it already, create your Workplace Safety policies now.
- Corporations must now ensure safe workplaces.
- Make your policies clear, concise and well communicated.

Effective Snow Removal

As the countdown to winter snow begins, property managers are pulling out their snow removal contracts to prepare for the first snowfall. These contractors are specially trained to employ the most effective yet environmentally responsible snow melting agents.

Removing snow from balconies or roof decks requires similar planning. Consider the following:

Deicing is the reactive application of ice-control products whereas *anti-icing* is proactive. Salt (sodium chloride) is the most common de-icer but it loses its effectiveness in very cold temperatures usually resulting in people re-applying it several times to no avail. Calcium chloride is effective even in very low temperatures but it tends to attract moisture from the air

creating not only a slipping but also a spalling hazard. Magnesium chloride seems to be the middle choice and can be used alone or with sand and salt.

Boards should consult their contractor for snow removal suggestions and disseminate same, where appropriate to their owners via notices, newsletters and Welcome Home packages.

Snowbirds' Condo Unit Checklist

While most of us are anticipating several months of winter, many may be fortunate enough to spend extended periods of time in the sunny south. Following are some suggestions to pass on to your owners:

Adjust the thermostat to a temperature that will keep the unit warm enough to avoid frozen pipes but not so warm that it costs a fortune.

Whether the water pipes are plastic or metal there is a risk of them cracking or breaking. The best protection is to turn off the water.

Where appropriate, trim trees and shrubs around your home to prevent them from breaking and damaging your home's exterior. Clean gutters and caulk around windows.

An unoccupied home is also at risk of vandalism and/or burglary. Make your home look lived in. Put some lights on timers and arrange to have newspaper delivery discontinued. Let the property manager know you will be away and leave an emergency number where you can be reached.

Planning ahead benefits everyone.

Are your Beds Driving you Buggy?

There have been a number of recent reports about the increasing problem of bed bug infestations in Toronto.

Boards are advised to again be proactive by instigating a program to source, control and eliminate bed bug infestation. Owners should

be advised of this program and should be encouraged to look for and report any incidents of bed bugs to management so that this program can quickly be implemented.

Don't wait until the problem hits your corporation, act

now. Your insect preventive maintenance contractor can help.

If dealt with collectively, expeditiously and effectively this program will be successful.

"Plan ahead to enjoy a worry free vacation."

What if a Member of your Board is also a Snowbird?

Believe it or not, some condominium corporations find it difficult to entice people to sit on their Boards of Directors. For this reason, some Boards accept people who spend extended periods of time in warm climates. If this is your Board ask yourself *'is that member still pulling his/her weight'?*

Board members who have other residences down south must still be prepared to

keep current on what is happening at the board meetings. In this electronic age it shouldn't be difficult for the property manager to email meeting packages to the absentee director before the meeting so that he/she can provide input in time for the meeting. The same can be done with the minutes of the meeting.

Like other absentee owners, these board members should

leave a contact number with the property manager should a conference call be required.

However owners should ensure that absentee directors meet the attendance standard mandated in the governing documents. If the qualifications and dedication meshes, there is no reason that they can't make an effective contribution to the board and the corporation.

Are Your Receivables Working for You?

One can almost hear the groans when the word *budget* is mentioned but no one can deny the importance of devoting the appropriate time and consideration to its formulation.

However, even the most carefully considered budget won't work if the Board doesn't pay equal attention to the collection of the receivables component.

The Condominium Act sets out the process for collecting delinquent maintenance fees. Management reports must include an aged report of uncollected receivables as well as steps taken to collect same.

We suggest that all corporations have a clearly defined and religiously adhered to lien policy. Many corporations prefer to turn the matter over to the

corporation's lawyer as soon as a unit goes into arrears. It should be noted too that these legal fees become part of the unit owner's debt and are not charged to the corporation.

Successful Boards keep a sharp eye on their receivables with a zero tolerance for outstanding balances. Can your Board say the same? If not, why not?



Special Winter Precautions

Winter brings out the need for additional care when driving on condominium corporation property. This is especially true in properties where there is more than one building with a significant roadway system.

While we may have been fortunate last winter when it came to snow, this year

could be quite different.

Boards are urged to remind owners to exercise extra caution when entering and leaving the parking facility, whether it is surface or underground. Stopping distances can be greater due to snow or wet/icy roadways and snow piles form special hazards.

Corporations with children included in their population should issue the appropriate instructions as they pertain to their particular building's needs. Quarterly newsletters, Welcome Home packages or the condominium's web site are the perfect vehicles for this.

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CPM Sponsors Upcoming CCI/ACMO Conference

As always, we thank those corporations who have already entrusted their property to our care and we look forward to a lengthy partnership with you. We also invite any condominium corporations interested in learning more about our unique management philosophy to contact us.

This fall Comfort Property Management is sponsoring the upcoming CCI/ACMO Conference. Please check the following site for further information. Please stop by our booth and introduce yourselves. <http://condoconference.ca/REGISTER/default.asp>

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Please consult the appropriate professionals before taking any action on behalf of your Corporation*

The Condominium as a Workplace

Most corporations employ a superintendent as a direct employee. Some even have employee cleaners. If your corporation falls into either of these categories, now is a good time to ensure that your Board is doing its due diligence with respect to workplace safety.

In our cover article we referenced Bill 168, an amendment to Ontario's Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA). While Bill 168 deals with violence and harassment the OHSA itself deals with workplace accidents and illnesses. When a Board hires a

superintendent it becomes an employer and has all the duties and responsibilities of same as well as those of a property owner as set out both in the Condominium Act and the OHSA.

It should also be noted that if a management company is responsible for supervising the cleaner and/or the superintendent pursuant to its management contract, it too is bound by the terms of the OHSA.

Boards are advised to ensure that all appropriate steps are being taken to ensure workplace safety. We have already discussed

the need for an assessment and policy under Bill 168; we also suggest the same type of assessment and policy for workplace health and safety.

It is assumed too that any assessed risks would also be addressed at the same time. If necessary, contact your lawyer for assistance.

Avoid possible fines for non-compliance or worse if an incident occurs. Do your due diligence.