

Condominium Home Owners Association

A non-profit association serving strata owners since 1976

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Condo Smarts

Headline: My Top 10 condo myths

Topic: Condo myths

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Written by: Tony Gioventu

Our office receives dozens of calls every week from owners who have bought or sold a condo, and now discover they have a problem, unaware that they could have easily checked the situation out before they moved in.

Here we debunk the top 10 fatal myths - or misunderstandings - of condo-buying:

1. *"Of course dogs are allowed, I saw two owners walking with dogs when we checked out the building."* The actual strata bylaws prohibit pets and the dogs were with visitors.
2. *"Adults only" means no kids, so people with kids can't buy.* An adults-only bylaw that specifies no actual age cannot be enforced.
3. *If the strata receives a settlement from a law suit, you'll get your refund even if you sell your unit beforehand.* In fact, refunds of special assessments and settlements are due and payable to owners, and owners are defined as the person on title at the time of the transaction.
4. *There are two parking spaces with this unit.* Did you receive a written confirmation of this from the strata corporation?
5. *"It's my unit and I'll do what I want, starting with a skylight!"* You must receive the written approval of the strata council before embarking on any major renovations. The planned renovations of a new home are often seriously disrupted because purchasers have not done so.
6. *The strata's insurance covers everything.* Strata insurance does not cover the personal property of owners, or betterments such as hardwood flooring.
7. *The condo is guaranteed not to be leaky. The report gave it a clean bill of health.* Have you actually read the report?
8. *The new roof has a 25-year warranty.* Was the warranty on file?
9. *Somebody is already renting out their unit, so I'm "grandfathered" if I want to or must do so in the future.* The word "grandfathered" does not appear anywhere in the Act. You may discover you have no exemption, and may in fact not rent out your unit..
10. *They said the strata council will gladly give me a written exemption from the bylaws for my cat.* Council does not have the authority to exempt owners from bylaws or amend bylaws that have been registered. Bylaw change can only come about by a 3/4 vote of the entire strata.

Tips: Never go by hearsay or assumption. Take the trouble to be fully informed. Always, always, always find out who has the authority to dispense information about your new unit or strata, and always get the information legally, in writing.

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