

## Strata Living

Headline: Surveillance Cameras

Topic: Security

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**Dear Tony :** Our strata council is struggling with an ongoing problem in our high rise. We are 178 units, and several units on one floor are owned by the same person, who happens to also be in the escort business. The owner and the tenants have always been very courteous. Their strata fees are paid on time and they have always supported the decision of council. However, we recently had a number of rather violent encounters in our building involving some of the visitors to these suites, and the owners want the council to take control of the situation. We do have security cameras in the building but only at the entry to identify visitors for access, and in the parking garage access area. We had an information meeting, and were advised by the lawyer of the owner of the strata units in question, that privacy laws prohibit us from placing cameras in the building. Is the strata corporation not permitted to monitor building activity to protect the safety of residents and property?

CW

**Dear CW:** Strata corporations are certainly permitted to conduct surveillance in their buildings for the protection of property and residents. *The Personal Information Protection Act* applies to strata corporations, but it does not prohibit their ability to protect themselves. The office of the privacy commissioner has produced an excellent

guide for strata corporations. Go to [www.oipc.bc.ca](http://www.oipc.bc.ca) and search strata corporations. Every strata corporation should have a copy of the guide because as many strata corporations handle personal information and conduct surveillance on a daily basis. The essence of the privacy policy is to ensure that: a) no personal property or personal space is being monitored ( that would include entry doors to strata lots ) b) strata corporations have a privacy policy that permits the corporation to conduct the surveillance, such as cameras or fobs, c) the policy is in the form of a bylaw that identifies the methods of collection, storage of information, access to information, times of camera operations, how the strata corporation responds to requests for access to recorded information, how owners, tenants and visitors are given notice that the premises is under surveillance or monitored by key fobs, and the eventual retention and disposition of the records. Elevator and public lobby and facility cameras are common, but before you install cameras and start monitoring make sure you have the authority of the owners to spend the funds for this purpose, and the strata corporation has consulted on adopting a proper privacy bylaw that permits the surveillance and complies with the privacy legislation.

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