

Strata Living

Headline: Strata Bullying

Topic: Bullies

Publication date: Feb 28, 2013

Publication: 24 Hours

Written by: Tony Gioventu

Dear Tony: Strata bullying is an all too frequent occurrence. A simple Google Search for the term Strata Bullying will result in at least 3 pages of results, including blogs, and legal advice. There are stories of people feeling harassed in their own home, a feeling that their home is not their home. People live in an aggressive community where once a year at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) it is an Us versus Them proxy war to be given information and a voice in their own home. Strata corporations tend to hire management firms to manage the building, "keep the peace" and uphold the BC Property Act. However, there is an overwhelming amount of cases where a property manager does not abide by the Property Act and further divides a community by favouring Council members and residents who support their agendas.

I was told by our property manager that I am taking the BC Property Act too literal and the Act is there as more of a guideline. Since this encounter a new Special General meeting agenda has been produced, as well as the agenda for our AGM. Until the AGM, I am still a Council member, yet I have not been invited to any meetings to draft these agendas, and I have not had any email or telephone communications with members of Council.

"A bullied council member and owner".

To all owners of strata properties: Don't let councils or managers get away with trivializing the legislation, your bylaws or prudent basic business principles. It will eventually place your community and your investments at risk. We see bullying in all forms in strata communities, often enabled by the strata councils and fuelled by the

intent to control by the property manager. The grasp for power is matched by unscrupulous behavior. Bullying also occurs from the owners. A single owner intent on harassing a volunteer council can do just as much damage to your community. So what are the solutions?

Compliance with all legislation and honest disclosure to the owners of the strata business is the first step. The Strata Property Act is not a guideline. If a strata council or manager are abusing the legislation for their control, it's time for replacements. Strata councils and managers who don't tell the truth will eventually spend all of your strata funds and energy on defending lies. They will make every effort to demonize owners who are trying to "out" their behavior. Character assassinations, derogatory treatment, libelous council minutes all form part of the chain of abuse. Bullying perpetuates when owners stand by. Breaking the hold certain groups of owners have on strata council, and all owners becoming involved in the strata business is the only solution. The seeds of apathy are sown every year at the AGM, when less than half of the owners ever attend to exercise their votes. As an owner, protect your community and your investment. Participate, encourage the constant renewal of council, encourage a transparent culture, attend meetings and take an interest in your properties.

For more information on CHOA resources and benefits visit www.choa.bc.ca
or contact the office at 1-877-353-2462 or email info@choa.bc.ca.

No part of this publication may be reproduced without the prior written permission of CHOA

This publication contains general information only and is not intended as legal advice. Use of this publication is at your own risk. CHOA will not be liable to you or any other person for any loss or damage arising from, connected with or relating to the use of this publication or any information contained herein by you or any other person.