

Condo Smarts

Headline: Registered offenders in condos

Topic: Sex Offender

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Dear Tony: No one in our strata has been prepared to talk about this issue, but we have found out we have a convicted sex offender living in our townhouse complex. Our strata is predominantly families and seniors. We think the council knew 6 months ago and decided not to tell anyone, and now the rumours have started spreading and people in our complex are afraid. We have two questions. As owners who live in our complex, do we have a right to know about the person, their history, and the risks to our residents? If there is an incident, does our strata council have any liability because they did not tell the owners?

GMR

Dear GMR: While on the surface this is not exclusively a strata problem, it is a housing issue, which in BC includes almost half of our housing, which in some form is strata titled. Housing for individuals who are offenders is a complicated problem as the Charter provides for freedom of mobility for all citizens who have essentially served their sentence. Partially due to the limit of housing available, but also because of the proximity of housing to conditions that may be a conflict or violation of the terms of release. Correctional Service Canada (CSC) makes every effort to determine where an offender will reside, and in virtually all cases, knows the offender's destination. Offenders who reach their Warrant Expiry Date, the date on which the criminal sentence officially ends, is imposed by the courts at the time of sentencing. CSC works in close collaboration with the RCMP and regional police forces to determine what information is released and shared with the public about offenders, and the warrant expiry rests with the province or territory where the offender relocates.

The crown and police have several tools available designed to protect the public for high-risk violent and

sexual offenders. These include: dangerous and long term sentences for serious personal injury offences, orders to provide DNA samples, orders to comply with registration requirements, imposition of probation orders with conditions set out by the sentencing court, peace bonds imposing strict conditions on individuals in the community, and orders imposing strict conditions on individuals convicted of offences against children under the age of 16.

Owners need to avoid speculation and gossip if at all possible and go directly to the source. It doesn't take much misinformation for a community to become paranoid and panicked. If your strata has a safety concern, contact your local police jurisdiction immediately. Your strata council has no concerns if you have placed the matter into the hands of your local police. Many communities across BC have community police offices that provide daily support and information. As in any emergency situation, if there is an imminent threat to public safety or an incident in progress call 911. For more information go to the Government of Canada web site under public safety. www.publicsafety.gc.ca