

Condo Smarts

Headline: Interior climate controls

Topic: Air Conditioning Units

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Dear Tony: How do we get our strata council to keep the air in the interior of our building fresh? To save money, the owners decided last year to put the system on a timer and that resulted in more frequent break downs and maintenance. Our service company has advised the system needs to be replaced as parts are no longer available. Unfortunately, our owners have chosen to ignore this advice and we have been without a system now for 6 weeks. The odours in the building are disgusting and the hallways are now humid. We also have a cultural conflict in our building. More than half of the owners are from a single cultural group, do not want to spend any money and they vote everything down. So how do we get this issue moving forward?

Irene M Coquitlam

Dear Irene: All modern multi-family buildings have some sort of air management system. The systems are commonly known as “make up air units, hallway/corridor pressurization, or fresh air blowers”. The systems are managed to deliver fresh air into the building to control odours, humidity, the buildup of potentially harmful gasses, and to provide a pleasant living environment.

If your building has an elevator lobby in your parking garage, fans must operate continuously to prevent carbon monoxide from migrating up to the business and homes.

In high rise buildings, corridor pressurization systems play an important role during fires. Each building, depending on age, design and use will have different demands for air management systems and different location and types of pressurization units. Many older buildings still have gas fire systems that come winter,

owners discover haven’t been working for years when the hallways are flooded with icy air.

A customized service contract for your building will ensure predictable costs and performance of your system.

In your situation, your building does have a vestibule and lobby in the parking garage and your strata is required to maintain your hallway pressurization system 24/7, so in addition to the increase in odours in the building, the owners are unaware they are likely being exposed to other hazards. After all, elevator shafts are simply large chimneys.

All strata corporations must maintain and repair common property and common assets, which includes hallway pressurization systems. If your strata corporation does not meet its obligations under the *Strata Property Act* and the bylaws of your strata corporation, an application to the Civil Resolution Tribunal (CRT) may be a solution. The CRT (www.civilresolutionbc.ca) has the authority to issue orders that require strata corporations to maintain and repair common property and there is no limit to the cost of the repairs that may be affected.

Metro Vancouver just launched a Strata Energy Advisor program to help strata councils look at their options for increasing performance, reducing cost and reducing energy consumption. For more information go to: www.strataenergyadvisor.ca and for more information on hallway pressurization systems go to www.choa.bc.ca.