

## Condo Smarts

Headline: Return your strata to a safe work place & operating facility

Topic: Repair & Maintenance Common Property

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**Dear Tony:** Our strata corporation shares a central community facility with 5 other properties. There is a club house for meetings of up to 100 people, a kitchen and lounge, fitness centre, change rooms and showers for the pool and hot tubs, a tennis court and a barbeque and terrace to host gatherings. Since the restrictions were first imposed, we shut down all operations; however, we are now getting a significant amount of pressure to open the pool, fitness centre and club room to host meetings. Our joint properties met last week to determine the requirements and were left confused over the protocols that are required before we can re-open, and how we manage the facilities. Several council members all sent the same emails to our health authority and received all slightly different answers. So even at this level it is not 100% clear. Is there an easy check list that strata councils can review before they provide access to their facilities?

*Sherrie Milne*

**Dear Sherrie:** Yes, we all want to be able to open our joint facilities. If we can manage our operations safely, it would help ease the stress of isolation that we have all experienced, and enable our communities to resume the “new” normal of operations. It is critical for all strata corporations and councils across BC to understand the priorities and the regulations that apply.

Strata corporations are legal entities that have all the rights and responsibilities of a person, such as the ability to buy, sell and mortgage property, they file annual tax returns, invest money for return, sue or may be sued, and hire contractors and service providers. What this means is a strata corporation must also comply with the regulations of building operations, employment standards, WorkSafeBC, public orders, local government bylaws and orders, Technical Safety

BC regulations and orders, local health authorities and pool regulations.

If your community is 4 units or more and you have a swimming pool or hot tub, it is classed under the Pool Regulation as a commercial pool and the operations must adhere to the provincial regulations. Risks to sanitation, water quality and public safety in relation to the pool are prescribed as health hazards. The restart of a dormant pool also poses a health risk for Legionella and operators or staff must take precautions. Don't leave the responsibility up to residents on a self-serve basis, in spite of pool signs and requirements, many users rarely shower before they enter the pool so the likelihood of other compliance is remote. Will someone screen users before they enter the facility? Shared change rooms, showers and washrooms will also require a high level of cleaning, handwashing stations, and public education. Post signs with clear instructions on use and social distancing.

The absolute first priority is the public safety of your residents, council, property manager, service providers, contractors and emergency responders. Review your property as a workplace as well as your residential community:

- Do you have any employees? Many strata corporations employ janitorial staff, a lobby concierge, site managers, landscaping staff, service providers and subcontractors. If they are working on your site, you are responsible.
- Have you reviewed the best practice guidelines provided by WorkSafe?
- Have you developed a safe work plan for your staff?

- Have you developed a plan to manage confirmed or suspected cases of Covid-19 or report an exposure to Covid-19 or suspected exposure?
- Have you developed human resource policies to support sick leaves and self-isolation?
- Have you provided your staff with the training and the protective equipment they require while working on your site?
- Have you established staff policies to ensure their safety?

If you are considering opening your pool, hot tub, or gym, both Interior Health and Island Health have published an excellent guideline for Gyms and Fitness centres and these provide a framework for managing facilities as well as check lists on screening and identifying users, behaviour in the facilities, appropriate use and frequency on cleaning high touch surfaces, and management of users in the facilities.

We would all like a clear order on what we can or cannot do with our facilities. This decision is often subject to the economic and human resources of each strata corporation provided they can meet the requirements of the orders and regulations that apply to each region. If your strata corporation cannot ensure the safety of your users, your staff and contractors, then opening your facilities will simply place everyone at risk. What will your next action be if there is an outbreak originating from your strata corporation as a result of mismanagement of your facilities?

We are encouraged to stay within our bubble, but if we are gathering in recreational facilities and compromise social distancing or contact, we place everyone in our community at risk. It is important to remember that many strata corporations in destination communities will also be exposed to transient users who are accessing their vacation homes and using Air BnB's. These persons will be much more difficult to screen and assess and may pose a greater threat to your community, or may be exposed and return to their own community. We are still limited to gathering in groups of up to 50 people, if social distancing is possible. A good rule of thumb for gatherings allowing for social distancing is 15% of what is normal. If your hall limit is 100 for meetings, 15% or 15 people is likely the maximum allowed to enable social distancing. For more information go to [Worksafe.ca](https://www.worksafe.ca), [gov.bc.ca](https://www.gov.bc.ca) or contact your regional health authority.