
Condo Smarts

Headline: Do we have to impose masks?

Topic: COVID-19

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Dear Tony: Under the recent provincial order, all public indoor spaces require masks. We have several residents who insist this includes our common areas of our apartment condo here in Nanaimo. Our strata council are beyond confused by the orders as they never identify anything to do with multi-family properties, and with so many condos in the province why does the government simply not include them in the orders? It would be so much simpler for the thousands of volunteers who manage these facilities. Gillian R.

Dear Gillian: Here is the exact wording of the provincial order. "As of Wednesday, Aug. 25, 2021, masks must be worn in all indoor public spaces throughout B.C. to help slow the transmission of COVID-19 as B.C. prepares for the fall and respiratory illness season. A new order from the provincial health officer will require people 12 and older to wear masks in indoor public settings, regardless of vaccination status. These settings include: malls, shopping centres, coffee shops and retail and grocery stores, liquor and drug stores, airports, city halls, libraries, community and recreation centres, restaurants, pubs and bars (unless seated); on public transportation, in a taxi or ride-sharing vehicle, areas of office buildings where services to the public are provided, common areas of sport and fitness centres when not engaged in physical activity, common areas of post-secondary institutions and non-profit organizations; and inside schools for all K-12 staff, visitors and students in grades 4-12."

This order does **NOT** include the common property and common areas of strata corporations, unless that area of the strata is a commercial property open to the public. It could be retail, office, rental office, a marina, golf course, or other public amenity.

Strata corporations are permitted to adopt bylaws and rules to regulate the use and enjoyment of their common property and common facilities.

A rule is the simplest and quickest solution and does not require a special general meeting. The rule is approved by majority vote at a strata council meeting and immediately posted and distributed to all tenants and owners. To ensure clarity this is often the best solution. A rule also applies to anyone visiting the building and can address contractors, service suppliers, deliveries, visitors, political campaigners, real estate agents and clients showing and visiting buildings.

In light of the growing case numbers of the variant, activities such as use of gyms and pools, or gathering for social events or general meetings should also be closely scrutinized. Create a safety plan/check list to evaluate whether your events will increase the risk of spreading the virus. Will the event/facility require multiple parties in the same indoor/outdoor close contact spaces? Is it possible that everyone can social distance by at least 2 metres including the entrance and exit of the space? Is the space properly ventilated? Are we requiring everyone to wear a mask? Are we tracing everyone who attends in the event of an outbreak? Are there any circumstances such as public speaking, registration or voting facilities that will require contact?

As many strata corporations also retain property managers and staff on site, the corporation must also comply with the WorkSafe requirements for Covid-19 and employee safety. CHOA continues to recommend during this period that masks be worn in all common areas of buildings, ventilation systems are maintained at their highest standards and performance, elevators are occupied by no more than 2 persons or 1 family at any time, and the continued use of electronic meetings to reduce gatherings and contact in larger groups.