
Strata Living

Headline: Access to strata lots and the census

Topics: Access

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Dear Tony: Our strata corporation has been contacted by census staff requesting access to our building. We have been advised that we have no choice and the law requires our strata corporation must provide access so the census staff can go door to door and contact owners and occupants in the building. They are also demanding owner's/occupant lists to our buildings, which we refuse to release as they are private information. This issue has come in our building on a number of occasions. Is there someone we can contact to find out the real answer?

Melanie B.

Dear Melanie: The census collects information on every man, woman, and child living in Canada under the *Statistics Act*. Anyone living in a building must be counted in the census. The *Act* outlines the mandatory requirements for completing and returning the census questionnaire. All Statistics Canada representatives carry official photo identification and are sworn to secrecy under the *Act*. They must keep any information that is provided by a resident or the strata corporation strictly confidential. That's the basic information, now for the complicated part.

Strata owners reside in buildings with an expectation of security and privacy. As a result, a few complications arise because of building designs and bylaws of different strata corporations. The front door of a detached house, like a townhouse, is essentially the same as the front door of an apartment style building. Like the front door bell, the lobby will house an enter phone system that allows for access to a building, at the permission of an occupant.

The difference in many strata buildings is the complications of security systems and privacy that prevent anyone from accessing a floor in the building unless an occupant on that front permits their entry. Many new high rises and apartments have isolated lock off systems that prevent anyone from accessing any floor other than their residence.

While the strata corporation is not permitted to provide access codes or fobs without the consent of the owners, there are some steps the strata can take to assist the census process. Some strata corporations may set a scheduled time for a census taker to be set up in the lobby of the strata enabling residents' easy access to participate. This permits direct access between the census staff and the residents, and does not require the strata corporation to release personal information or breach building security. It is helpful, if your strata has a council member or volunteer to assist the census staff. Any questions, call 1.844.815.6412