

Condominium Home Owners Association

A non-profit association serving strata owners since 1976

Bulletin: 300-104

Condo Smarts

Headline: Condo renos can open up can of worms

Topic: Alterations

Publication date: November 21, 2004

Publication: The Province

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Owners in condo buildings are frequently changing their flooring, updating their bathrooms, painting, installing new kitchen designs. In short, decorating.

However, where is the line between decorating and structural alterations? Recently, one Campbell River owner discovered her piano in her fourth-floor apartment was tilting to one side.

Clearly there was something wrong with the building.

There was no apparent change to the exterior of the building, but the piano was on an inside wall.

It turned out the owner below, who had approval from council to renovate his apartment, hadn't told council he was removing a wall, which turned out to be structural. The weight of the piano, slowly caused the floor/ceiling to sag. Now what? Who pays?

Strata Law: The Standard Bylaws require that owners must seek written approval before the alter the structure of the strata lot.

Don't forget that municipal bylaws and code requirements will also necessitate building permits and inspections for a variety of changes, including electrical, plumbing and structural alterations.

Tips: The owner of the strata lot had to assume all of the responsibility, including the cost for rebuilding the structure, the cost of engineering, permitting and related legal fees.

The building has been safely restored.

Councils should remember they have a right to impose reasonable conditions on alteration requests to protect the interests of the corporation and the owners.

A post-renovation inspection to ensure nothing extra was wrong would also be a considerable help.

If in doubt, permits and planning departments in local municipal offices are tremendously helpful.

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