

Condo Smarts

Headline: Attention to detail may flush out illegal activities in stratas

Topic: Grow-ops

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Criminal activities such as grow-ops and meth labs in strata lots are the scourge of owners, corporations, councils, managers and developers.

In September, a Richmond strata was alarmed to find the police raiding one of their townhouses, unearthing a large cache of illegal materials, weapons and substances. On the surface everything had seemed normal, with no complaints, noise or suspicious frequent visitors, and no real indicators that there was a problem. But the resulting cost of the damages from the raid exceeded \$50,000 and the owner was unavailable to perform the repairs. Is the strata stuck with a damaged vacant home? Luckily, no. The municipality has a bylaw that addresses grow ops. The orders require specific restoration of the damages and repairs, greatly benefiting the strata.

Strata Law: If a strata receives legal notices or orders from a public or local authority (usually the municipality), it must promptly give that notice to the strata lot owner.

If that order or notice is ignored and the owner fails to perform the work, the strata may perform the work. The owner, then, must by law reimburse the strata corporation for the work. Most important, this amount of work is lienable against the title, which means the strata may consider further actions, such ordering the sale

of the property in question to recover the costs. The strata lien takes priority over most other charges on the title, thus protecting the strata's interests.

Tips: Watch for the signs of grow ops and meth labs especially rental units that are frequent targets of grow-ops. If you suspect criminal activity, do not investigate yourself, but contact local police. Look for:

- Covered, painted or blocked windows.
- Condensation on windows.
- Bright industrial lights.
- Yard barriers such as aggressive animals, blocking shrubs, new fencing.
- Odours vented at night or early hours.
- Constant humming from generators or motors.
- Disposed growing products.

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