

Condo Smarts

Headline: Look to municipality for help

Topic: Grow-ops

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Dear Condo Smarts: A few weeks ago, two grow-ops were discovered in our building.

You can imagine the fiasco. Police, fire trucks, hazardous material removal, a flood, electrical fire and now restoration and construction. Our council don't know how we are going to recover our costs.

In addition to the units, there is damage to attics, plumbing systems and common area hallways. Estimates put the cost of restoration at \$450,000 and grow-op claims are excluded from our insurance. Isn't there some help out there for beleaguered condo owners?

-- Karen D., Vancouver

Dear Karen: Any strata corporation in BC that has an identified grow op or meth lab needs to take the following immediate steps to protect your owners and recover your costs.

- Ensure that a police report has been filed.
- Contact your municipal office. Most regions have bylaws that address the problem. An official order from the city, issued directly to the owner of the unit or units and to the legal name of the strata corporation is critical. Make sure the order lists all of the damages and identifies all of the restoration requirements. Once the strata has received an official order, they are in a position to take action to

ensure the proper restoration of the building and recovery of those costs against the owner.

- If they are willing, coordinate the restoration with the unit owner or owners and obtain estimates for the required environmental and structural restoration. Do it right the first time. A botched restoration job will haunt your strata owners for years to come.
- If the owner has not properly conducted or paid for the costs, seek legal advice and commence recovery actions. This can include liening or an order for sale.
- Have a final inspection performed by the municipal inspector to ensure the restoration is complete and any municipal orders are satisfied to restore the reputation and value of your building.
- Review your bylaws. Make sure your bylaws include conditions for the recovery of costs for damages and costs associated with the remediation of grow-ops, meth labs and unauthorized activities.

For more information on CHOA resources and benefits visit www.choa.bc.ca or contact the office at 1-877-353-2462 or email office@choa.bc.ca.

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