

# Condominium Home Owners' Association

*Serving BC's Strata Property Owners since 1976*

Bulletin: 300-210

## Condo Smarts

Headline: Don't ever compromise safety by giving out key

Topic: Keys

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**Dear Condo Smarts:** We live in a medium-size bare land strata development on Vancouver Island.

Our strata council have demanded that each owner provide a key for access to our strata lots in case of an emergency, or for inspection in our absence.

Many of the owners have objected to this practice; however, we provided a key, assuming we could trust our council and that it would only be in case of an emergency.

My husband and I just returned from a vacation and have discovered a number of our valuables are missing.

We immediately contacted the police and our insurance company, but because there was no forced entry there is little that can be done, and our insurance refused the claim because they cannot prove there was an unlawful entry or removal of the objects. We are quite upset and wonder if we have any options besides giving our keys to our strata council?

-- *J&K Miller*

**Dear Mr & Mrs Miller:** Your personal safety and security in your strata lot is a property owners' right that the strata corporation does not have the right to regulate.

The legislation makes no provision for the council to demand keys to owners' homes. Giving a stranger keys does nothing but compromise your security and in some cases your personal safety.

When a new owner moves into a home, the first recommendation is that they have the locks re-keyed immediately and change security codes. No one knows how many keys have been produced over time or who has them. If the strata refuses to return your keys, change your locks.

The bylaws make special provisions for strata owners and emergency personnel to access strata lots when emergency situations arise. For normal inspections, the council must give you 48 hours written notice of an inspection, specifying the reason for the inspection and obtain your consent for the inspection.

Many owners possess valuable collections of art, antiques and family heirlooms. Losing control over your keys places them all at risk.

The insurance and security requirements for a strata to maintain keys for units are extremely onerous and almost impossible to maintain. Think of it from the point of view of your personal safety. Do you want keys available to strangers while you sleep?

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