

Condominium Home Owners' Association

Serving BC's Strata Property Owners since 1976

Bulletin: 300-214

Condo Smarts

Headline: Don't let bully destroy your community

Topic: Bullies

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Dear Condo Smarts: We live in a lovely 70-unit condo apartment building in the Fraser Valley. For over 20 years our community has lived in reasonable peace and harmony. In 2004 a new owner moved in, became our president, and has since created a strata prison camp atmosphere for our members.

Sadly, our owners now refer to him as the "strata nazi". Everything about our lives has become controlled. No one can have an opinion at council meetings without being verbally abused.

At the slightest sign of noise he is pounding on one of our doors demanding entry to inspect the unit. Our visitors are often interrogated in the hallways or elevators, until they disclose who they are visiting and the nature of their business.

Many owners have simply sold, but many of us are seniors on fixed incomes who were once happy in our homes. In your experience is there any way our strata can regain its peaceful sense of community and harmony?

-- The Fraser Valley Owners

Dear Beleaguered Owners: Bullies and tyrants are a common part of strata living, but they can only thrive if they are empowered by the strata community.

Unfortunately, complacency and apathy in strata communities often prevent owners from acting to protect their own interests.

So it's time to take back your community. The majority of owners either by open vote or secret ballot need to get back to business.

The simple solution is go back to the basics, the Act and the Bylaws of your strata.

Decisions at council meetings are conducted by a majority vote and most routine business is conducted at general meetings by a majority vote. The simplest solution is to elect a group of owners that are interested in your community standards and protecting the privacy and lifestyle of your owners.

Insist that all decisions at council meetings are voted on by the council, and the result is recorded in the minutes.

If any owners are threatened, the council or the owners may have to take more drastic action that may involve legal advice or police complaints.

Whatever you do, stay on focus with the business of the strata corporation, and don't allow personal issues or conflicts to disrupt your meetings. Remember, your responsibilities are managing and maintaining the common property and common assets of the strata corporation for the benefit of all owners.

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