

Condominium Home Owners' Association

Serving BC's Strata Property Owners since 1976

Bulletin: 300-244

Condo Smarts

Headline: Grow-ops bane of owners

Topic: Pot

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This is the last in a series about the six notorious "p's" of strata living: pets, people, parking, prostitution, polls and pot.

Dear Condo Smarts: Our townhouse complex has been plagued with grow ops over the past 5 years. It seems every few months we have another visit from the drug squad and another unit is busted.

Two units have been busted more than once. There are constant legal costs being paid by the strata owners, routine damage to common property and the neighbouring units have had their homes and personal property affected.

The police have always been very cooperative but we're at the point we can't pay the costs any longer, and we're quite frankly tired of being an easy target for grow ops.

How have other strata corporations solved this problem.

-Mrs. D. Warren, Richmond.

Dear Mrs. Warren: There are several parts to a solution for grow ops and meth labs. The first is enforceable bylaws that address common area damages, grow ops and related costs including legal costs for enforcement.

The second is a good working relationship with your local government. Most municipal bylaws make a provision to name the strata corporation in an order for repairs where there is a grow op identified.

It is critical that the order include the legal name of your strata, for example the owners, strata plan ABC 1234.

By including your legal name, this order empowers the strata corporation to effectively meet the obligations of the repairs in the order, and then under the Strata Property Act, file a lien for those related costs of the order against the offending unit. It gives your strata priority over other charges like bank mortgages, and makes the owner of the offending lot pay the bills.

Your strata council must actively enforce your bylaws. Routine inspections of every strata lot for operation and maintenance requirements make it inconvenient for growers to set up operations.

If an owner fails to comply with inspections, enforce the bylaws requiring access for inspections. This may also include proceeding with a court order to enforce the bylaws and gain access to the suites.

Simply put, enforce the bylaws and act quickly. If the operation is a meth lab, the contamination may result in an uninhabitable situation for many other units as well.

For those strata corporations with no history of grow ops as of yet, there are also some insurance options for grow-ops in strata corporations. While the deductible may often be \$50,000 or greater, consider that grow op or meth lab damages can easily exceed \$250,000.

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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