

# Condominium Home Owners' Association

*Serving BC's Strata Property Owners since 1976*

Bulletin: 300-285

## Condo Smarts

**Headline:** Maintenance or Crisis

Topic: Maintenance

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**Dear Condo Smarts:** We are writing to you, in hopes you publish our letter for all condo owners in BC to read. We live in a 263-unit, 12-floor concrete building that was constructed in the late 70s. This was a well designed and well finished building that we were once very proud of. Over the past 30 years our strata has literally done nothing about maintenance and repairs, other than emergency failures like hot water boilers, and elevators. Now our deferral has come home to haunt us. Each owner is faced with an average \$19,000 assessment just to upkeep and upgrade the exterior, not including the roofing. Our windows have failed, our decks and balconies are in serious failure and the masonry detailing is in need of serious attention. To put it bluntly, we figured out that if each strata lot had paid an extra \$30/month over the last 34 years, our buildings would have routinely been repaired, the interest would have paid for inflation costs, and we wouldn't be doing this at a time when construction costs are at a record high. We are encouraging every strata to look at their long term plans, and plan for the future. Carol Chow, Vancouver

**Dear Carol:** You are absolutely correct. Unfortunately, our legislation does not yet require strata corporations to plan for the

future costs other than minimal reserve contributions. A serious behavior pattern that many home owners province wide have developed is "run to failure." It is often too easy to defer maintenance issues because they don't directly affect our daily lifestyles, but once the roof fails, the windows leak, the elevator seizes, pipes burst, the parkade floods, it's too late. The costs have accelerated 30-50% and your community is faced with costly damages. A solution for strata corporations is to consider bylaws that specifically address repair and maintenance of building components. There are two considerations. The Operations Manual that itemizes all components that require annual inspection, maintenance and repairs, and the Renewals Manual, that details all building components, analysis of their current condition, remaining life, schedule for replacement and costs estimates for future repairs. Once a bylaw is ratified, the strata corporation is bound to the annual and future commitments of repairs and funding. We've all heard the line "pay me now or pay me later." In strata corporations it needs to be amended to "pay me much more later." A sample Building Maintenance Enclosure checklist is available by emailing Deanna Ferguson at [info@choa.bc.ca](mailto:info@choa.bc.ca).

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