

Condominium Home Owners' Association

Serving BC's Strata Property Owners since 1976

Bulletin: 300-293

Condo Smarts

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Dear Condo Smarts: I have a very short question. Our home was totally damaged by a fire in a neighbour's unit earlier this spring. Repairs and rebuilding have been going well but we have been unable to live in our unit since and are in temporary housing paid by our insurance until the restoration is complete. We just received a notice from our strata corporation advising that we had not paid our strata fees since the March fire and that a lien may be imposed if we don't pay. They have agreed to wait until we are back in our home to pay the fees; however, do we really have to pay our fees even though we are unable to live in our townhouse because of someone else's fire? Lillian Mason, Okanagan Kootenay region

Dear Lillian: Unfortunately there are some things that never go away regardless of the circumstances. Taxes, mortgages and strata fees are all part of the cost of owning property. Strata fees are the simplest form of taxes in that they are collected for the operation of your strata, the same way we pay municipal taxes for the operation of our local governments. Your strata council is

acting generously because it is a bylaw requirement to pay your strata fees each month and they have an obligation to enforce the bylaws. This column is a good opportunity to remind everyone who lives in or owns a strata to double check their insurance policies. The strata must ensure they are insured for full replacement value and that requires routine certified appraisals to meet your insurers' requirements. If you are underinsured your insurer may only be obligated to pay half of your claim. Owners, landlords, tenants and occupants should ensure they have a condominium/strata homeowner policy to protect their personal property, any betterments to the strata lot and underinsurance. In the event you find yourself paying a deductible or the insurance is insufficient to cover a loss, your homeowner insurance is the final safety net. Like Lillian, make sure your policy covers you for outside living expenses in case your home is uninhabitable. When buying a homeowner policy, bring your strata policy with you so your insurance broker is aware of the limitations of the strata coverage.

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