

**Condo Smarts**

Headline: Election Signs & Campaigning

Topic: Elections

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Written by: Tony Gioventu

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**Dear Condo Smarts:** I arrived home to my strata corporation on Friday to discover the strata council president had let a political canvasser into our building, and he was sitting in the lobby canvassing for a single party. I was harassed by this person because I refused to take a campaign leaflet, so I complained to the strata council who advised that under the Election Act, it is the right of every party to canvass in our building and there is nothing we can do about. The strata council president has also arranged for this candidate to come to our building, use our common room and speak to our residents late next week. I am totally offended by this level of forceful access and invasion into our privacy. If I were a single family resident in a home or townhouse I would simply shut the door, so how does the strata council have the right to impose their political beliefs on our owners.

*Karen S. Abbotsford*

**Dear Karen:** There is plenty of confusion about the rights and authority of candidates, strata councils and property owners, tenants and residents during elections. The Federal Election Act does not apply to our Provincial Election. Our Provincial Election Act, applies to both provincial and municipal elections in BC. Strata corporations may adopt bylaws that limit or prohibit election signs on common property, and that may restrict the size of election signs that are displayed on strata lots; however, the strata corporation cannot prohibit signs being displayed from a strata lot. Canvassers do not have the right to access multi-family buildings in the BC Election Act, unless specific consent has been provided by the strata corporation, and even then a strata council would be well advised to seek the consent of their ownership before

they consider access. Remember multi-family properties are for the use and enjoyment of owners, tenants, residents and their guests. Our experience over the years has indicated that unauthorized politicking or canvassing in a high rise or apartment lobby usually creates more dissent with the ownership and is a significant turn off for most voters, often with negative effects not intended by the candidates. One of the benefits of strata living is the natural barrier created by the front doors, preventing canvassing or door to door sales. If an owner wishes to invite a candidate into their home that is their privilege; however, that does permission to enter does not extend to the other owners. The strata corporation must also respect the individual rights of all owners, and that includes the rights of owners to be opposed to the use of the common property for election meetings and campaigning. We have many communities with up to 1,000 residents. If the strata council is considering hosting a community opportunity to meet candidates, seek the consent of the owners first. All owners of the strata corporation pay for the common facilities which are intended for the use and enjoyment of strata lot owners, tenants, residents and their guests. The strata may host a special event but respect everyone's rights and political beliefs. First seek the consent of the owners to host the event and to permit media, if requested. Ensure that all parties are represented and that only owners, tenants, residents and their guests are invited. This is not an opportunity for the candidates to invite the general public. The strata corporation still has an obligation to maintain the security and manage the liability risks of the building.

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