

**Condo Smarts**

Headline: The wasteful cost of failures  
Topic: Repair & Maintenance; Balconies & Decks  
Publication date: Sept 18, 2014  
Publication: The Province  
Written by: Tony Gioventu

---

**Dear Tony:** We hope you will publish our letter for other condo owners. I bought my unit in 2011, and I foolishly did not review all of the strata minutes and records before I purchased. I am now paying a steep price for not being cautious, but I have decided to roll up my sleeves and make the best of it. Our strata was built in 1990, and is 32 units in East Vancouver. The building is wood frame construction with cedar siding and stucco panels. We have 22 balconies with vinyl membranes and since 2000, the strata have been advised to replace the vinyl decking. Partly because of the poor standard of original work and the decaying condition. Had the repairs been completed in 2000, under the supervision of an engineer at the time, the costs would have been around \$40,000 for all 22 balconies. Needless to say the strata deferred and fought about who was responsible for many years and now we are repairing serious balcony failures at a rate of \$40,000 for each balcony, assuming best case scenario. Most of the owners from 2000 are no longer here, and the new wave of owners are now paying the price. Please tell your readers not to delay repairs. *Patti C.*

**Dear Patti:** Thank you for your letter and for providing all of the documents for the readers. As property owners, we are often led to believe by owners who do not want to pay for repairs that we can delay in the hopes of saving money. We also tend to be influenced to suspect that anyone who is giving us recommendations for repairs and renewals must be only for personal benefit, so how can we trust them? The solution is simple. Question the information you are being

provided. There should be a logical explanation. As consumers we play as vital a role in the success of our property management, operations and the purchasing of goods as the contractors we hire. Patti's strata is a tragic example of decisions made without understanding the consequences. They were recommended in 2000 to replace the vinyl decking because the seams were poorly fused. At that time there was no other damage evident. That was voted down. In 2003, they again unsuccessfully attempted to get funding for the repairs. In 2004, they spent \$3,500 on spot repairs only. In 2005 dry rot was discovered under the balcony decking. There was an estimate for repairs to the vinyl, decking and structure of \$7,000 per deck. The owners voted the repairs down. In 2006 the first water damages were reported in strata lots. In 2009, two extremely damaged strata balconies were repaired, including damage to the structure at a total cost of \$39,000 for each balcony. As of 2014, 20 balcony repairs are still remaining, varying in estimates from \$15,000 to \$45,000. At best case scenario the strata will spend \$440,000 for repairs that should have only cost \$40,000 in total. Not every building component will result in such drastic results; however, building systems that relate to life safety and emergency systems, or that manage the delivery, drainage, discharge or deflection of water, are extremely vulnerable. Elevators, emergency systems, roofing, balconies, drains, exterior walls, doors and windows, internal piping and ground water management can all result in serious costs if neglected. Understand the consequences of delaying repairs before you decide to vote no.

---

For more information on CHOA resources and benefits visit [www.choa.bc.ca](http://www.choa.bc.ca)  
or contact the office at 1-877-353-2462 or email [office@choa.bc.ca](mailto:office@choa.bc.ca).

**No part of this publication may be reproduced without the prior written permission of CHOA**

This publication contains general information only and is not intended as legal advice. Use of this publication is at your own risk. CHOA will not be liable to you or any other person for any loss or damage arising from, connected with or relating to the use of this publication or any information contained herein by you or any other person.