

Condo Smarts

Headline: Organic waste requirements introduced

Topic: Recycling

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Written by: Tony Gioventu

Dear Tony: We have seen a few articles and interviews on the new organic waste requirements. Our strata corporation is a 32 unit apartment building with no underground parking. Our rental building was converted to condos in 1975. We do not have any space to put another container on our property. To do so will require the removal of 1 common area parking space, all of which are a premium as we only have 16 spots. We would appreciate some direction on the new requirements and to be able to understand how mandatory they really are. Before we remove someone's parking we need to make sure we have no other options.

Nazrill M. Penticton

Dear Nazrill: The requirements actually apply to organic waste overall. Strata corporations affected by the new regulation are in Metro Vancouver at this time, but don't be surprised to discover your local communities in the interior and on Vancouver island will be implementing increased waste management requirements.

Strata corporations are under increasing pressure to manage their waste at higher standards with significant reductions in landfill contributions to reduce cost and environmental impact. As of January 1, new rules are in effect to encourage residents and businesses in Metro Vancouver to separate food waste from regular garbage. Initial enforcement will focus on large generators of food waste like supermarkets, and major restaurants and hotels. The first six months will be an education period when no penalties will be charged in order to give residents and businesses additional time to implement effective plans for separating food waste from the garbage. As of July 2015, a

surcharge will apply to garbage where the waste contains more than 25% organic waste.

Typically these estimates likely only apply to large waste producers such as restaurants and grocery stores, so the 25% threshold is unlikely to have much impact on strata corporations this year; however, in 2016 the amount permitted drops to 10% organic waste and 5% in 2017. This will provide strata corporations with sufficient time to set up additional services with their waste management providers, but more important, to educate the occupants of their buildings. Even if organics management is not mandatory in your region, your strata can still consider using this opportunity to start an organics education program and management option for your owners.

In addition to the availability of space for organic receptacles, the greatest challenge that we have encountered with strata corporations is this public awareness in their building about the management of organic waste from each strata lot. Whether it is an apartment building, high rise, low rise, or townhouse complex, there will be challenges for everyone in managing their recycling and organic waste. Many multi family buildings were not original designed to contain and manage organic waste management, so space constrictions and issues such as odour and proper ventilation will have to be addressed. While some strata townhouse and bare land communities have community gardens and on site composting, very few strata buildings actually have a secure landscape area for composting, so organic waste management is the only option. A few tips to get your strata started. Contact your local city hall and find out what waste management requirements are in

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place for your region. Identify whether they have a company or service provider who can supply the strata with in suite organics bins either at no cost or a reduced cost, and distribute the bins to owners along with a simple instruction chart of how to manage their waste and the frequency and methods of disposal. Determine if any of the changes will require a significant change in use or appearance of common property. The decisions to locate and administer the organic waste as a result may require a general meeting of the owners. Ultimately if owners do not participate, the strata corporation will eventually pay the penalties.

Everyone is in agreement that no one wants to be the garbage police in their strata corporation, so it requires the resident's commitment to the program, and a period of time for cultural change. One important factor to remember is that waste management areas along with in suite bins have to be maintained vigilantly otherwise your community may be exposed to pest and rodent infestations and odours.

For more information in the Metro Vancouver area contact the Recycling Council of BC at 604 732 9253. They will also be able to provide you with information for recycling across the province.

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