

## Strata Living

Headline: Alterations

Topic: Alterations

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**Dear Tony:** I want to renovate my unit and do some upgrades. I requested some information from the strata council and I received a copy of the bylaw that lists those items that require written permission to alter. It looks like most of the decorating in my strata lot actually requires consent of council to alter. Is that possible? I assumed I owned my own carpets and cabinets and doors in the within the unit, but according to the strata list, I need their consent. My concern is over the willingness of council to permit alterations to my strata lot. They have given owners a hard time in the past and I don't want to go through the same issues. I want to make sure we do everything right, but I would also like to avoid council if possible. Are there some limits to the council authority over my unit?

*Jason W.*

**Dear Jason:** If your strata corporation has not amended the Schedule of Standard Bylaws of the Strata Property Act in relation to alterations of a strata lot, you will discover that virtually everything in the strata lot that was built by the owner developer is part of the strata assets that must be insured under section 149 of the Act. For example, the carpets, kitchen cabinets, built in fans, plumbing fixtures, and interior doors, built or installed by the owner developer, require the written approval of the strata corporation before they can be altered. The bylaw for

strata lot alterations requires that the strata corporation must not unreasonably refuse. That is a judgment call of the strata council; however, the strata council would have to reasonably justify the refusal. An example where the strata could defend refusing an alteration is if the alteration resulted in a structural change to the unit that could place the building at future risk, or an alteration that jeopardized the safety or security of the building. It is important to comply with the strata corporation bylaws, keep a written record of all communications, and do not make alterations contrary to the bylaws and without written consent. If there is a bylaw violation, one of the eventual options is a court order to restore the property to its original condition. A very costly risk that can be avoided by simply complying with the strata bylaws.

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