



FIRSTSERVICE RESIDENTIAL CONNECTIONS

SUMMER | 2015



WE CAN SORT IT OUT

Transitioning to the next phase of disposal!

A FINE THING

Making bylaw offenders pay

ARE YOU COVERED?

Insurance you didn't know you needed



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Welcome | President's Message



In April, we welcomed nearly 150 strata council members, representing more than 100 strata corporations across the Lower Mainland, for a discussion about managing short-term rentals.

We are pleased to share with you the summer edition of FirstService Residential CONNECTIONS. This edition of our strata newsletter includes articles on a number of popular topics including the enforcement of bylaws, homeowner insurance, and a breakdown of what goes into monthly strata fees.

Reflecting on the spring, there were a number of highlights that made the season memorable. First, we were proud to host our largest educational seminar to date. In April, we welcomed nearly 150 strata council members, representing more than 100 strata corporations across the Lower Mainland, to UBC at Robson Square for a discussion on strategies for managing short-term rentals. We were humbled by the turnout for the seminar, which was led by two experienced guest speakers, including Sean Ingraham, one of our very own managing brokers.

The spring season also saw the launch of two new websites: ***I Am FirstService Residential*** (<http://join.fsresidential.com>), an industry-first employment microsite targeted to career candidates, and ***The Elements of Living*** (<http://theelementsofliving.com>), a consumer lifestyle blog for residents. These digital initiatives allow us to further display the depth of our team's expertise in providing management solutions that truly improve the lifestyles of our clients along with a company culture that allows us to attract and retain top talent. You will learn more about these initiatives later in the newsletter.

This summer, we look forward to launching two new unique customer service programs to further enhance our core values as we strive to continue making a difference for you, our client, by providing exceptional service and solutions for your strata.

We hope you enjoy this edition of our CONNECTIONS newsletter.

Sincerely,

Scott Douglas
President, FirstService Residential BC



FirstService
RESIDENTIAL



A FINE THING

Enforcing bylaws is sometimes a necessary part of being a Strata Council member. Here's the BC Government's guide to going after offenders.

1. Who must comply with bylaws and rules

The following persons must comply with the bylaws and rules of a strata corporation:

- owners;
- tenants;
- people living with or visiting owners and tenants.

2. How to process complaints of alleged bylaw and rule violations

The following steps should be taken by parties in dealing with complaints of alleged bylaw and rule violations:

- the aggrieved party complaining of a bylaw or rule breach by another owner or tenant must make a complaint to the strata council;
- the strata council must then give the alleged bylaw or rule offender written notice of the complaint;
- if the alleged offender is a tenant, the strata council must also give the landlord and owner written notice of the complaint;
- the strata council must decide whether to proceed with enforcement. It may give the alleged bylaw or rule offender a warning or time to comply with the bylaw or rule. If the breach is corrected, the strata council may decide not to take any further steps.

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Disclaimer: These guides are provided by the BC Office of Housing and Construction Standards for the reader's convenience; they are not a substitute for professional advice including legal advice. Please also note the Standard Bylaws can be amended.

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Alternatively, the strata council may proceed with enforcement;

- if the strata council decides to proceed with enforcement, it must give the alleged offender a reasonable opportunity to respond to the complaint, including an opportunity to respond at a hearing, if requested. The Regulations define hearing as “an opportunity to be heard in person at a council meeting;”
- if the alleged offender is a strata council

If a bylaw or rule contravention has resulted in fining the offender, fines may be reimposed for a continuing contravention without going through a new complaint process

member, that member must excuse himself or herself from the complaint process, unless all strata lot owners are on the strata council;

- once the alleged offender has answered or been given a reasonable opportunity to answer the complaint, the strata council must decide whether a bylaw or rule has been breached by the alleged offender;
- if the strata council decides that a bylaw or rule has been breached, it must then decide how to enforce the bylaw or rule against the offender; and
- finally, the strata council must give written notice of its decision, “as soon as feasible” to:
 - the offender or alleged offender; and
 - the landlord and owner, if the offender or alleged offender is a tenant.

[Note: the strata council may give the alleged rule or bylaw offender a warning at any time before

proceeding to enforce the rule or bylaw.]

3. Enforcement options available to the Strata Council

If after following the above steps, the strata council has determined that a breach of a bylaw or rule occurred, they may do any of the following:

- impose a fine against an owner or tenant;
 - the fine must not exceed the maximum fine amount set out in the bylaws of the strata corporation;
 - the Standard Bylaws permit a fine of up to \$50 for a breach of a bylaw, and up to \$10 for a breach of a rule;
 - the maximum fine amounts in the Standard Bylaws can be changed by bylaw amendment, but they must never exceed \$500 for a rental restriction bylaw breach, \$200 for any other bylaw breach, and \$50 for a breach of a rule; and
 - the bylaws may set out different maximum fines for breaches of different bylaws and rules.

- reimpose a fine;
 - if a bylaw or rule contravention has resulted in fining the offender, fines may be reimposed for a continuing contravention of a bylaw or rule without going through a new complaint process; and
 - fines can be reimposed no more frequently than set out in the bylaws.

The Standard Bylaws provide that fines can be reimposed once every seven days. This bylaw can be amended to decrease but not increase the frequency of re-imposing fines.

- give the offender a warning;
- give the offender or landlord time to comply with the bylaw or rule that has been breached;

- restrict access to a recreational facility;
 - this restriction may be against the strata lot owner, tenant, or an occupant or visitor who has breached the bylaws or rules;
 - the bylaw or rule breached must relate to the use of the recreational facility that is restricted;
 - the restriction can only be for a reasonable period of time.
- remedy the breach and recover all reasonable costs from the offender.

4. Unenforceable bylaws

Bylaws and rules are unenforceable if they:

- contravene the Act, Regulations, Human Rights Code or another enactment or law;
 - destroy or modify an implied easement created under the Act;
 - prohibit or restrict an owner from freely selling, leasing, mortgaging or otherwise disposing of his or her strata lot;
- However, bylaws may be created to:
- reasonably control the activities relating to the sale of a strata lot, including the placement of “For Sale” signs and open house times;
 - limit the rental of strata lots subject to the Form J.
 - restrict the age of persons residing in the strata lot in accordance with the Human Rights Code.

5. How Strata Corporations can collect fines

Strata corporations can collect fines and other costs incurred in remedying breaches by the following methods:

- sue the owner or tenant in Court;
 - the strata corporation must give the owner or tenant and any mortgagee who

has requested notice at least two weeks’ notice demanding payment and of its intention to sue if payment is not received; [Please refer to part 6 of this guide for an explanation of how the notice period runs.]

- the owner or tenant may be able to pay money which is in dispute into court, or to the strata corporation to hold in trust, if a court proceeding has started; and
- once a court order against the owner has been obtained, the strata corporation can enforce it against the owner through various collection methods permitted by law.

- arbitrate the matter;
 - the strata corporation must give the owner or tenant and any mortgagee who has requested notice at least two weeks’ notice demanding payment and of its intention to initiate arbitration proceedings if payment is not received; [see part 6 for an explanation of how the notice period runs.]
 - the owner or tenant can pay money which is in dispute to the strata corporation to hold in trust if the arbitration proceeding has started; and
 - an arbitrator’s decision may be filed in the Supreme Court if the amount awarded is over \$25,000 or it may be filed in Small Claims Court, if the amount awarded is under \$25,000. On being filed, it will have the same effect and all proceedings may be taken against the owner as if it were a court order.

- refuse to produce a “Certificate of Payment” (Form F);
 - the strata council can refuse to issue a “Certificate of Payment” (Form F) to an owner or to a purchaser of an owner’s strata lot, if amounts are owing to the strata corporation and arrangements to pay as set out in the Act have not been made.

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6. Giving notice and calculating the notice period

The strata corporation can give notice to an owner of its intention to commence legal action or arbitration in order to collect fines and other costs incurred in remedying a breach of a bylaw in the following ways:

- if a person has provided the strata corporation with an address for receiving notices that is outside of the strata development, then notice can be delivered by:
 - personally leaving it with the person; or
 - mailing to the address provided by the person;
- if a person has not provided the strata corporation with an address for receiving notices that is outside of the strata development, then notice can be delivered by:
 - personally leaving it with the person;
 - leaving it under the door of the person's strata lot;
 - leaving it with an adult occupant of the person's strata lot;
 - mailing to the strata lot address;
 - putting into the mail box or mail slot for the strata lot;
 - faxing it to a fax number provided by the person; or
 - emailing it to an email address provided by the person.
- if notice has been given by any of the above methods, except by giving it to the person, the notice is deemed to be received by the person four days after it was given.
- Under the Interpretation Act, if the reference to time includes phrases such as "clear" days or weeks, or "at least" in reference to days or weeks, the time must be calculated by ex-

cluding the first day and the last day of the period. Another way of thinking about the days that must be excluded is to think that nothing can happen on those days.

- Thus, when calculating the number of days within the two week notice period for commencing court action or arbitration, the day the notice is given, or is deemed to be received, cannot be counted as one of the days. The court action or arbitration cannot commence on the last day of the notice period. It can commence on any of the days following the last day of the notice period.

7. Enforcement against tenants

Under the Strata Property Act, there are additional requirements for enforcing bylaws and rules against tenants, which are outlined below. (Note: in addition to the Strata Property Act, residential strata tenancies in British Columbia are governed by the Residential Tenancy Act (RTA). More information on the RTA and the rights and responsibilities of tenants and landlords can be found at the Residential Tenancy Branch website here: <http://www.rto.gov.bc.ca/default.aspx>).

Under the Strata Property Act:

- an owner who rents his or her lot must provide the tenant with:
 - a "Notice of Tenant's Responsibilities" (Form K), which must be signed by the tenant;
 - a copy of the bylaws;
 - a copy of the rules; and
- within two weeks of renting a strata lot to a tenant, the landlord must give the strata corporation the Form K signed by the tenant;

[Note: if an owner fails to comply with any of the above requirements, the tenant is still bound by the bylaws and rules of the strata corporation, but the tenant may terminate the tenancy, within 90 days of the contravention if he or she chooses,



and recover reasonable moving expenses from the owner.]

- the strata corporation may collect a tenant's fines or costs of remedying a contravention from either the tenant or the landlord; and
- serious and repeated breaches by a residential tenant may give a landlord grounds to evict the tenant.

- The strata corporation may be able to evict a residential tenant who repeatedly breaches reasonable and significant bylaw or rules, if there is serious interference with the rights of other persons in the strata development.

[Note: if the strata corporation collects a tenant's fine from the landlord, then the tenant owes that sum to the landlord.]



ARE YOU COVERED?

It's important to understand the limits of your strata coverage – and to fill the gaps with a personal policy.

DO YOU KNOW that only 40 percent (estimated) of BC homeowners have personal insurance? This figure is even lower for tenants. Whether living in the unit or as an investor, unit owners should always make sure their personal assets and liabilities are adequately protected by their own personal insurance policy. A typical unit owner's policy provides a variety of coverages:

Personal Property

Premiums are mainly based on the limit of insurance purchased, and such a limit should reflect the full replacement value of all household furniture and personal effects, including jewellery and other valuable items. All policies have special limits for such valuable items as jewellery, cash etc., and must be added to a scheduled rider in order to obtain the correct coverage. Most policies

will also cover the personal property while it is temporarily off premises (with the owner on vacation, for example).

Additional Living Expenses

If the owner is forced to leave home due to a loss that's covered, he or she may need substantial sums while the damage is being repaired and/or replaced. In the case of an investment unit, such coverage helps pay the owner's lost rental income.

Betterments & Improvements

The strata corporation's Insurance policy will provide coverage for "fixtures built or installed on a strata lot, if the fixtures are built or installed by the owner developer as part of the original construction on the strata lot." Any subsequent improvements or betterments will be left to the unit owner to protect. It is wise to ensure that the limit of insurance purchased for improvements and betterments accurately reflects the replacement value of all improvements or betterments forming part of the strata lot – whether or not such improvements or betterments have been acquired or installed by the current owner.

Strata Deductible Assessment

More and more strata corporations now have bylaws to facilitate charging strata deductibles back to unit owners responsible for a loss or



damage. It doesn't matter if the owners or their tenants are directly responsible for the loss or damage in question; in many cases, the mere fact that the damage originates in the unit – for example, a faulty washing machine that leaks and

damages the suite below – is sufficient to make the assessment valid.

Strata deductibles can be as low as \$1,000 and as high as \$500,000. Unit owners' personal policies cover this risk to a specific limit. Owners need to make sure they are fully insured.

Special Assessments

This coverage provides protection for the owner's share of levies for damage to the common property (not wear and tear) that may be charged for a variety of reasons. For example, it is imperative to protect yourself by purchasing adequate earthquake insurance with your personal insurance policy. In the event of a quake, it is probable that an assessment will be made by the strata corporation to recover your portion of the deductible owing on the strata's insurance policy.

The deductible amount is a percentage of the total insurance value stated on the certificate of insurance or policy declarations. For example:

Total insurance value stated on the certificate of insurance = \$20,000,000

Earthquake deductible = 10%

Deductible for the strata corporation = \$2 million

The \$2 million would be split amongst unit owners by unit entitlement.

Personal Liability

This protects for legal responsibility to others worldwide for claims arising from bodily injury, property damage, fees for legal defense, legal liability to occasional employees, voluntary property damage and voluntary medical payments, and covers liability arising from the use and ownership of the strata lot.

Each unit owner has specific insurance requirements which should be discussed with an insurance broker to ensure the right protection is in place - and at the right price.

More and more strata corporations have bylaws for charging strata deductibles back to unit owners responsible for a loss or damage.



Understanding Strata Fees

Knowing the difference between your operating fund and contingency reserve fund is just one of the things you need to understand about how your strata is financed.

CONDO LIVING has its perks: amazing urban locations close to public transportation, being part of a community without having to do yardwork or home maintenance, enjoying amenities like fitness centres, party lounges and pools at your doorstep. Just don't forget that those perks come at a price – a monthly strata fee.

What are strata fees and how are they determined?

Your monthly strata fee is money that's used by the strata corporation to pay the common

expenses of the development. Your individual fee is assessed by taking the total cost of the strata's expenses and dividing that by the unit entitlement of your strata lot. The larger square footage of your home, the bigger your fee.

Where does the money go?

There are two funds that every strata corporation in BC must maintain: an operating fund and a contingency reserve fund (CRF). The operating fund is used to pay for common expenses that

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Repaint – and be satisfied.

No doubt that cracking and peeling signal it's time to repaint. But it may also be time for an update when the colours of a room no longer excite you.

REMEMBER WHEN you last painted your living or dining room, your entrance hallway, den, kitchen, or another room in your home? It felt so great just looking at the finished work, even before the furniture was moved back into place. That new colour scheme you selected – the clean, unmarred baseboard and molding that set off that room so well? The bright white ceiling that highlighted the whole space?

But it's been a few years. How do you know when it's time to repaint?

CertaPro Painters® in Vancouver recommends doing a walk-about in your home. If the walls or door frames are marred and a bit dirty, baseboards scuffed and dingy, or hairline "settling" cracks have appeared in ceilings, there's no question that it's time.

But suppose it still looks fresh and clean; is it worthwhile to once again plan a redo? Here's a good tip. If you walk into a room and it doesn't stir you, give you a little bit of a smile or warm your senses, or if it makes you feel the slightest bit sad, then repainting – with or without some new decorating touches – could be just what the doctor ordered.

A freshly painted

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This article courtesy of





Some highlights of our year: the Vancouver Sun Run (far left), wine and cheese event with new strata client (top), staying healthy during Smoothie Day (immediate left) and Office Yoga Team.

SEPARATION ANXIETY?

Keeping organic waste out of regular garbage isn't rocket science. Here are a few tips for ensuring compliance in your strata property (and avoiding unpalatable fines).

ON JANUARY 1, new legislation came into effect that requires food waste to be separated from regular waste. This legislation applies to all organic waste. It's not exclusive to strata corporations but applies only to Metro Vancouver (though is likely to be rolled out across the province in the future).

How does the new legislation affect strata corporations? It all depends on the strategy you take. Investing time now to plan an organics program and educate owners is a proactive way to adhere to the new legislation while avoiding fines for failing to separate organic waste. Developing an organic waste program may have the added benefit of reminding residents of the other waste diversion programs run by your strata, such as recycling and bottle collection.

Many strata corporations are asking how the new legislation will be enforced. Here is a summa-

ry of the different enforcement periods and associated fines to be imposed by your waste service provider:

January 2015 to June 2015 (six months) – Education period during which no fines will be assessed. This is an opportunity for strata corporations to begin implementing new organic waste programs.

July 2015 to December 2015 (six months) – Any garbage loads with more than 25% organics may be fined with a 50% surcharge (approximately \$500 or more).

2016 – Any garbage loads with more than 10% organics may be fined with a 50% surcharge.

2017 – Any garbage loads with more than 5% organics may be fined with [continued next page](#)



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a 50% surcharge.

While enforcement measures are likely to begin with major organic waste producers, such as restaurants, grocery stores and hotels, strata corporations should take note of the above enforcement calendar. Many owners worry about the difficulty of encouraging all residents to properly separate food waste. Education is the key. Here are three quick tips on how to begin informing residents of the new organic requirements:

- Select a council member to lead the organic implementation. This person will oversee the launch of the program in your building while monitoring the response and feedback from residents.
- Host an information session at your building to educate residents on how to properly dispose of organic waste. This will also create an open forum to respond to concerns and misconceptions.
- Post notices and signage in common areas and garbage rooms to remind owners of the need to separate organic waste.

Strata councils and residents are likely to have questions about strategies for meeting the new legislation guidelines while also limiting bad odours and infestations. Here is some helpful advice:

Use a “Kitchen Catcher”

The success of your organic program is greatly influenced by how residents separate food waste in their units. Experience shows that the use of a kitchen catcher (small plastic bin with a snap-latch lid) by residents is critical for the proper capturing of organic material. A good kitchen catcher will be sturdy and have a seal-tight lock to prevent spillage if dropped in a common area. Kitchen catchers should also be perforated to allow airflow. Contrary to common belief, the

airflow prevents foul odours by allowing organic waste to dry rather than decompose in moisture. It may also be helpful to purchase a kitchen catcher that comes with a label explaining what items should be disposed of as organic waste. Properly diverting food waste in your unit helps your strata’s centralized organic toter remain clean and smell-free.

Keep Your Waste Dry

The dryer the food waste disposed of by residents, the less potential for bad odours and infestation. Residents should pour all food liquids down the drain rather than into the kitchen catcher. Also be sure to frequently empty your kitchen catcher into your building’s centralized toter.

Newspaper is also a great tool for residents. Wrapping your food scraps in newspaper before dumping into your kitchen catcher will help soak up any moisture to further limit odours. Newspaper is not only readily available, it’s often free. Use it to line your kitchen catcher. And since newspaper is compostable, it can be dumped into your strata’s centralized organic toter.

Be Sure to Remove Glass, Plastic, and Metal

It’s important not to mix glass, plastic, and metal with your organic waste. While it may seem easy to throw out containers lined with food scraps, including glass, plastic, and metal in your organic waste, it can easily lead to fines for the strata because these materials can be detected by your service provider during regular pick-ups.

For further tips on creating an organic waste program at your strata, contact your waste service provider. They are likely to have additional information resources and staff who may assist with communicating the new requirements to residents of your building.

This article prepared with the help of the experts at Waste Management



Newspaper is also a great tool for residents. Wrapping your food scraps in newspaper before dumping will help soak up any moisture to limit odours.



Veronica Franco and Sean Ingraham speak to strata council members at UBC Robson Square during FirstService Residential’s seminar on the topic of short-term rentals in stratas.

Short-term rental meeting attracts record turnout

WITH THE SURGE IN POPULARITY of web services like Airbnb and VRBO, strata councils are having to deal with the possibility of their buildings being turned into de facto hotels. To help address some of the many issues raised, FirstService Residential offered a free seminar to concerned strata council members on the very topical subject on April 30 at UBC Robson Square in Vancouver.

The response was very enthusiastic, as nearly 150 guests representing more than 100 strata corporations across Greater Vancouver came to join the conversation.

The seminar, entitled **Short-term Rentals in Strata Corporations**, was led by two strata experts: Sean Ingraham, the Managing Broker for FirstService Residential, and Veronica Franco, Partner at Clark Wilson LLP. The discussion focused on the short-term rental trend across the Lower Mainland, while also addressing rental restrictions and strategies for council members to

manage tenants in the spirit of building a positive culture at their properties.

“It was our biggest seminar ever,” said Max Gajdel, FirstService Residential BC Manager of Business Development. “We are delighted about the record turnout. We strive to be the trusted advisor for our clients, and education is a big part of this. Our seminar series is a value-added service that’s exclusive to our clients, and gives them the tools they need to make informed decisions.”

Since launching its educational series in 2013, the company continues to hold regular seminars for the strata councils it serves. The evening events include a networking reception followed by an open discussion where guests have the opportunity to learn from strata specialists on a variety of topics. Past seminars have included lectures on organic waste requirements, the Civil Resolution Tribunal (CRT), and changes to the Limitation Act.

STRATA PARTICIPATION NOT AN OPTION UNDER NEW CRT AMENDMENT ACT

All parties will soon be obliged to participate in tribunals on matters under CRT jurisdiction

By Tony Gioventi, Executive Director of the Condominium Home Owners Association of BC

INTRODUCED TO YOU last issue, Canada's first online tribunal, BC's Civil Resolution Tribunal (CRT), was created to increase access to justice for British Columbians by helping you resolve strata property and small claims disputes fairly, quickly and affordably from your home computer or mobile phone.

Now just passed in May is BC's Civil Resolution Tribunal Amendment Act, which carries a number of significant changes directly affecting strata corporations.

The most important is that strata corporations will eventually be obliged to participate in strata matters under the jurisdiction of the CRT – putting them in the same position as owners, tenants and occupants.

The Tribunal is being implemented in stages to allow the public to transition into the use of the online services for dispute resolution. The four stages of the Tribunal process will include: The Solution Explorer, Party to Party Negotiations, Case Management, and Adjudicated Outcomes.

A significant step in the implementation of the tribunal is the appointment of 18 tribunal members. Another, when it becomes active in the fall of 2015, is the online Solution Explorer, which will permit access to strata information allowing the public to explore their specific types of problems and available solutions, and to enable parties to negotiate directly to resolve their issues.

The Tribunal will be eager to receive input

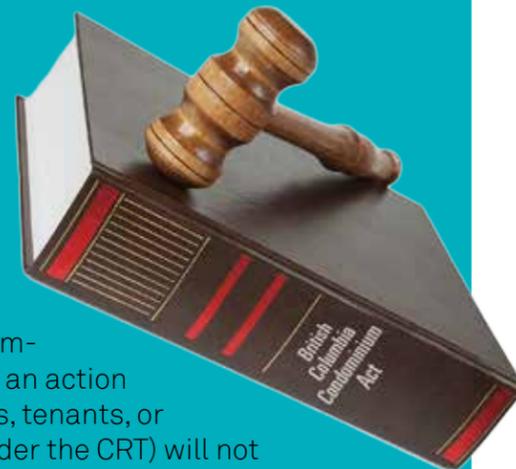
from the public on the format of the Solution Explorer and ease of access.

In 2016, case management and adjudication services will be launched, enabling strata owners, tenants and occupants to commence Tribunal actions

against the strata corporation. As mentioned, the strata corporation must participate. But the strata corporation commencement of an action against owners, tenants, or occupants (under the CRT) will not become mandatory until the regulations bringing the Amendment Act come into effect – likely within a year of the adjudication process beginning.

We at the CRT are all eagerly awaiting its full implementation – to address a significant backlog of strata disputes and to provide strata corporations and owners with quick, economical access to day-to-day dispute resolution mechanisms.

The changes in the limitations periods – which essentially reduced the collection time of fees, fines, penalties, insurance



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from previous page deductibles, damages and costs to a two-year period – have placed a much higher burden on strata corporations to actively collect money owing to them. A \$200 fine sitting on an owner's account is much more complicated to collect if the owner is not selling or remortgaging, and many strata corporations have discovered it is cheaper to write the amounts off than to proceed with collections. The CRT, once fully enacted, will permit strata corporations, specifically at the decision of the strata council, to commence an action to collect debts before they expire under the limitation period, without requiring a three-quarters vote of the owners at a general meeting, or a bylaw permitting small claims actions. Traditional collections such as strata fees and special

levies that require order for sale proceedings will remain as applications to the Supreme Court of BC. Of course, this also means owners, tenants and occupants will have a level playing field to challenge the decisions and bylaws of the strata, and to seek decisions ordering the strata corporation to comply with the Strata Property Act, regulations and bylaws of the strata.

We can anticipate a much higher level of scrutiny of strata corporation business in the years to come. We are fortunate to have the leadership of Shannon Salter, Chair of the CRT, and the thousands of hours contributed by volunteers within the industry in the past three years to the development of the CRT.

To follow the progress on the CRT go to: www.civilresolutionbc.ca

WE LAUNCH WEBSITE AND LIFESTYLE BLOG

FIRSTSERVICE RESIDENTIAL has launched two new websites with the dual aims of promoting employment opportunities in the property management business and helping residents lead happier lives.

I Am FirstService Residential (<http://Join.FSResidential.com>) is an industry-first employment microsite targeted to career candidates to help FirstService expand its available talent pool by introducing the property management industry and showcasing its culture and career opportunities to candidates beyond the traditional real estate sector. In addition to job openings, the site contains such innovative elements as profiles and career paths of successful associates across the organization to illustrate the dynamic and diverse professions and range of advancement opportunities of the community association management industry.

The second site – **The Elements of Living (<http://TheElementsofLiving.com>)** – is a consumer lifestyle blog for residents. It will serve as an additional channel for the company to strengthen relationships with residents and help them lead healthier, happier lives. Designed

like an online magazine, the blog features a continuously updated mix of informative and compelling articles on family living, health and wellness, pets, home life, cooking, green living and gardening, travel and other lifestyle topics that resonate with a consumer audience. Visitors to the site can easily share content on their personal networks via Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest.

“Property management has evolved beyond the operational expectations and responsibilities of managing a building or collecting dues” says Chuck Fallon, CEO of FirstService Residential. “These digital initiatives expand our audiences and enable us to showcase the breadth of professional property management and how it can improve lives. By building on the concept of a higher level of sophistication and customer service delivery designed to enhance quality of life – a cross-over from the hospitality industry into the residential sector – we are positively impacting people's lives and transforming the property management industry into an even more sought-after profession and career building opportunity.”

Understanding strata fees

from page 12 maintain the building or occur more than once over the course of a year. This includes building insurance, property manager's fees, gardening, garbage collection, water, maintaining common property, upkeep of amenities, cleaning, repairs, etc. The CRF is the fund typically used to pay for expenses that occur less than once a year, or more unusual expenses. This might include a lobby upgrade, new roof, new gutters, etc.

How much is a typical strata fee?

Strata fees vary greatly from area to area and building to building. It is difficult to compare fees directly because they depend on the management style of the strata as well as the type of amenities

that are offered. In general, monthly strata fees in Metro Vancouver range between 25 and 59 cents per square foot. The average range is 35 to 40 cents. The higher end is typical for buildings with 'wet' amenities such as pools, hot tubs, water features and other luxurious expenses like 24-hour concierge service.

Questions to Ask

For new communities, developers create an estimated overall budget so that you know what your anticipated monthly fees will be. If there's a shortfall between the proposed and actual operating expenses in the first year, then the Strata Property Act will impose a penalty on the developer. If you're looking for a second opinion on the overall budget, check with an experienced realtor, lawyer, accountant or [continued next page](#)

When to repaint

from page 13 room can definitely lift your spirits, and it's probably the least expensive way to maintain or even add to the value of your house. CertaPro Painters® offers these tips for making the most of your repainting experience.

1. Stand Tall

If you want to make your ceiling look taller and your room more spacious, paint the ceiling in a lighter version of the wall colour, or try an airy colour like pale blue or soft gray. The corners of the room will recede to reveal a soft canopy of colour.

2. Small is Beautiful, Too

Embrace your small space with a simple scheme of vibrant colour defined by white or black trim and accents.

3. Warm is Welcome

Large and busy rooms benefit from earthy, inviting colours that create a cozy, relaxing ambience and make people feel comfortable. Choose paint colours in deep ochre, rusty red, and burnt orange to make large rooms feel more livable, and busy rooms more serene.

4. Light Colours Recede

Hallways and small areas will seem less confining

with pale, cool, and neutral colours because they reflect light. Paired with good light fixtures, these transitional spaces will feel more like part of the house.

5. Take Charge

Deep, bold colours can be surprisingly versatile. Rich royal blue walls become cheerful with fresh orange or citrus yellow accents. And paired with graphic accents of black, white, or gray, almost any daring colour becomes fresh and modern.

6. Go White and Bright

To show off colourful furnishings and vibrant prints, think of your space as a gallery with clean white walls and ceilings in a flat finish. Stay away from muddy antique whites, opting instead for crisp clean tints to create the perfect canvas for bold strokes of colour.

*Please contact your landlord prior to engaging in any painting project. For more interior or exterior colour tips, contact your local CertaPro Painters®. * As seen in CertaPro Painters® Envision magazine © 2015 All Rights Reserved Certa ProPainters, Ltd. Each CertaPro Painters® business is independently owned and operated.*

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property manager.

When you're purchasing a resale home, you should confirm if your fees include such utilities as hot water, heat and gas. Also, how much money is being contributed to the reserve fund each year, and is it enough to cover unanticipated expenses? When is the building warranty expiring? Have any major repairs, like a new roof, been recently made or are planned? Check the minutes of past strata council

meetings to ensure you have a clear understanding of what's been completed, where money is being allocated and spent and whether the council is proactive or tends to do the bare minimum – which could lead to greater issues. As usual, some basic due diligence before you buy will help you avoid issues down the road.

– Cameron McNeill, MAC MARKETING SOLUTIONS
www.macmarketingsolutions.com



Owners of Aberdeen Square present Max Gajdel (above right), FirstService Residential Manager of Business Development, with traditional calligraphy gift to celebrate the Chinese New Year.

New Year, new client celebration draws 800

FIRSTSERVICE RESIDENTIAL representatives addressed more than 800 guests at a Chinese New Year celebration on February 14 in the atrium of Aberdeen Square, a new 325-unit mixed-use development in Richmond, BC. The celebration brought together strata owners, families, friends, entertainers and local politicians for an afternoon of traditional ceremonies and performances, while Aberdeen Square's unique retail owners – from traditional calligraphers to fashion designers – opened their doors to guests.

"We are humbled to have been invited by our newest client to participate," said Max Gajdel, FirstService Residential BC Manager of Business Development. "The opportunity to meet guests and owners helps us in our ongoing mission of building communities through great relationships."

Said Crystal Hou, Aberdeen Square's Strata Council President: "This event demonstrates the popularity of the new centre, and will allow us to continue attracting local investments that will make Aberdeen Square a pillar in the neighbourhood."

Aberdeen Square is a 325-unit mixed use development of retail, office and food court space, located directly on the transit line at Aberdeen Station in Richmond.



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