



Condo Connection

Wilson, Blanchard – *Condominium Management with Experience and Integrity*

www.wilsonblanchard.com

The WB Condo Connection highlights Ontario condominium related articles and educational items that may be of interest to Boards of Directors and condo owners. It is published online and available on our website (www.wilsonblanchard.com) as well as in hard copy format to each of the members of our Boards of Directors.

We hope you enjoy this edition and we welcome your comments, suggestions or article topic requests by email to newsletter.editor@wilsonblanchard.com or by mail to:

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Wilson, Blanchard Title Changes

By Ray Wilson, RCM, ACCI, FCCI, AIHM
President

This fall Wilson, Blanchard has launched our new logo and unveiled our internal and external websites. This exciting time comes following a period of reviewing the company's structure and planning for the future – which looks VERY BRIGHT – for the WB Team.

I am pleased to announce the following title changes following that review period.

- o Karen Reynolds – Chief Operating Officer
- o Paula Davis – Chief Financial Officer
- o Dean McCabe – Vice President of Operations
- o Wayne Klem – Executive Director of Property Management – Toronto
- o Mike Mullen – Director of Property Management – Hamilton and Kitchener
- o Jeff Lack – Manager of Financial Reporting
- o Cindy Basilio – Senior Manager of Administration – Hamilton
- o Jerry Cunningham – Manager of Administration – Toronto

While many of the duties of these individuals will not change we hope that both internally and externally our company structure will be seen as one of the many strong attributes that Wilson, Blanchard has to offer our clients.

The Way We Share Information These Days Is Changing

By Dean McCabe, RCM, ACCI
Vice President – Operations

Some of you spent the weeks leading up to Christmas looking at data plans, iPads or android smart phones. If you were not doing your shopping on-line you may have been updating your Facebook status as you walked the mall or found a parking space.

The evolution of the way we share information has been at the forefront of the recent design of the WB website and the creation of our new WB intranet site for use by our employees.

It has also led us to launch the WBcondo Blog. The contents of this new service will provide weekly information on news items of interest relating to condominium communities in Ontario. Since the launch in November we have posted items on Taxation of Common Elements in Condominiums, Tarion Public Consultations on Common Elements in Condominiums and news on the January 1st deadline for meeting the requirements of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

You can visit the blog by simply clicking the Wordpress Icon located on our homepage at www.wilsonblanchard.com. But we have also made it easier to receive notice of a new entry by following WBcondo on the social media service of your choice.

- For those that use Facebook simply click the Facebook icon on the homepage and “like” the WBcondo page.
- For those who prefer Twitter simply click the Twitter icon on the homepage and follow WB_condo
- The LinkedIn icon is also available for those that wish to follow the WBcondo group.

We will still be providing our WB Condo Connection Newsletter quarterly for Directors and will feature information on Wilson, Blanchard as well as timely articles on items of interest to Condominiums.

We hope that you find this new service helpful, useful and efficient and look forward to your feedback.

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act

By Karen Reynolds, RCM, ACCI, FCCI, AIHM
Chief Operating Officer

Just when you thought your corporation was ahead of the game by complying with the Amendments to the Occupational Health and Safety Act (Bill 168), more legislation applicable to condominium corporations comes down the pipe! Yes, it's true! The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) was enacted June 13, 2005 and the first Regulation

to become law under that legislation is The Customer Service Standard. The deadline for compliance with the standard was January 1, 2012.

AODA is viewed as a key for making the entire province accessible and allows the government to develop, implement and enforce mandatory accessibility standards in key areas of daily living.

Please see *AODA* on page 3

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The purpose of the Customer Service Standard is to identify, remove and prevent obstacles and barriers that inhibit access to goods and services by people with disabilities.

Persons with disabilities are a growing part of our population and this legislation and its regulations mean that rather than addressing accessibility issues on an individual “one off” basis when a request is received, any providers of goods and services in the public or private sector must develop and implement customer service policies and procedures for serving people with disabilities. All members of staff must be trained to ensure the policies and procedures are being implemented.

Does this mean that corporations need to remodel elevators and entrances by January 1st? We think not but if your buildings or amenities are not accessible to all, then you should be putting plans in place to incorporate modifications going forward and providing for the cost in future budgets. This legislation is not just relative to accessing your building and/or common areas. Think about any barriers in your corporation and ways in which those barriers could be removed. It includes having policies and procedures in place for the delivery of notices and newsletters to residents who have visual disabilities and providing access to common areas for residents with service animals. Fire alarm systems in units and common areas should be retrofitted to accommodate the deaf or hearing impaired and personal support workers must be permitted to accompany persons with disabilities. And, in the event those systems which were put in place to accommodate persons with disabilities are temporarily unavailable, your policy should address how you will notify affected individuals.

“Identify, remove and prevent obstacles...that inhibit access to goods and services by people with disabilities.”

This legislation applies to all condominium corporations who have at least one employee but if you have no employees and are aware of persons with disabilities in your corporation whose access is restricted, why not consider adopting a policy to assist them?

Bear in mind when drafting your policies and procedures that they should respect the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities, must be integrated to enable persons with a disability to obtain, use or benefit from the goods or services and provide equal opportunity for persons to use and benefit from the goods or services.

As a company, Wilson, Blanchard has drafted and adopted our own Policies and Procedures and will be providing training to all staff members early in January. As part of our own package, we have also developed a template for use by our corporations. Of course, it is your choice whether you utilize our template or have your own prepared by your corporation’s solicitor.

At present, there may be no persons with disabilities residing in your corporation however, as our population ages and our disability rate increases, the chances you will be faced with retrofitting common areas or modifying your delivery methods due to a request increase. Penalties including fines and/or compliance orders have been put in place for corporations who fail to meet their obligations. Don’t procrastinate. Develop your policies and procedures and train your staff now.

Reserve Fund Investments

By Jeff Lack, BAcc, CGA
Manager of Financial Reporting

Section 115 (8) of the Ontario Condominium Act states that “Before investing any part of the money in a corporation’s reserve fund accounts, the board shall develop an investment plan based on the anticipated cash requirements of the reserve fund as set out in the most recent reserve fund study.” Besides complying with the Act, developing such a plan forces the Directors to think about and organize what they are doing as well as consider such matters as who has access to their corporate records and information (both personal and corporate) and who has signing authority and access to the investments. The plan should also ensure that the information and investments are accessible in the future if there is a change in Board members. In addition, an investment plan should ensure that the investments chosen meet the stringent requirements of the Condo Act, namely that they are “eligible securities” as defined in section 115 (5).

Some Board members may believe they don’t possess the knowledge and experience required to develop such a plan and to manage the investments on behalf of the corporation. After all, in many cases we are looking at investments of several hundred thousand dollars, and in some cases well over \$1 Million. As such,

“We provide you with honest and sound advice that comes from good experience and proper education.”

Boards often turn to their Property Management company for advice and our answer often surprises them – “we can’t help you, but we know who can!”

You see, as your Property Manager, it is important that we provide you with honest and sound advice that comes from good experience and proper education. It is also important that we know our limitations in order to point you in the right direction when we are asked to do something that may be beyond our scope. After all, we are property managers – we do not offer legal advice as we are not lawyers. We direct you to a qualified lawyer with industry expertise. Likewise, we do not offer engineering advice – we are not engineers. So why would we offer investment advice? We have not been trained as investment advisors nor are we investment experts. This also begs the question...why would you want someone without the proper experience and education managing your investments? With that in mind, we return to the original answer to our Boards – “we can’t help you, but we know who can!” Wilson, Blanchard has access to investment advisors who are experts in the Condominium industry and we can certainly arrange for a meeting with one (or more) of them and the Board.

Sometimes meeting more than one investment advisor is necessary. It is important that the Board of Directors find an advisor that they trust and that they are comfortable working with, especially when a significant amount of money is involved. This should be no different than obtaining the services of any other contractor. Boards often obtain three or more quotes for a contract renewal or major repair, so why not meet with more than one investment advisor to determine which one

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best fits the Board's expectations.

To give Boards an idea of what kind of service is available, we recently met with one of the advisors that we recommend and he provided a summary of the services he provides.

We work with Boards on the development of Reserve Fund Investment plans. We have been doing this for more than ten years, so we have created a system, put it in place and we have worked out the bugs. We also work directly with the Board of Directors to gather the necessary information to open the investment accounts. We then create a spreadsheet and update it to track investments and maturity dates.

This is a client added value for Wilson, Blanchard as there is absolutely no fee charged to the corporation for this service. *[It should be noted that Wilson, Blanchard does not receive any financial compensation what-so-ever, either from the investment advisors that we recommend or from the investments themselves.*

Investment advisors earn commissions directly from the investments that they place on behalf of the corporation.]

While the approach works best with corporations that are investing for periods of one year or longer and although working with larger deposits provides more flexibility for laddering the plan, we will consider working with corporations with smaller deposits on hand.

We believe that services such as those described above bring great value to our condominium clients and can help to maximize the corporation's return on their assets.

Wilson, Blanchard has been working with multiple sources to help appoint investment advisors for our condominium clients who could provide a complimentary reserve fund investment plan based on the information provided in their reserve fund studies. If you would like more information about the services available, please speak with your property manager who would be happy to arrange for a meeting with one of our recommended third-party investment advisors.

Property Tax Tip

Check with your property manager to determine if your condominium community has been paying property taxes on common elements like guest suites. A decision last year by MPAC has left the door open for condominiums that have had to purchase a common element to appeal the assessment and avoid property tax expenses.

Welcome!

Wilson, Blanchard would like to welcome our newest managed properties:

- Waterloo North Condominium Corporation #98
- Wentworth Common Element Condominium Corporation #479
- Wentworth Common Element Condominium Corporation #482
- Peel Condominium Corporation #492
- Wentworth Standard Condominium Corporation #361
- Wentworth Standard Condominium Corporation #457



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