



Condo Connection

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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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Landscape: A Condominium Asset Overlooked (Curb Appeal)

By: Wayne Klem
Executive Director of Property Management - Toronto

We have all seen the various HGTV shows on buying and selling property in the greater Toronto area, and the majority of these are single family properties. The one important aspect that realtors stress when buying property is location, location, location. I think most of us would agree with this point but another also very important factor in selling or buying is curb appeal.

Curb appeal is equally important for owners of condominiums when they decide to buy or sell a unit. The interior of a unit whether it be a high rise or townhome is an important factor in the decision of someone purchasing property, but before they even enter the unit they must saunter through the common elements of the Corporation as they make their way to see the unit for sale. This first impression can positively or negatively affect their decision to purchase the unit.

Inside This Issue

Landscape: A Condominium Asset Overlooked	1
Cover Your Assets During Winter	2
The Use of Consultants on Major Projects	3
Welcome	4

Curb appeal involves many aspects of the condominium property; it includes the state of repair of fences, roadways, curbs, gatehouses and signage along with many other items.

Landscaping is an area of equal importance that enhances the curb appeal of a property. This can be accomplished with contracting a professional landscape company with proper terms and specifications to maintain the landscaped areas of the common elements of the condominium during the spring, summer, fall and winter months. Each condominium has its own requirements, therefore the landscape contract should be tailored to the individual Corporation's landscape needs; a boilerplate contract may not cover all items required to properly maintain the curb appeal of your Corporation.

Maintaining the curb appeal is not as easy as simply having a professional landscaper; there are many other aspects of maintaining the beautiful appearance of a Corporation's landscape. In conjunction with a landscape contractor, boards should consider the utilization of an Arborist and/ or a Landscape Planner. These professionals will be able to create a detailed landscape plan of the property categorizing the various species of trees, shrubbery and general plantings. This plan will outline each type of tree, shrub and various plants on the property and will point out which areas

Cont'd from page 1...

need additional attention and make recommendations as to what needs to be replaced. This would include the necessity of the removal of diseased trees such as the ash bore, and recommendations of tree replacements that will be hardier and resistant to disease, along with other recommendations that will enhance the landscape and curb appeal of the condominium for years to come.

The advantage of such a plan, besides maintaining a beautifully landscaped property, is that the landscape plan can be incorporated in the reserve fund study utilizing the time frame for major repair or replacement of landscape items, and provides the reserve fund planner with actual current cost of replacement.

Cover Your Assets During Winter

By: Brad Wells, RCM
Property Manager - Hamilton

In most aspects of the condominium industry, the significance of administrative requirements and legal consideration continue to rise for everyday tasks. This is certainly true when keeping our community roadways and walkways clear of snow and ice during the winter season. The burden of responsibility falls onto the Board, who are then assisted by the Property Manager and any staff or contractors hired to do the job.

Long gone are the days of knowing a guy with a snow blade on his pick-up truck that you pay to plow and salt.

The clearing of snow and ice is the action of winter snow removal in order to achieve safe access in and around the site. Increasingly, the goal is how to best protect the Corporation by limiting risk and liability exposure. The by-product of limiting risk and liability is that you will have a safer site and the paperwork to prove it.

This short article is not to be considered legal advice. We always recommend that you review your Corporation's specific requirements with your insurance broker, contractors and lawyer.

To get you started, here is list of things to consider for your winter snow clearing responsibilities:

- Find a Reliable and Professional Contractor. When getting bids for a snow removal contract, check references and a list of other properties in your area that they service.
- Get a copy of the contractor's WSIB clearance and insurance certificate. Ensure that the Condominium Corporation and the property management company are named as additional insured on the contractor's policy for the life of the contract. Ask for a copy of their Health and Safety Plan.
- Demand that the contractor keep a log of all site inspections and all work done on site. The log must include the date, time, temperature, weather conditions and work completed on each visit. Ask for copies of the logs for your records.
- Have a signed contract. This seems simple but is easily overlooked. Often a contractor has been working at a Corporation for a long time and may have had a "verbal" renewal - which may not help you if there is an incident.
- Have a detailed contract. Avoid the one-page contract. Ensure all duties and responsibilities are outlined including specifying all areas that must be cleared.
- Document all claims. In the unfortunate event of a slip and fall or other loss on your property, immediately start a new file. You will need to complete the following:
 - Investigate the claim. View the site immediately and take photos. Talk to all parties involved and take detailed notes of their responses. Prepare an incident report.
 - Contact your insurance company by reporting the loss to your broker. They will provide you with advice on what to do next.

Have your documents ready. All of the items noted above will be requested including logs and contracts and these may be needed for court proceedings.

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You may work with a great contractor and don't think all of these steps are necessary. Unfortunately, when faced with legal action, it doesn't matter how nice a person is. It only matters what the paperwork says.

The Use of Consultants on Major Projects

By: Wayne Klem
Executive Director of Property Management - Toronto

At some point in its life, every condominium will either contemplate or will have completed a major project or two through its Operating Budget surplus, or the Reserve Fund through a study by the Corporation's engineer, which has been submitted and approved by the Board of Directors.

These major projects could be corridor renovations, common element facility refurbishments, landscape revitalization efforts, exterior caulking and/or brick work, window replacement, roof replacement, chiller and cooling tower replacement, boiler and domestic hot water boiler replacement, along with major garage refurbishments. These projects will, on average, cost in excess of \$50,000.00.

Under the Occupational Health and Safety Act, any project of \$50,000.00 or greater is required to have a NOP (Notice of Project) registered with the Ministry of Labour. The NOP stipulates who the general contractor of the project will be and who should act as the responsible party to ensure that all health and safety regulations under the Occupational Health and Safety Act are being followed on the job site.

Typically, Boards of Directors look to management to oversee and direct such major projects. If management assumes this role we are then classified as the general contractor in the eyes of the Ministry of Labour. It is clear that management does not have the required skills or capacity to take on the role as a general contractor and the responsibilities that this comes with.

Management, on behalf of the condominium, would oversee a project in conjunction with the consultant and/ or engineer

to ensure the project is: on schedule, that the site is kept clean after the day's work, that the area is properly secured, that all progress payments are processed as approved by the consultant and/or engineer for Board approval, and would attend all site meetings and secure all approval from the Board for any change orders required to be implemented by the engineer and/or consultant.

Management strongly recommends that Boards of Directors consider the use of consultants and/or an engineering firm to be involved in any major project from start to finish, as they can greatly reduce the risk and maximize the value of a project. Of course, there is a cost involved to appoint a consultant whether it be an engineer, interior designer or landscape planner; however, the money invested in these professionals to guide both the Board and Management in overseeing a major project is worth the peace of mind in knowing that the Corporation's best interest is being served.

The cost of a consultant can be charged against the Reserve Fund account as long as the project is part of the Reserve Fund Study. Consultants provide a variety of consulting services depending on the type of project being considered. Management, on the Board's behalf, should provide three quotes from consultants who are familiar with the type of project being considered and have each outline their services and fee structure. These services would include but are not limited to: a condition survey, developing the scope of work, specifications for the project, tendering the work, receiving closed tenders on behalf of the corporation, and analyzing the quotes to provide the Board with a summary of the quotes received and a recommendation as to whom the Board should consider for the project. Once a contractor has been approved, the consultant will present to the board a CCDC contract form outlining the contractual requirements between both parties for the Corporation's lawyer to review. Finally the consultant will manage the project and see it through to its completion including periodic site visits, approving progress billings, conducting site meetings and submitting to the Board and management any change orders required for approval outside the scope of work and specifications.

The bottom line, to protect the Board and management, is to select the right consultant for the task at hand and to utilize professionals who are familiar with the industry.

Keeping Window Sills Dry

By: Jill Mark, RCM
Property Manager - Toronto

Condensation in the winter and humidity in the summer damages window sills and is costly for condominiums to repair.

Windows that can be opened should be left open for up to 20 minutes daily to allow air circulation. Window coverings such as blinds and curtains should also be opened frequently.

Any moisture around the window sill should be wiped up. Do not crowd the window with multiple plants as they increase humidity.



Welcome!

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

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