

TORONTO CONDO GROUP SAYS PLANNING, EDUCATION, INDUSTRY/GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES, KEY TO DEALING WITH GLASS TOWER ISSUE

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For Immediate Release

The Toronto and Area Chapter of the Canadian Condominium Institute (CCI-T) said today it believes planning by condominium boards, education, and current industry and government initiatives are the best way to deal with the concerns being identified over glass-clad condominium high rises.

Some building industry experts have voiced concerns about the energy efficiency, durability and leakage resistance of many of the glass-clad condominium towers and the anticipated failure rate of this type of building envelope for those towers which have been built in recent years. They maintain that these buildings are inherently less energy efficient than traditional construction methodologies given the significantly lower thermal resistance of glass and metal to traditional insulation methods. Additionally as the sealed units and joints fail, the condominium corporations must initiate remediation or replacement of the buildings' window-walls in a proactive manner. Remediation or replacement costs can be a substantial expense for the corporation – a cost that, once again, is borne by the owners in the form of high maintenance fees and/or special assessments.

“Special assessments can be imposed by the condominium’s board of directors to meet unforeseen repair or replacement costs”, said Lynn Morrovat, CCI-T’s Operations Manager. “They typically must be paid in relatively short order, which can be a burden for owners.”

Bill Thompson, CCI-T President and President of condominium management firm Malvern Condominium Property Management said “As with all construction types, the boards governing condominium corporations with glass-clad towers need to begin planning today to determine the scope of the concern in individual buildings and the best ways to address any issues they identify. They should determine whether a serious concern exists, look at the most cost-efficient method for making repairs, the timing of the work, and the most reasonable method of paying for it.” He noted that a properly prepared reserve fund study, as mandated under the *Condominium Act*, should anticipate the types of repair and renewal that will be needed over the service life of a window wall system. “This will enable condominium corporations to determine the appropriate annual contribution to the reserve fund, so funds are available to complete the necessary work”, he said. This should avoid the need for a special assessment.

“Financial issues such as special assessments and reserve fund management are part of CCI-T’s level 200 and 300 courses, and we also offer books on condominium reserve funding through our website”, said Morrovat. “These resources provide good information for condominium boards and individual owners as they look to address this issue.”

Thompson agrees, adding “One of the really useful things about the resources we provide is that they focus on sound and time-tested principles of financial management, so they don’t need to be modified for this issue – people just need to apply them to the situation in which they find themselves. Our instructors can certainly draw attention to this particular application.”

Thompson also cites the emergence and adoption of LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) technologies, upcoming revisions to the Ontario Building Code (OBC) and heightened awareness by developers as factors that will minimize any issues going forward. “Developers have already been implementing LEED standards in some new buildings, and as they face new energy performance requirements in the 2012 version of the OBC, new buildings will see improvements in building energy performance.”

Sally Thompson, a CCI-T director and Practice Leader at Halsall Associates, noted that the Tarion Warranty Corporation, which provides new home warranties in Ontario, has expanded the requirements under its Builder Bulletin 19R to deal with the durability and leakage concerns related to window walls. “Bulletin 19R provides that newly-constructed buildings’ window walls must comply with the OAA and Pro-Demnity requirements which means they must be designed by a building science specialist, must be compliant with the Canadian Standards Association’s standard A440 and must be a ‘rain screen’ system”. She expects this will improve the durability of such systems in all buildings designed after January 2010, the implementation date of the requirement.

Brian Shedden, BSSO, Director of Operations, GRG Building Consultants and a Director of CCI-T noted that “the window walls used in many of the towers should not be confused with the sophisticated curtainwall systems employed on many commercial towers. They look similar, but their design and service life is dramatically different.”

CCI-T supports any initiative which will encourage better education in the industry especially by new purchasers. This includes the potential development of an energy rating system for condominiums similar to that applied to consumer appliances and electronics. Such a system has been included in the Ontario *Green Energy Act*, but has not yet been implemented.

The Canadian Condominium Institute (CCI) was formed in 1982 and has chapters across Canada, including a very active Toronto Chapter. CCI focuses on condominium issues for the benefit of condominium corporations, residents, professionals and trade service suppliers. The goal of CCI is to promote a strong condominium community through education and information dissemination, and communication with all levels of government with a view to continuously improving condominium communities.

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