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The Last Word

Condos and COVID: Safety Should be Everyone's Top Priority

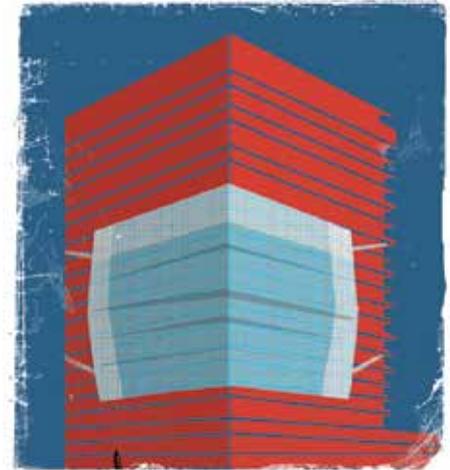
The last seven months have seen many changes in the world. The coronavirus (COVID-19) has caused many of us to live by decisions that are set by various governing bodies. However, for those who live in condominiums, this has been part of their lives since they became owners.

The Condominium Act (the "Act") sets governance of condominiums in Ontario. Although the Act is the overall governing statute, every condominium in Ontario is also governed by its declaration, by-laws and rules. Condominiums give us a perfect example of how people should live together and, in my mind, provide a perfect example of how people can work together in these trying times. Corporations are similar to governments: you have your laws set out by the Act, the Corporation's declaration, by-laws and rules. You have your elected officials who are the Board of Directors, elected by the constituents who are the owners. Let's not forget the Property Managers, who, in my mind, are the "front-line workers". They are faced with the daunting task of implementing and enforcing the rules, policies, and procedures established by the Boards. The virus has caused all of us to adapt and accept changes that are out of our norm and at this point, many of us are uncertain when or if we will ever see life as it was before COVID-19.

Boards have had to make decisions that affect how owners live. There have been restrictions on getting access to amenities, living for long periods in a confined space, social distancing and wearing masks, working from home for an extended period of time, and trusting neighbours who you may not really know if they are also abiding by the new policies and procedures established by the boards. Rules have been established to protect owners and even limiting gatherings in common areas. All of this has, to some extent, affected people's mental health in one way or another. We are currently heading into the second wave of the virus and some of us may think there is no end in sight. The government has just announced more stringent guidelines that we will all have to live with. Although many are getting tired of all of the rules and restrictions, it is in everyone's best interest to accept what is being put in place to protect everyone's health and safety.

At this point, based on the guidelines established by the provincial and municipal governments, condominiums should have implemented a plan to deal with COVID-19. The plan is meant to protect your health and avoid further spread of the virus.

Communication is vital during these times. Use technology to its fullest. Restrictions in place may limit your ability to communi-



cate the way we used to. Property Managers are less accessible either because they are working behind closed doors or offsite. Where you used to be able to talk to them face to face, now you can only contact them by phone or email. Corporations have created webpages or newsletters to keep owners informed. Communication with vendors has also gone virtual. Corporations have been able to hold board meetings and annual meetings virtually. I have found that everyone has tried, to the best of their ability, to work within the restrictions in place due to COVID-19.

Safety should be everyone's top priority. New measures like the closing of amenities, gathering restrictions, and increased cleaning measures have all been established to protect our well-being. You should accept the limitations that are in place to only undertake emergency repairs since it has been proven that limiting interaction helps reduce your chance of exposure to the virus.

Be aware that everyone has been affected by this differently, both physically and emotionally. Physical restrictions have affected us all. The coming months are going to be trying for everyone. The bottom line is: if we all work together, it will make it easier to get through and strive through these unprecedented times. **CV**

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