



BULLETIN

News and resources for BC strata owners, councils, and industry professionals



AUGUST 2024

Vancouver Island Strata Owners Association

VISOA Bulletin

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The Bulletin is a digital magazine published by the Vancouver Island Strata Owners Association (VISOA) four times per year.

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VISOA is an independent, non-profit, member-funded society. Formed in 1973, it is the longest-running organization of its kind in Canada. VISOA provides education, support, and advocacy for British Columbia strata owners and strata corporations. As part of its mandate, VISOA meets with government and industry associations, and sits on advisory panels to advocate for BC strata owners and strata corporations.

Membership is open to any resident of BC, strata corporations (such as condominiums, townhouses, bare land, and commercial stratas) and businesses that provide goods and services to stratas. Visit our website or contact us for more information about membership.

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General inquiries: information@visoa.bc.ca

Membership inquiries: membership@visoa.bc.ca

Letters to the editor: editor@visoa.bc.ca

Advertising inquiries: businessmembers@visoa.bc.ca

Office: 250-920-0688

Toll-free 1-855-388-4762

Vancouver Island Strata Owners Association
602-620 View St
Victoria BC V8W 1J6

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In This Issue

5 Editor's Message

6 Photo Contest

21 Introducing New Business Members

24 Business Directory

28 You Asked

33 President's Message - BC Election 2024

Featured

3 Introducing VISOA's New Website

7 Dealing with Hoarders in Stratas

10 Water-wise Lawns

15 How to Register for a CRA Business Number

18 Do Stratas Need an Electrical Operating Permit?

29 Infographic: Can I use my strata lot for short-term rental accommodations?

30 Cyber Security for Strata Councils

On the cover: "Breakwater" is a complex of 16 townhomes in 4 buildings located on the Armstrong promontory in the outskirts of Sidney by the Sea with views of Mount Baker. Overlooking the entrance to Tsehum Harbour, we are frequently visited by passing by orcas, humpback whales, and a constant parade of yachts.
- Tony Thompson, VIS60.

Disclaimer: The material in this publication is intended for informational purposes and cannot replace consultation with qualified professionals. Legal advice or other expert assistance should be sought as appropriate.

■ Introducing VISOA's New Website

The internet is a wonderful thing. Fast, convenient and open 24/7. You can find the “best” Greek salad recipe in less than a minute, satisfy your movie trivia needs, and shop for just about anything at any time of day.

But despite the incredible sophistication of search engines, searching for information about strata living can potentially lead you astray. A search for how to approve major repairs could take you to an article by a lawyer in Ontario, a blogger in Australia, or a news article in Singapore. Without realizing it, you could be relying on information that is relevant to another jurisdiction, not the laws in British Columbia. In short, it may do more harm than good.

What are strata owners searching for?

We asked ourselves what topics are strata owners in BC actually searching for? What we found was that over 80% of Google searches about strata living are about the fundamentals. What is a strata corporation? What are council members' duties? What's the voting threshold for passing a budget? What's a Form B and where can I find it? Who is responsible for repairs of this or that?

What's the difference between a bylaw and a rule? What is a special levy? What's a bare land strata? What are common property and limited common property? What's in a depreciation report? The list goes on.

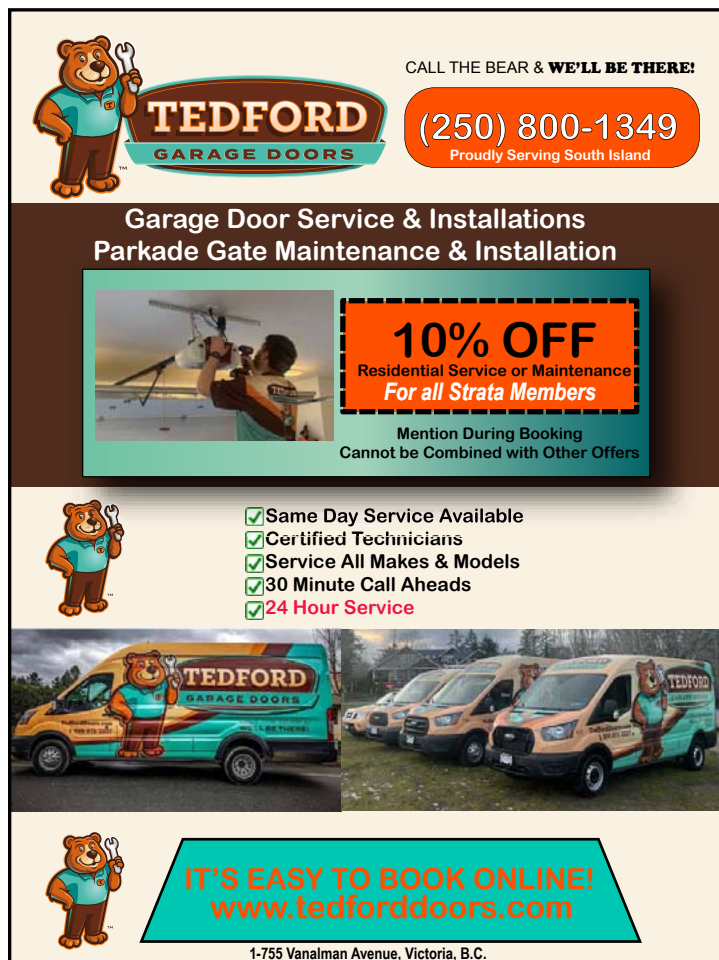
VISOA's new website

Two years ago, VISOA embarked on a project to build a new website to:

- Make it easy to find information that strata owners are looking for
- Allow members to create and log in to their profile to access resources and services
- Make it easier to purchase and renew memberships
- Allow members to maintain their contact information
- Streamline VISOA's administrative processes
- Modernize systems to support a growing number of members

Here's an overview of the new website. Check it out at visoa.bc.ca

continued on page 4



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The Resource Centre (knowledge base)

The new website has a knowledge base called the [Resource Centre](#). Here any visitor can search a keyword or phrase and find answers to frequently asked questions. It's filled with articles based on priority - the topics that people are searching for the most. Over time, the Resource Centre's analytics will tell us what visitors are searching for and we'll add articles to meet those needs.

Member resources

Each VISOA corporate, individual, and associate member has an account (profile) on the website so that you have easy access to the information and tools you need 24/7. Visit the resource centre to learn [How to use your VISOA account](#), including how to create a profile, log in, reset your password, and what services and tools you can access when logged in.

We created an additional library of resources just for our members. Log in to your profile to access member-only resources such as a letter template to send a notice of complaint, an Excel worksheet to calculate each owner's portion of a special levy, a template to create a privacy

policy, a workbook for planning EV charging, slides from our seminars and webinars, reference documents, and more. There are already over 50 resources available for our members and we'll continue to grow this library over time. Some resources are available to our corporate members only.

Ask the Strata Support Team

If a question isn't covered in the resource centre, members can contact our Strata Support Team. Just [log in to your profile](#). The new Ask the Strata Support Team form is quick and easy to submit.

Publications

Under [Publications](#) you'll find issues of VISOA's Bulletin magazine from 2006 to the present. You'll also find publications for sale such as New to Council, Best Practices for Strata Treasurers, and our easy accounting program called STRATACCOUNT.

Latest News and more

On the [home page](#), you'll see latest news, as well as links to learn about VISOA, events, volunteering, membership,

continued on page 5



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and more. You can also subscribe to VISOA's free e-newsletter.

Business Directory

Check out the new [Business Directory](#). You can search by business name, keyword, service, or pick one of over 40 categories to find businesses that offer services such as depreciation reports, document storage, heat pumps, insurance, garage doors, legal services, roof cleaning, and more.

Our business members can log in to their accounts to keep their business and contact information up to date.

Thank you

Thank you to our members for your support and patience throughout this project. We'd also like to thank [Caorda](#) for bringing our vision of the website to life. We hope you all enjoy the new website and your member benefits. Feel free to send feedback and suggestions by using the new [Contact us form](#).

■ Editor's Message

Thank you to everyone who contributed to this issue. We're especially grateful for the article by Alyona Kokanova about hoarding in stratas. Our Strata Support Team often receives questions about how to deal with these situations.

With the BC Election taking place in October, we encourage you to [complete our survey](#) to share your top suggestions and concerns related to strata owners and corporations. Read the [President's Message](#) on page 33 for more information and be sure to complete the survey by September 9. VISOA will send the top questions to the parties after the campaigns begin on September 21.

Please visit our new website at visoa.bc.ca. In the Bulletins section, you'll find issues all the way back to 2006.

Contact us to suggest a topic for the next issue or to enter our photo contest! We also welcome submissions from readers and subject matter experts. Send an email to editor@visoa.bc.ca or use the [contact us](#) form on the website.

VISOA Bulletin and Suite of Services committees are Wendy Wall, Susan Ferster, André De Leebeeck, and John Grubb with special thanks to volunteer Janice Foley, and Advertising Coordinator Cindy Young.

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2024 Cover Photo Contest

Submit your photo of a BC strata to editor@visoa.bc.ca. Photos selected for the cover of Bulletin issues in 2024 will be entered into a draw on December 1, 2024.

First prize: a one-year VISOA corporate membership for all owners in your strata.

Second prize: \$50 to the submitter.



■ Dealing with Hoarders in Stratas

by Alyona Kokanova

A reality of strata living is that you live in close quarters with your neighbours. This can be problematic when your neighbour's conduct negatively affects other residents such as when a resident hoards inside their strata lot.

What is hoarding?

Hoarding may involve collecting and keeping an overflow of furniture, boxes, garbage, food, and clothing that is crammed into a strata lot in a manner that blocks entrance ways and creates unsanitary and unlivable conditions. Although a hoarding situation may initially only affect the individual who hoards, it can and often does turn into a greater issue for adjacent residents and the strata corporation as a whole.

A strata council is typically made aware of a hoarding situation when neighbouring residents send in complaints about unpleasant odours from a particular strata lot and pests that are infesting their homes and the common areas such as flies, cockroaches, and rats.

Below are some suggestions for councils to deal with complaints and enforce the bylaws.

Investigate complaints

The first step the strata council should take is to promptly investigate the complaints, before the hoarding issue gets any worse. Complaints should provide sufficient detail, including which strata lot has allegedly breached the bylaws and may also mention which bylaw(s) have allegedly been breached.

The complaints might be based on "Use of Property" bylaws. Most strata corporations have a bylaw similar to Standard Bylaw 3(1) of the *Strata Property Act* (SPA), the relevant portions of which may read as follows:

- 3 (1) An owner, tenant, occupant or visitor must not use a strata lot, the common property or common assets in a way that
- (a) causes a nuisance or hazard to another person,
 - (b) causes unreasonable noise,
 - (c) unreasonably interferes with the rights of other persons to use and enjoy the common property, common assets or another strata lot,
 - (d) is illegal, or
 - (e) is contrary to a purpose for which the strata lot or common property is intended as shown expressly or by necessary implication on or by the strata plan.

In *The Owners, Strata Plan LMS 1162 v Triple P Enterprises Ltd.*, 2018 BCSC 1502, the court defined a nuisance as follows:

[33] Accordingly, to establish the tort of nuisance, a plaintiff must prove a substantial, non-trivial interference with its use and enjoyment of its property and that the interference is unreasonable. Although the focus is primarily on the effect on the plaintiff, the conflicting interests have to be weighed and all relevant circumstances considered in assessing whether the interference, even if non-trivial, is unreasonable. In my view, the use of the word "nuisance" in bylaw 2.12, imports the notion that the conduct complained of must unreasonably interfere in this sense.

An owner's complaint may fall under bylaw 3(1)(a), which refers to nuisance, if the hoarding results in an unpleasant odour that emanates from the subject strata lot and transfers into the common property areas or the neighbouring strata lots. This may also prompt a breach of bylaw 3(1)(c), as odours would likely unreasonably

continued on page 8



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Dealing with Hoarders in Stratas

interfere with the rights of other residents' use and enjoyment of the common property and their own strata lots.

To investigate the complaint and gather information, the strata council may need to confirm the state of the strata lot. If the strata corporation has passed a bylaw that requires an owner, tenant, occupant, or visitor to allow a person authorized by the strata corporation to enter a strata lot for the purposes of inspecting it for bylaw contraventions, this bylaw may be relied on to verify the allegation against the subject strata lot. For strata corporations that have not passed such a bylaw, [Standard Bylaw 7](#) may be relied on to require an owner, tenant, occupant, or visitor to allow a person authorized by the strata corporation to enter a strata lot in an emergency or on 48 hours' written notice to inspect, repair, or maintain common property, common assets, and any portions of a strata lot that are the responsibility of the strata corporation to repair and maintain. The notice must include the date and approximate time of entry, and the reason for entry.

If the resident does not permit the strata council to enter, the strata council should seek legal advice to confirm whether or not it can lawfully enter the strata lot without receiving the resident's approval beforehand. This may be done by bringing a claim in the [Civil Resolution Tribunal \(CRT\)](#) to seek an order that the owner grant the strata council access. In certain situations, such as when the hoarding issue is deemed a serious health and safety concern, the strata council may have the option of hiring a locksmith to enter the strata lot. However, the strata council would first need to make two or more attempts to access the strata lot in compliance with Standard Bylaw 7, and the owner would need to have denied all requests. The strata council's authority to hire a locksmith and to recover this expense may be granted to it by the strata corporation's bylaws or by SPA s. 133 which states:

133 (1) The strata corporation may do what is reasonably necessary to remedy a contravention of its bylaws or rules, including

- (a) doing work on or to a strata lot, the common property or common assets, and,
- (b) removing objects from the common property or common assets.

(2) The strata corporation may require that the reasonable costs of remedying the contravention be paid by the person who may be fined for the contravention under section 130.

The strata council should consult with its legal counsel prior to entering a strata lot to ensure the entry is lawful.

Determine if there is a breach of the bylaws

After the strata council investigates the complaint and determines that the complaint is reasonable, it must follow the steps outlined in SPA s.135. This includes, giving the owner or tenant the particulars of the complaint in writing, and a reasonable opportunity to answer the complaint, including a hearing if requested by the owner or tenant.

At a future council meeting the strata council must review the complaint, the response (if any), and any information or evidence gathered and determine if the bylaw(s) has been breached. One of the ways the strata council may enforce its bylaws is by fining the owner or tenant. The strata council must strictly comply with s.135, otherwise the fines may not be recoverable.

Typically, a strata's bylaws will include a "continuing contravention" bylaw, which may allow it to impose a fine every 7 days until the contravention is remedied.

Remediate

If the responsible owner fails or refuses to address a pest issue within their strata lot (after being given an opportunity to do so by the strata council), the strata council may hire a pest control contractor and rely on SPA s. 133 to undertake the remediation work and recover the expense from the responsible owner.

A public or local authority such as a health authority or fire department may issue a work order against the strata lot to require certain work. Under [SPA s. 85](#), if an owner fails to do the required work, the strata corporation may complete this work itself. The strata council must notify the owner in writing of its intention to do the work at least one week before starting same. The owner must reimburse the strata corporation for any money the strata corporation spends doing work on or to the strata lot under this section. A lien may also be filed against the strata lot to recover the costs owed by the owner.

Although an owner must allow a person authorized by the strata corporation to treat their strata lot for pests (if the owner fails to adequately treat the strata lot themselves), the strata council's authority does not extend to removing or disposing of the contents within the strata lot. In [The Owners, Strata Plan NW 2209 v. Stuart, 2021 BCCRT 1168](#), the strata corporation hired contractors to remove and dispose of contents from within a strata lot where hoarding occurred, including its refuse and garbage. The strata corporation attempted to rely on SPA s. 133 and on its bylaws to recover the costs of the removal and disposal from the strata lot's owner. However, the CRT ruled that s. 133 confines the strata corporation's

continued on page 9

Dealing with Hoarders in Stratas

authority to only removing objects from common property, and does not provide the strata corporation with authority to remove objects from within a strata lot.

Be mindful of the Human Rights Code

Strata corporations must deal with hoarding situations carefully. Often hoarding situations are linked to a resident's mental health issues. This means fines may not be effective in achieving the results the strata council is seeking. The strata council must remain mindful of its duties under the *Human Rights Code*, which requires the strata corporation to accommodate an owner or tenant with a mental disability to the point of undue hardship. See *Herbert Stengert obo others v. Strata Plan BCS2427, 2018 BCHRT 70*. Undue hardship is a high threshold to meet, which means that neighbouring residents may need to tolerate intermittent periods of odours escaping from the strata lot and the occasional pest outbreak. In the case of hoarding, undue hardship may be satisfied in instances where the strata lot is deemed an ongoing safety hazard by local authorities and no effort has been made on the resident's behalf to reduce the safety risk.

Ensure compliance with PIPA

If the hoarding situation is believed to be affecting the health or safety of the subject owner or any other individual residing in the strata corporation, it may be suitable for the strata council to contact the individual's family or emergency contact(s) (if the individual provided this contact information to the strata corporation)

to assist the individual with remedying the hoarding situation. If contacting the individual's family or emergency contact(s) is not an option, the strata council may consider contacting the Public Guardian and Trustee's Office, fire services, and health authorities.


However, prior to contacting any third party, the strata council must ensure the strata corporation complies with the *Personal Information Protection Act* ("PIPA"), and does not divulge personal information without having the necessary authority to do so. PIPA s. 18 provides certain exceptions to when a strata corporation may disclose personal information about an individual without their consent, such as when there are reasonable grounds to believe that compelling circumstances exist that affect the health or safety of the individual.

Make a claim with the Civil Resolution Tribunal

If fines are ineffective, a strata corporation may choose to pursue a claim against the owner or tenant through the CRT seeking an order that would mandate the strata lot owner or tenant to cure their ongoing contravention of the bylaws. In *The Owners, Strata Plan LMS 2885 v. Faith, 2021 BCCRT 1096*, the CRT made several orders that required the owner to allow the strata council and a fire safety expert to access the strata lot to further investigate the owner's hoarding and mandating the owner to take any actions recommended by the expert to remedy the fire hazards and/or pest infestations.

It is prudent that the strata council seeks legal advice before commencing a CRT claim to ensure the resolutions sought are properly worded.

Proceed to the Supreme Court of British Columbia

Once the CRT order is filed with the Supreme Court of British Columbia (BCSC) it has the same force and effect as if it were a court order ("order"). If the resident breaches the order (i.e. the owner fails to grant the strata council and/or its fire safety and pest infestation experts with access to the strata lot, or fails to clear out the contents of the strata lot to the extent specified under the order), then the strata corporation can bring a BCSC contempt proceeding against the owner for breaching the order. Contempt proceedings carry significant penalties for those who breach orders. Seeking legal advice prior to pursuing this option is advisable. 



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This article is intended for information purposes only and should not be taken as the provision of legal advice. Alyona Kokanova is a lawyer whose practice focuses on strata property law. She is a lawyer with the law firm of [Cleveland Doan LLP](http://ClevelandDoanLLP.com) and can be reached at (604) 536-5002 or alyona@clevelanddoan.com.

Water-wise Lawns

by Wendy Wall

Many strata properties in BC are large with sprawling lawns. While that landscaping choice was desirable at one time, we now live with the reality of severe drought throughout most of the province. Is it time to rethink our green spaces and find alternatives to water-guzzling, chemical-hungry, high-maintenance lawns?

Outdoor water use

Residential use accounts for 66% of water use in the Capital Regional District (CRD). In summer months, water use in the region increases by 44%, mostly due to non-essential outdoor uses like lawn watering. Up to 50% of home irrigation is wasted due to evaporation, runoff, overwatering and leaks as well as improper system design, installation and maintenance!

Most districts in BC have water conservation bylaws that limit watering of lawns by specifying frequency, time of day, and days of the week. Check your district's website for details.

Going brown

Some property owners in BC have embraced water

conservation through measures such as letting lawns go brown in summer – the natural life cycle for grasses. However, this can be a challenge for strata properties. Many irrigation systems are divided into zones that include lawns, gardens, shrubs, and trees in each zone. To cease watering lawns would essentially mean not using the irrigation system at all. Hand watering gardens, shrubs, and trees on large properties would require a large, well-coordinated group of volunteers for months on end. It simply isn't practical.

How much lawn do you need?

It might be time to start a conversation! Do your residents use all areas of the lawn? How do they use it? If there are areas that are not used for socializing, play, or pets, then the question becomes does it need to be grass? Could some areas be converted to ground covers, native species, and drought-tolerant plants?

Drought-tolerant alternatives to traditional lawns

In July, Sigrie Kendrick, executive-director of the non-profit Okanagan Xeriscape Association wrote that she was elated to see that 4 of the 9 properties on the

continued on page 12

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Water-wise Lawns

[Kelowna FlowerPower garden tour](#) had no grass in their front yards. One had an enormous patch of flowering thyme. It's not native to BC, but it is water-wise.

Some property owners have overseeded or completely replaced their lawn using White Dutch clover (*Trifolium repens*) or the smaller variety microclover (*Trifolium repens* var. *Pipolina*). Clover requires less water, less fertilizer, and less mowing than conventional turf lawns. However, these species are not native to BC. While not officially labelled invasive, they are vigorous growers and may outcompete other plants and spread to neighbouring properties. If this is an option your strata is interested in, you may want to give it a try in a small area first.

Also keep pollinators in mind. According to the Horticulture Centre of the Pacific, there are about 450 bee species native to BC. Wild bees are picky eaters feeding on different vegetation, so swapping one monoculture for another isn't as beneficial as other options.

Choosing native plants and seed blends

Kristen Miskelly of [Satinflower Nurseries](#) in Victoria encourages property owners to think outside the box. Resist the urge to seek plants that have the lawn-like characteristics you're accustomed to. Thinking of "landscape" not "lawn" opens up a world of possibilities for non-invasive, native plants which can provide interest, texture, and colourful foliage and flowers over the seasons. Replacing some of your lawn with native plants can reduce water and maintenance costs. They also support biodiversity and healthy ecosystems. Because native plants have evolved in this climate for generations, they support songbirds and attract a diversity of pollinators.

Kristen recommends the following native species that are relatively trampling-tolerant. Many are fairly short, popping up in height when they flower. They require little or no watering and just one mowing in the fall.

- [Yarrow](#) (*Achillea millefolium*)
- [California Oatgrass](#) (*Danthonia californica*)
- [Field Chickweed](#) (*Cerastium arvense*)
- [Self-heal](#) (*Prunella vulgaris* ssp. *lanceolata*)
- [Wild Strawberry](#) (*Fragaria virginiana*)
- [Long-stoloned Sedge](#) (*Carex inops* ssp. *inops*)
- [Western Rush](#) (*Juncus occidentalis*)
- [Designed seed blends](#)

For the best success, work with a professional to develop a seed blend for the type of soil and amount of sunlight

continued on page 13

Woolly Sunflower



Field Chickweed



Self-heal





Water-wise Lawns

in the desired location of your property. Consideration should be given to the ecological behaviour of the various species and germination rates, as well as site preparation and seeding techniques. Consultation with an expert is often necessary when choosing and designing an appropriate seed blend.

Satinflower Nurseries has numerous guides on their website including [Sowing Your Seed](#) and [Preparing a New Meadow for Native Plants](#). Check out their [Meadow Makers Program](#) for step-by-step guidance to convert lawn to native meadow, or contact them for a consultation.

An inspiring strata

In the Okanagan, watering household lawns and gardens accounts for approximately 24% of water use. A story about [The Meadows](#), a 57-unit townhouse strata in Kelowna caught our eye.



We contacted Helen Raham, the strata's program coordinator, who explained their multi-year plan to reduce water use, adapt to drought, and reduce maintenance costs. The strata recently completed a 9-year project to remove over 2,000 feet of cedar hedge - a very "thirsty" species. Junipers, which require less trimming and are deer and drought-resistant, have been planted where needed.

To guide upgrades and replacements to garden beds throughout the complex, strata owners approved a list of plants which need little water, require less maintenance, and are less vulnerable to deer. Recently the strata passed a resolution to approve a "Xeriscape Action Plan": a 3-year plan to convert certain areas of impractical lawn to "no-mow" zones using groundcovers and hardscaping.



The irrigation system at The Meadows has about 25 zones covering the 6-acre property. An audit by [Kelowna's Water Smart program](#) in 2022 identified numerous efficiencies that could be achieved, starting with observing where water is being wasted during irrigation cycles. As the system runs at night when most residents are asleep, a dedicated team of volunteers does monthly daylight checks to monitor and report broken heads, pooling, overspray, or other issues. After over 60 leaks and oversprays were identified and fixed, water consumption reduced by over 2,000 gallons each watering day. Helen also explained the rain sensors and smart controller app they use to monitor the system, turn zones on or off, and input data to improve its effectiveness.

A major project is underway to change irrigation of garden beds to drip irrigation which supplies water to the

continued on page 14

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Water-wise Lawns

root area of the plants where it is needed as opposed to spraying it in the air where so much is lost to evaporation. Helen explains that switching from spray heads to drip lines is more complicated than one might think with pressurization and other factors, but their volunteers are dedicated and are receiving specialized training. New plantings will also reduce the amount of irrigation needed. Not only does this result in cost savings, but it resolves an issue with boggy areas and water accumulating in crawlspaces.

When [watering in extreme heat](#), Sigrie Kendrick of the Okanagan Xeriscape Association wrote, “at least plan on designing your landscape so that you group plants with similar needs together. Doing so will conserve water and lead to healthier plants as they will be less likely to be under or over-watered.”

Lawn watering tips

The CRD says that 70-80% of all plant problems are related to incorrect watering. Frequent watering of your lawn creates shallow roots which are ill-equipped to deal with drought and increases susceptibility to disease and weeds. Longer, infrequent watering will help to develop deeper, healthier roots. The CRD suggest watering up to one inch per week including rain.

Shane Stipic of [Green Tech Property Care Ltd.](#) in Nanaimo says to implement a watering schedule that “trains your lawn”. Early morning watering reduces loss to wind and evaporation, and allows water to soak in before sunlight heats the soil.

Watering early in the morning also allows any water on the foliage to dry, limiting the risk of powdery mildew and other fungal diseases. See the CRD’s [Water Wise Lawn Care](#) information sheet for more tips.

Watering in the CRD

Did you know that a large number of properties have programmed their irrigation systems to start at 4 am, 5 am, and 6 am? This sudden and high demand puts excessive pressure on the water supply infrastructure. The CRD is asking property owners with timed systems to stagger irrigation system start times away from the top of the hour. Pick a random time like 1:41 am, 2:23 am, 3:12 am.

See the CRD’s information sheet [Reducing Morning Water Demand](#), the [Homeowners Guide to Outdoor Water Use](#), and the [BC Landscape Water Calculator](#). 

Thank you! This article was made possible through interviews with Kristen Miskelly, Satinflower Nurseries; CRD Water Conservation Program staff; Helen Raham, The Meadows; and Shane Stipic, Green Tech Property Care Ltd.

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How to Register a Strata for a CRA Business Number

by Susan Ferster

Strata corporations need a Business Number (BN) from the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) to file their annual tax return and make payroll deductions if the strata corporation has employees. A BN is usually requested by financial institutions when the strata corporation opens a new bank account.

Paragraph 150 of the *Income Tax Act* requires all corporations, including strata corporations, to file a T2 income tax return each year, even if they may be exempt from paying tax. Non-residential and mixed-use stratas, and stratas that operate commercial businesses should consult a tax professional to determine the strata corporation's tax obligations.

How does a strata corporation get a BN?

If your strata corporation doesn't have a BN yet, use the CRA pdf form [Request for a Business Number and Certain Program Accounts \(form RC-1 E \(23\)\)](#). Don't use the Business Registration Online method as it does not have fields for strata corporations!

The RC-1 E (23) form is 14 pages long. However, if your

strata doesn't need "program accounts" such as payroll deductions, you will only need to fill out 6 areas.

1. On page 1 under "Register for a business number", tick the box for "I want to register for a BN - Part A". Skip the "Register for program accounts" section and go to Part A1 "Ownership type".

- "Indicate your ownership type": tick the box for "Other" and fill in "strata corporation".
- "Are you incorporated": tick "No"
- "Tick the box that best describes your type of operation": tick "Strata condo corporation"

2. Go to Part A3 "Business Information". Enter the strata's legal name, physical address (civil address), mailing address (the strata's legal mailing address is on file at the Land Title Office – make sure it's kept up-to-date), and language of correspondence (English or French).

What is the strata's legal name? Under section 2 of the *Strata Property Act*, a strata corporation's legal name is:

continued on page 16

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How to Register for a CRA Business Number

“The Owners, Strata Plan [the registration number of the strata plan]”. The registration number may include 1-3 letters or no letters at all. For example: The Owners, Strata Plan 248; The Owners, Strata Plan K492; The Owners, Strata Plan LMS215; The Owners, Strata Plan EPS2755; The Owners, Strata Plan VIS2221.

3. Skip to page 10. In Part D1 “Corporation program account identification”, the first line says “If the information is the same as in Part A3, tick this box”. Tick this box and leave the rest of the fields in D1 blank.


4. Go to Part D4 “Documentation for condominium corporations registrations”. For the question “Are you a condominium corporation?” tick the “yes” box.

5. You must provide a copy of the following documents:

- The most recent Board of Management meeting minutes that includes the names of the board members (for strata corporations, this means the most recent council meeting minutes that includes the names of the council members)
- The most recent Property Management Agreement that is in place (if your strata is self-managed attach a letter stating your strata is managed by the strata council and has not hired or contracted a strata or property management company)
- The land title (for strata corporations it’s unclear whether this means the common property search record or a copy of the strata plan. You could include both.) See [3 Free Tools for Strata Property Information](#) to learn how to order documents from the Land Title Office using myLTSA Explorer.

6. Complete Part G “Certification”. Generally, the person completing this form will be a council member. If so, tick the box for “a representative”. Fill in your name, title and a phone number then sign and date the form. It appears that you do not have to provide a social insurance number as a council member is a representative, not an “owner, partner, or corporate director”.

If your strata has employees or operates a commercial business such as a golf course, the strata will need to register for “program accounts”. Fill out the sections of the form for the program accounts needed. You may want to consult a tax professional.

Once completed, mail or fax it to your nearest tax services office or tax centre. To find the appropriate office or centre, go to [Find a CRA address](#). 

Disclaimer: The information in this article is based on information from the Canada Revenue Agency website and the RC1 E (23) form as of August 2024. Contact CRA or a tax professional to confirm these instructions or for more information.



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■ Do Stratas Need an Electrical Operating Permit?

by Lee MacFarlane

If you don't know what an electrical operating permit is and what it's for, you are not alone. These permits promote electrical safety and provide a framework to ensure electrical equipment is checked regularly and maintained properly. Electrical equipment deteriorates over time and needs to be maintained or replaced. If your strata maintains electrical systems, this may reduce the risk of costly equipment failures and increase safety. Preventative maintenance saves time, money, and provides peace of mind.

Which stratas need a permit?

The majority of strata corporations in BC are duplexes or very small residential buildings. Most of these don't need an electrical operating permit. However, most commercial stratas, condominium buildings, and some townhouse stratas need a permit.

An electrical operating permit is required when the electrical supply is greater than 250 kVA or 750 volts. A permit is also required if your strata has electrical equipment such as:

- A fire alarm system
- An electric vehicle energy management system (EVEMS), or
- Other electrical equipment per the *Safety Standards Act*, *Safety Standards General Regulation*, and *BC Electrical Safety Regulation*.

Ask your electrical contractor or submit the online form at [Technical Safety BC](#) to find out if your building needs an electrical operating permit.

Who applies for the permit?

The strata corporation is considered the building owner and is therefore responsible for obtaining the permit. Who you get the permit from depends on where you live. The permit is issued by the authority that holds jurisdiction in your area. Permits are issued by Burnaby, Maple Ridge, City of North Vancouver, District of North Vancouver, Surrey, Vancouver, Victoria, and West Vancouver. For all other areas of BC, the permit is issued by Technical Safety BC.

continued on page 19



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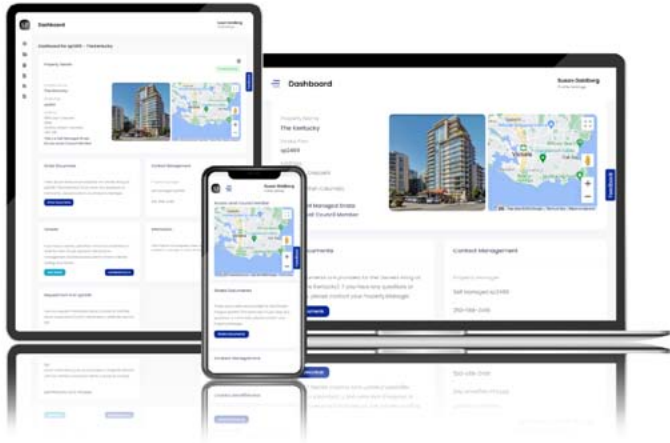
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Do Stratas Need an Electrical Operating Permit?

You need the following information to apply for an electrical operating permit:

- The name of a certified Field Safety Representative (FSR) who has agreed to be named on the permit and their certificate number
- Electrical contractor name
- Electrical contractor class
- Electrical contractor licence number
- Your site address
- Your site's primary service volts, amps, and phase (your FSR can provide this information)

The strata's electrical contractor can help your council apply for the permit. In most jurisdictions you can create an account and apply online. The permit must be renewed annually and you must contact the issuer of the permit to update the permit if your FSR or electrical contractor changes.

What is a Field Safety Representative (FSR)?

A FSR is your resource providing guidance and support to help the strata corporation be aware of and comply with its legal obligations. They have the expertise to validate completed electrical work and provide assurance that electrical equipment has been safely installed and maintained.

It isn't possible to list all the equipment a FSR might check as the characteristics of properties and buildings differ. Some examples of equipment a FSR might check include: main distribution equipment, meter centres, panels, and emergency systems. The FSR will recommend any electrical maintenance needed. Their role is to advise, not maintain.

When choosing a FSR, ask them to list the frequency and scope of services needed for your property. It may depend on what type of equipment you have. Fire safety systems are specialized systems reviewed by other professionals. See [What is an Annual Fire Safety Inspection](#).

The strata's responsibilities

As the permit holder, the strata is legally responsible for compliance with the *Safety Standards Act* and Regulations. This would include a plan for regular maintenance of electrical equipment, following the terms and conditions of the permit, and hiring qualified persons. Your FSR is the subject matter expert and can help the strata council understand its responsibilities specific to your building and situation.

All emergency incidents and electrical work completed on the property must be recorded in a logbook.

continued on page 20

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Do Stratas Need an Electrical Operating Permit?

The FSR can maintain this logbook for you. From time to time the authority that has jurisdiction (see above) may require access to this logbook to ensure your strata is complying with all requirements.

Common property and in-suite electrical work

An electrical operating permit is essentially a blanket electrical permit for the entire property. The strata or an individual owner can hire the electrical contractor named on the permit to perform routine maintenance and small additions rather than incur the expense of individual permits. However, if an owner wants to hire a different electrical contractor, they must obtain a separate electrical installation permit for the work they are doing in the suite.

All electrical work on the common property and in suites must be reported to the FSR and recorded in the logbook.

Benefits of an electrical operating permit

Many equipment failures or emergencies such as failed pumps or seized switches are preventable with regular monitoring, inspections, and maintenance. Keeping electrical equipment maintained increases its reliability and longevity and reduces risks of shutdowns. A well-maintained electrical system provides peace of mind to your residents and your insurance company!

Visit Technical Safety BC for more information. **V**

Lee MacFarlane is a FSR and manager at Edwards Electric with offices on Vancouver Island and the Lower Mainland. Contact the Edwards Electric team at office@edwardselectric.net or visit www.edwardselectric.net

Visit Lee at the Everything Electric Canada show September 6-8 at the Vancouver Convention Centre.



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You Asked

Q: The Act says the strata has to keep minutes for 6 years. Are we supposed to destroy them after that?

A: [Section 35](#) of the *Strata Property Act* (SPA) lists records the strata must retain including 35 (1) (a) “minutes of annual and special general meetings and council meetings, including the results of any votes”.

[Regulation 4.1 \(3\)](#) says the strata must retain them for at least 6 years but doesn’t specify a maximum retention time. The strata could, if it wished to, keep records indefinitely. There’s no requirement in the SPA or Regulations to destroy records. See [Lipton v. The Owners, Strata Plan VIS 4673, 2024 BCCRT 335](#).

Q: Do we have to include a proxy form in an AGM notice package?

A: No, it’s not required. [SPA s. 45](#) of lists the information and documents that must be included in the notice for an annual general meeting (AGM):


3 (a) a description of the matters that will be voted on at the meeting, including the proposed wording

of any resolution requiring a 3/4 vote, 80% vote or unanimous vote;

(b) the date, time and, if applicable, place of the meeting;

(c) if attendance by telephone or other electronic means will be permitted, instructions for attending the meeting by electronic means.

(4) If the meeting is an annual general meeting, the notice must include the budget and financial statement referred to in [section 103](#). [See [Regulations 6.6 and 6.7](#) for details]

While not required, some stratas include a copy of the minutes of the previous AGM, an insurance summary, a proxy form, and reports from the president, treasurer, and/or committees. Having this information prior to the meeting is often helpful to answer common questions and save time during the meeting. 

VISOA members may log in to our website to submit questions to the [Strata Support Team](#).



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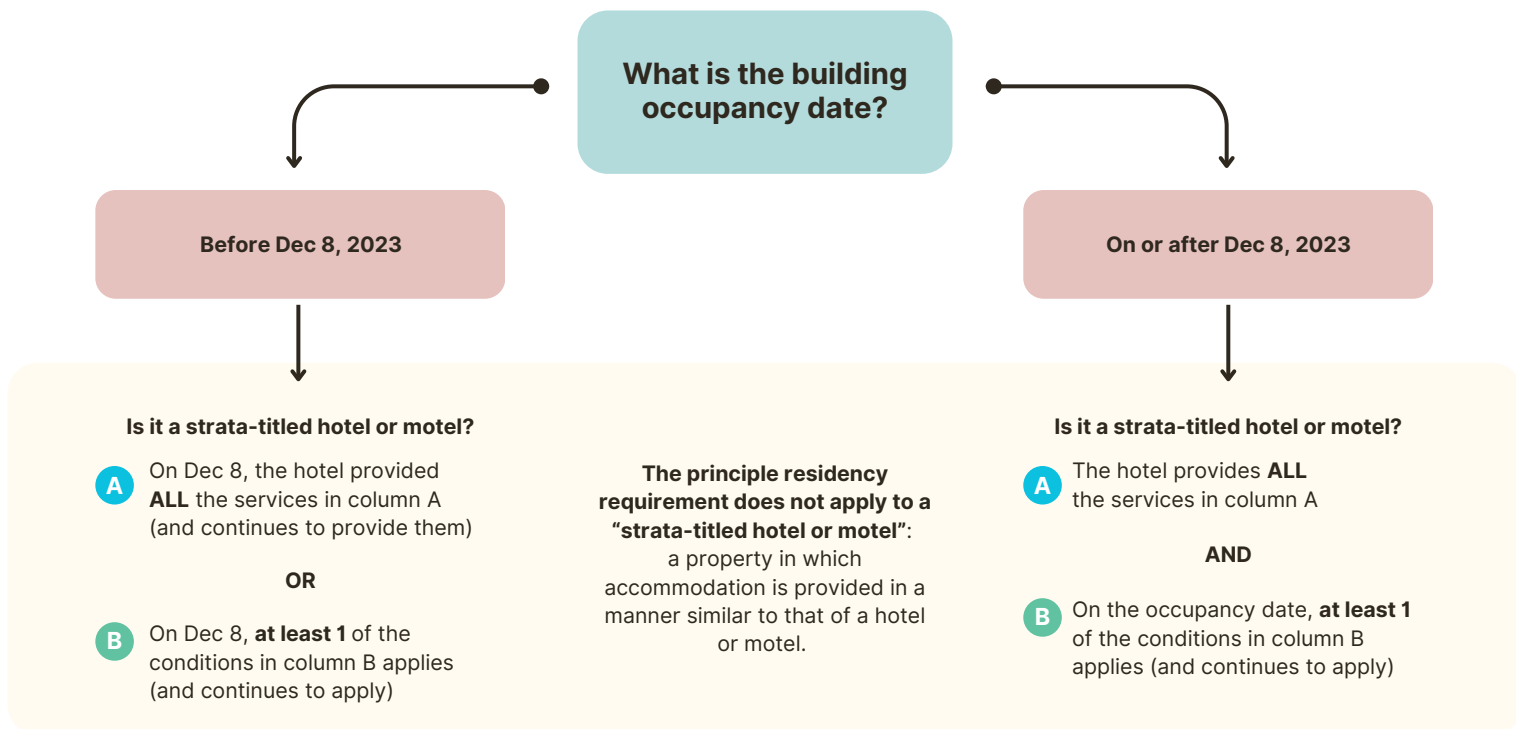
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Can I use my strata lot for short-term rental accommodations?

As of May 1, 2024 many homes in BC can no longer be used for short-term rental accommodations such as Airbnb. See if your strata lot is located in an area where the **principal residency requirement** applies. If so, and the strata lot is not your principal residence, use this infographic to learn about the exemption for “strata-titled hotels and motels”. The principal residency requirement doesn’t apply to common property suites or a strata lot owned by the strata corporation. Be sure to check your municipal bylaws as well.



A Services are provided in a manner similar to that of a hotel:

- It has its own website for marketing the accommodations available

AND

- It has one or more employees or contractors working a front desk on site

AND

- It has one or more employees or contractors provide house-keeping services to the strata lots used for accommodation

B 2 or more lots can’t be used as a principle residence due to a restriction under:

- A rental management agreement between the manager and one or more owners of the strata lots

OR

- A restrictive covenant registered against the land

OR

- A land use regulation bylaw (per Local Government Act)

OR

- A zoning bylaw (per Vancouver Charter)

Cyber Security for Strata Councils

by Mark Peters

As strata council members, we have a statutory duty to act in the best interests of the owners. Are we following cyber safety practices to protect information and strata funds? Almost daily we see news reports of people who have fallen victim to scams, hackers, fraud, and identity theft. The risk is not limited to gaining access to an online account. Criminals might gain full control of a person's computer or an organization's network.

The risks are increased for strata corporations for two reasons:

1. Shared passwords: For transparency and good governance, strata councils often have policies that require more than one council member to have access to the strata's email accounts, online document storage, etc. Councils often create short passwords that are easy to remember and don't change them very often.
2. Vulnerability of each council member: Any attack that successfully gains access to a council member's computer or personal information could result in the perpetrator gaining access to the strata's information and online accounts.

Cybersecurity is the practice of defending computers, servers, mobile devices, electronic systems, networks, and data from malicious attacks. It's also known as information technology security or electronic information security.

Awareness

The first step to protect the strata corporation is ensuring that all council members are aware of the methods that scammers use to try to get access to information and electronic devices. Scams are constantly changing and becoming more convincing. Visit the [Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre](#) to learn about scams affecting Canadians. Here are some of the most common methods.

Phishing

[Phishing and social engineering](#) account for nearly 80% of password breaches. By phone, email, or text message, the hacker tries to coax you to give them personal information or a password. If a text or email is convincing, you might click a link and enter your

continued on page 31

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Cyber Security for Strata Councils

username and password to log in to what looks like a familiar website. Once the hacker has one of your login names and passwords, they will try to use it on websites for banking, credit cards, email platforms, social media etc., hoping you used the same or similar password.

Malware and ransomware

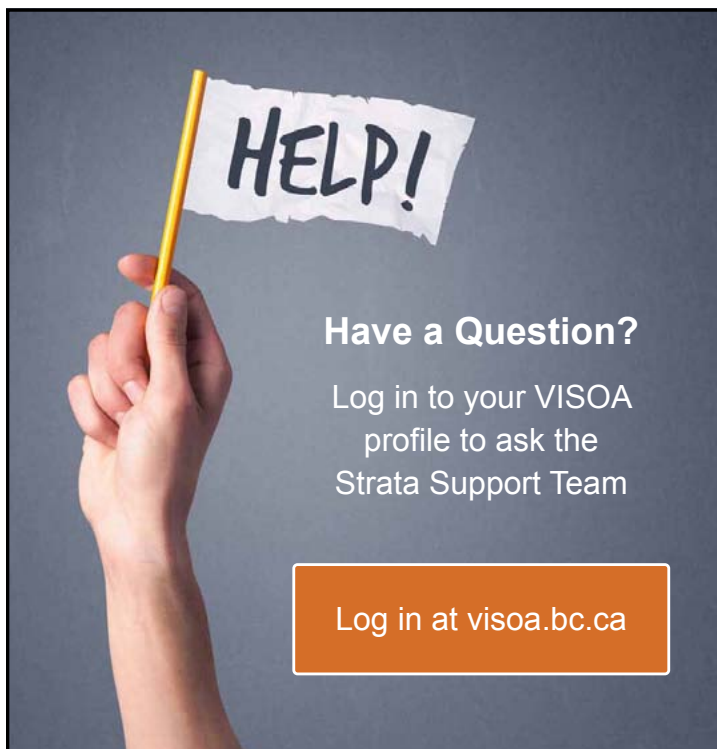
Clicking a dangerous link or attachment could infect your computer with a virus or malware. This can damage files, steal information, provide access to your emails, and more. Criminals might use ransomware to gain access to your device. They can lock you out of your computer or electronic device, or encrypt the data, until a ransom payment is made.

Strata cyber security check up

Council members often change every year. Ensure that access to the strata's email accounts, bank accounts, etc are reviewed at least twice per year. After each annual general meeting or any change in council members, change passwords, and update settings such as email forwarding filters.

Document storage

Many councils store the strata's records online. Ensure that only authorized persons have access and all available security features are used. Never store a list of passwords in your files. Some platforms cater to stratas and offer levels of security such as encryption to protect records and information. See [VISOA's business directory](#).



HELP!

Have a Question?

Log in to your VISOA profile to ask the Strata Support Team

[Log in at visoa.bc.ca](https://visoa.bc.ca)

Banking

For self-managed stratas, ensure that the bank accounts are in the name of the strata corporation and that the accounts require two signatures for all withdrawals and transfers. Most stratas authorize 2-4 council members as signatories on the strata's bank accounts. The resolution should be in the council minutes listing the names of the persons that council has authorized as the signatories for that year. Promptly contact your financial institution to add or remove signatories each time signatories change. Some strata councils have found previous owners or even deceased persons are still signatories on the strata's bank accounts!

For online banking, some financial institutions have systems that require two signatories to log in to approve all e-transfers, online bill payments, and transfers between accounts. Each authorized person has a separate login name and password.

Verify payment directions. Many businesses now accept payment by e-transfer. Refer to the invoice or call the company to ensure that you have the correct email address to send the payment to.

Review bank statements monthly. Even better, use online banking to check bank account activity frequently. Some institutions allow you to set up email or text alerts to notify you of large transactions or when an account balance falls below a certain amount. Your bank may be able to give online access that is read-only. This can be useful for a bookkeeper who is doing the accounting but has no signing authority. Contact your bank or credit union immediately if you suspect fraudulent activity.

Stay safe. Be vigilant!

Don't fall for scams that ask for personal information or try to scare you into doing something urgently. Slow down. Think before you click a link or attachment. If you are ever in doubt about the legitimacy of a phone call, message, link, attachment, or website, call the person or company. Look up the real contact information. Never use the contact numbers contained in the text or email.

For example, you receive an email that appears to be from Amazon (or another common online platform) asking you to click a link to confirm your purchase or it says that your account has been compromised. If you click the link or attachment the spoofer then has access to your personal information or computer.

- Be aware of phishing and social engineering tactics
- Only visit secured websites that start with <https://> (it also has a lock symbol), not <http://>

continued on page 32



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Cyber Security for Strata Councils

- Only connect to secured wireless networks (be cautious when using public wi-fi)
- Backup files and data frequently
- Keep your computer's operating system up to date as it often includes security updates
- Install anti-malware software
- Follow best practices for passwords

Best practices for passwords

Access to any bank account, online storage site, or other site is vulnerable if the passwords are weak. With the advent of artificial intelligence, “brute-force” attacks can crack 8-character passwords in less than one second. Many 14-character passwords can be cracked in less than one day. One of the best ways that council members can protect themselves and their strata is to follow best practices for all of their personal and strata passwords.

- Don't use words that are easy to guess such as names of pets, family or council members, birthdates, or addresses
- Use at least 14-characters, preferably 20, 24, or 30!
- Increase the complexity using upper and lowercase letters, numerals, and special characters such as #*@!
- Test [the strength](#) of your password
- For a password that's easier to remember, use a passphrase or unrelated words (e.g., Shortcake7-Calibrate-Manhole!)
- Use a [password/passphrase generator](#) to create a strong password
- Never use the same or similar password for multiple accounts
- Use a trusted password manager to store your passwords
- Use a multi-factor authentication app where possible (Need help installing an app on your cell phone? Ask a friend or family member. That's what grandchildren are for!)

Learn more

Visit [GetCyberSafe](#) to learn more about cyber security and simple steps you can take to protect yourself online. Find information about [securing accounts and devices](#), creating strong passwords, multi-factor authentication, password managers, public wi-fi safety, and more.

Visit the [Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre](#) to learn about past and current scams affecting Canadians. Learn how to protect yourself, report fraud, and what to do if you're a victim of fraud. Other resources include the [RCMP's Stay Cyber Healthy](#) and the [Canadian Centre for Cyber Security](#).

■ President's Message

BC Election 2024

BC's next provincial general election is scheduled for October 19, 2024. Strata owners make up a significant portion of voters, more than 25%. The question becomes what do strata owners want to hear from the candidates? What issues are important to you?

If you had 2 minutes in an elevator with a candidate in your riding, what would you ask or say to them to help you decide if you want to vote for them?

[Complete our survey](#) by September 9 to share your concerns, ranked by priority. We'll be ready for Writ Day on September 21: the day the election is called. We'll send the top questions to the parties.

Get ready to vote

1. Find your district: There are new electoral districts for the 2024 Provincial General Election. Knowing your district is important because it determines your candidates and nearest voting places. Enter your address in the [My District App](#) to find your district.

2. Register to vote: Registering in advance makes voting faster and easier. Registered voters also receive important updates from Elections BC after the election is called, including information about where, when and how to vote. Visit [Online Voter Registration](#) to register now.

3. Learn about new ways to vote: The 2024 election will be the first general election conducted under the modernized Election Act. ElectionsBC will use networked laptops instead of paper lists to look up voters and cross them off the voters list. This should reduce line-ups, and make voting faster and easier. They'll use electronic tabulators to count paper ballots for accuracy and efficiency and to report results quickly on election night.

4. Choose a voting place: Under this new system, you can vote at any voting place. This should make it easier to get out and vote! See [New Voting Processes](#) for more information.

5. Mark your calendar: Advanced voting takes place Oct 10-13 and 14-16. Final voting day is October 19.

Canvassing in strata properties

Many strata owners in buildings with controlled access

don't realize that they must allow access to candidates and authorized canvassers during the campaign period. Don't get upset. The legislation allows them to be in your building and knock on doors!

[Section 228.01](#) of the *BC Election Act* says a strata corporation or individual acting on behalf of a strata corporation must not unreasonably restrict access to residential property by a candidate or an authorized canvasser for the purposes of canvassing voters and distributing candidate information from 9 am to 9 pm during the campaign period.

An "authorized canvasser" means an individual authorized in writing by a candidate to canvass voters and distribute candidate information on the candidate's behalf. If requested by a resident, council member or manager, a candidate or authorized canvasser must produce government-issued photo identification and either proof of candidacy or a candidate's written authorization to canvass voters and distribute candidate information.

Election signs

Many stratas have bylaws about signs. Remember there are exceptions for election signs. Residents can display them in their strata lot. For example, that could be a poster in the window of a condo unit, or a lawn sign on a bare land strata lot.

The details are in [section 228.1](#) of the *BC Election Act*. A strata corporation or a person acting on behalf of a strata corporation must not prohibit the owner or tenant of a strata unit from displaying election advertising posters on the premises of the owner's or tenant's unit.

Strata bylaws may set reasonable conditions relating to the size or type of election advertising posters that may be displayed on the premises, and may prohibit the display of election advertising posters in common areas.

Over the last 2 years, many strata owners have expressed their political views and changes they want to see. I encourage all of you to get out and vote on October 19 or in one of the advance polls.

Wendy Wall, *VISOA President*, president@visoa.bc.ca

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