

Are the strata council meetings open to strata owners to attend?

Under the Standard Bylaws of the Strata Property Act, a strata owner may attend a strata council meeting as an observer. This helps ensure transparency in the operation of the strata corporation. However, the bylaws of some strata corporations have been amended to exclude this provision.

What long-term contracts is the strata corporation a party to and what do they obligate the strata corporation to do?

Some stratas have entered into long-term contracts for the supply of certain services to the strata (e.g. sewage services to a bare land strata). In some cases the developer entered into the contract on behalf of the strata corporation before its first Annual General Meeting. Where there is such a contract, you should ensure that the contract is currently in the best interests of the strata owner and decide whether you want to pay the costs an owner is legally obligated to pay.

Is the strata lot part of a phased development which is yet to be completed?

If the strata lot is part of an incomplete phased development, you should be aware that future phases may not be developed in the way they are being represented to you.

What is a condominium or strata corporation?

Condominiums or strata corporations are nonprofit corporations where property owners have shared ownership of property rights and obligations. The legal framework for them is the Strata Property Act. They are communities with what is essentially an extra level of government. The extra level of government is the strata council, which manages the day-to-day operation of the strata corporation.

Is the strata corporation managed by a licensed professional strata manager or is it managed directly by the council elected by owners?

The quality of management of the strata largely depends upon the skills of those doing the managing. As volunteers, strata council members may or may not have all the management skills required to meet your expectations. Similarly, not all professional strata managers are equally skilled. Reading minutes of past council meetings and conversing with the professional strata manager (if there is one) can reveal a lot about the state of management of the strata.

Useful Information

Vancouver Island Strata
Owners Association
Phone 250-920-0222

Toll free 1-877-33-VISOA (877-338-4762)
Website: www.visoa.bc.ca

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation
"Condominium Buyers Guide"



Is Strata or Condominium living for me?

Am I ready to live in a community where I don't have total control over my own dwelling?

Am I comfortable in a place where decisions are made democratically and I may not get my way?

Am I willing to cooperate and help in the running of the strata corporation?



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Important Questions to Ask Before Buying a Strata Unit

- **What do the bylaws and rules say?**
- **Do they contain any restrictions (such as no pets, no rentals, age restrictions) that would significantly impact or interfere with your enjoyment in living there?**
- **Do they contain any restrictions that would significantly enhance your enjoyment in living there?**

Strata bylaws and rules apply to all owners and cannot be ignored. Violators are subject to legal action undertaken by the strata corporation to enforce the bylaws. If you cannot live with a bylaw do not buy a unit in the strata. Do not expect to “get away” with violating a bylaw or having the bylaw changed to accommodate you.

How much money is in the strata corporation’s reserve fund?

Is it enough to repair or replace common property without a major special levy? The strata corporation is responsible for managing common property and common assets. These require regular maintenance and, sometimes, major repairs (e.g. roofing replacement). If the strata corporation does not have a contingency reserve fund sufficient to pay for major repairs, it must make a special levy on each strata unit including the one you are considering. An inadequate reserve fund could mean an unexpected cost to you.

Is the strata corporation involved in any lawsuits?

If the strata corporation is involved in a lawsuit and the outcome later turns out to be unfavorable for the strata corporation, it could result in costs to each strata unit owner, including you. If there is a lawsuit, find out the worst case scenario for the strata owner and determine whether you can afford the cost.

How much is the monthly strata fee? What does it pay for? What does it not pay for?

The monthly strata fee can be a significant cost of home ownership. In some strata developments the fee covers some utility costs whereas in others it does not cover any. Be aware of what the fee does cover and what additional costs of ownership you may incur, such as utilities. Do understand it will increase as costs rise. Also, note that new stratas often have very low monthly fees.

What insurance does the strata corporation carry for property damage and liability?

A strata corporation is required under the Strata Property Act to carry insurance on its property and fixtures as well as liability insurance for property damage and bodily injury. Generally, this coverage does not apply to the contents of a strata unit or a building on a strata lot in a bare land strata. As a purchaser of a strata unit you must insure your own property. A strata corporation is also subject to liability for errors and omissions of strata council members and may carry insurance against this type of liability but is not required to do so. If the strata corporation has a court judgement made against it and there is no insurance to cover it, as a strata owner you will be liable for a share of the costs of this judgement.

The Vancouver Island Strata Owners Association (VISOA) is an independent, non-profit organization that was formed in 1973 for the purpose of providing information to all stratas on Vancouver Island. Membership is open to all residential strata corporations or owners of residential strata units on Vancouver Island that have registered with the B.C. Land Title Office.

November 2007