

Condo Smarts March 30th - April 2nd, 2016

Electric Vehicles

Dear Tony: We have a catch 22 problem. We bought a new electric vehicle six months ago and stupidly assumed that our strata would simply let us modify a parking space for a charging station. "Note to everyone in a strata, never assume anything in a strata is that easy." So now I am relying on my husband's workplace to charge our vehicle, and other public locations around the city. This would be the easiest though if our strata would simply permit the change of parking allocations so we could have stations installed, then other owners could also consider buying electric cars. Are there any programs or guides that might help us out? Brian & Kelly

Dear Brian and Kelly: As the trend towards electric vehicles grows, electric vehicles charging stations (EVCS) are becoming a common facility and service in public areas, and placing pressure on multifamily developments to consider the installation of the service. Drivers won't buy electric vehicles because they don't have stations in their condo, and the strata won't install stations because the costs benefit very few. EVCS installation is a much more complicated issue than simply installing a station and letting owners charge at leisure; however, it is both feasible and manageable for the strata corporation and the owner(s) making the request. It is unlikely the owners will vote in favour of expenses or alterations that are only for the use and benefit of 1-4 owners, especially when there are so many other pressures on common budgets with rising insurance costs, utilities and operating costs. The strata corporation however does have a viable option. They may agree to permit the installation of an EVCS at the request of an owner(s), if the owner(s) agree to the related costs of installation.

If you live in a townhouse with your own dedicated garage that is part of the strata lot, or a bare land strata with an exclusive location on your strata lot, you the owner may install your own charging station, subject to the bylaws of the strata corporation; however, most townhouse and apartment style condos have common area parking and common electrical facilities.

Before you consider the installation of an EVCS, the strata corporation and applicant owner will have to determine the location of the station, any electrical alterations, capacity of electrical service in the building, civil and engineering requirements, future depreciation obligations and costs, installation costs, access, future costs of the operations, utilities, insurance, liability and responsibility for the EVCS. The strata council will also have to determine where the station is best located and if parking is even possible to reallocate for use. In many buildings parking has been allocated as limited common property or assigned by an owner developer lease, and the strata council cannot reallocate the parking to accommodate an EVCS, although the strata corporation may be able to consider changing the use of other parking.

In addition to the anticipated energy costs, electric vehicles reduce greenhouse gas emission by up to 98% over combustion engines. They almost eliminate vehicle noise and emissions in buildings and contribute to healthier communities. It's a great time for a strata to consider the installation of a charging station. The province have just launched a funding program to be administered by the Fraser Basin Council. The program is open to individuals anywhere in the province that reside in an eligible multi-unit residential building, or to parties authorized to make decisions regarding the building like building managers or owners, and strata councils. Approved applicants would be eligible to receive a rebate of up to 75% of the total, before-tax cost of installing a Level 2 charging station to a maximum of \$4,500. The program will be hosted by the Fraser Basin Council. If you would like more information on EVCS installations, visit the choa web site for an EVCS info guide. www.choa.bc.ca

Sincerely,

Tony Gioventu, Executive Director
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