

Condo Smarts September 21st – 24th, 2016

Commissioning a New Building

Dear Tony: We purchased our Burnaby condo in the spring and our strata is about to hold its first annual general meeting. One of the agenda items posed to the property manager is the requirement for commissioning of the building before the strata council takes over responsibility. We were told there is no such thing as commissioning a building, and other than approving the first budget, the insurance report and the election of a strata council, the meeting would be very short. Our owners have some serious concerns about the administration of the utilities and the property operations and not sure how to address these matters at the meeting. How do the owners know we are getting what we bought? That would seem to be the purpose of commissioning a building. Carols V.

Dear Carlos: We live in many complicated building systems that include shared parking garages, district energy, air space parcels, mixed use residential and commercial property, social housing and community amenities. Commissioning of new buildings is crucial exercise for new strata councils to ensure as the strata corporation's representatives they have received all of the records and documents, the strata has received what was intended by the developer, and the your strata is only paying for your direct costs in shared relationships. If your strata is in an air space parcel arrangement, a building audit/commission would be the only way of confirming the allocation of costs are being administered properly.

Building commissioning is more of a procedural concept than a duty required by the legislation. Commissioning is the process of verifying the performance of the building systems for mechanical (HVAC), plumbing, electrical, energy consumption and efficiency, fire/life safety, building envelopes, interior systems, sustainable systems, lighting, wastewater, controls, and building security to achieve the owner's requirements as intended by the building owner and buyers, and as designed by the building architects and engineers. The *Strata Property Act* does not specifically require any such action; however, the Act does require that at the first Annual General Meeting of the strata corporation, in addition to the records of the strata corporation, the owner developer must provide to the strata corporation: all plans relating to building permits, documents that showing locations of pipe, wires, ducts and building systems, all contracts entered into for the strata corporation, the land title documents, names and addresses of all contractors, subcontractors and suppliers, and all warranties and manuals that relate to operations, installation, construction, maintenance and repair. Due to the lack of experience, most new strata councils fail to verify whether the information is provided, who received the records, and how the information is available to the strata council. Once your new strata council has been elected, a complete review of the records and documents required for operations and warranty administration is essential. Once you have received and reviewed the documents, review your warranty contract to determine your obligations and the expiry dates of the warranties, and verify your utility and operations costs are consistent with the obligations of your strata.

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