

# real estate

**Condo-Ology®:** A Former Front Line Condominium Manager's Perspective

*Can our Local Condominium Corporations Keep Our Distinctiveness?*

Since leaving the day-to-day management responsibilities of condominium corporations to pursue condominium consulting in June 2011, I have discovered how fortunate Collingwood and surrounding area condominium owners are. Oh, we have had/have our issues, but in relation to larger populated areas, we have a lot to be thankful for.

For us living or weekending in the north, we have mostly avoided the serious issues/problems that are impacting some of the larger populated area condominiums. For this avoidance, I would like to give credit to the Owners, Directors, Realtors, Condominium Management Staffers, Local Service and Product Providers, the Town of Collingwood Staff and due to my bias, most importantly: the Front Line Condominium Managers.

Since my family and I arrival to Collingwood in 1987 as well as others that have followed has made it difficult for our area to retain the small Town atmosphere in which we all were seeking. My commute to work went from one stoplight to six (I am not expecting sympathy), box stores began to arrive and were shortly followed by large service providers etc. In general, individuals' attitudes are unfortunately slowly closing the gap between the genuine small town feel to that of large populated areas.

The Ontario Government is working to revamp the Condominium Act of Ontario. This review is in response to the explosion of condominium ownership in Ontario (7% of Ontario's population now lives in a condominium) and increasing horror stories related to the condominium industry. The Government's decision to review, create and amend legislation is courageous, as it has hired an independent third party \* (a first for Ontario) to oversee the review process.

The review process is exciting; however, it does create concern. We must consider the potential influence larger populated area stakeholders may have in the review process and how their participation may affect our small-town condominium distinctiveness and success.

I recently read an article by a prominent Toronto condominium lawyer who described a condominium corporation as a business, and owners as the shareholders. This comparison is the most widely provincially accepted comparison. With all due respect, since I began

in this industry I have never believed this comparison, and nor should you if we want our condominium corporations to continually be operated successfully.

A condominium corporation is a human settlement within the confines of a municipality, operated under provincial legislation. The Directors are the elected representatives of the owners, similarly to an elected politician and owners are citizens. The condominium manager acts the professional civil servant, whose responsibility is to run the day-to-day activities, no matter who has been elected to the Board of Directors. Owners elect Directors to oversee the condominium corporations operations and all owners are legislated to pay a common element fee similar to that of taxes.

Therefore, a Condominium Corporation Board of Directors constitutes the forth level of government in Canada. Scary thought for many of us. It is what it is and it is critical for all of us to acknowledge if we want to maintain our northern condominium distinctiveness.

Next article – What kind of condo-government do we want?

*“Many forms of Government have been tried, and will be tried in this world of sin and woe. No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all-wise. Indeed, it has been said that democracy is the worst form of government except all those other forms that have been tried from time to time.”* - Sir Winston Churchill (1874 - 1965), Hansard, November 11, 1947.

FORE! Tom

Tom LePage is a 25-year plus Member of the Real Institute of Canada and Association of Condominium Managers of Ontario in which he has earned several designations.

Tom is locally best known as being on the incredible development team of Lighthouse Point Yacht and Tennis Club from start to finish (1987 – 2008) and was the on-site condominium manager from 1989 to 2010

\* The independent third party is the Public Policy Forum – lead by Don Lenihan. The Public Policy Forum will be using the Public Engagement Approach vs. Consumer Approach to create new legislations - a first for Ontario! For those of you wishing additional information i.e. what is Public Engagement, Don Lenihan has written a book called Rescuing Policy – The case for public engagement, which is available free on the internet.

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