

AUG 14-2005

This strata caught hiding information

STRATA: Smart buyer blew the whistle and strata now faces messy legal action



Tony Gioventu

CONDO SMARTS

When a purchaser views a strata property, the best information they can generally obtain is by reading the minutes of council meetings, general meetings, and the rules and registered bylaws.

But what occurs when the strata corporation issues one set of minutes for the owners and buyers, but maintains a secret set of second minutes?

A Vancouver buyer recently was duped by the strata council's withholding of the real minutes of the meetings. In February, the buyer and her agent requested copies of all the council meet-

ing minutes for the previous four years. These were ostensibly supplied in plenty of time to review and before the purchase was complete. Everything seemed fine until the new buyer was elected to council and discovered the building had a serious structural problem. The council had been keeping this secret from the owners, including the vendor, and recording a confidential set of minutes. This unacceptable tactic may drastically rebound on the council. The purchaser is now seeking legal counsel to attempt to recover any of the related costs for failing to disclose the information.

Strata law: There is a long list of records and documents that the act requires the strata corporation to maintain. If an owner or their agent requests copies of the records set out in the act, they must be provided within 14 days and the strata may charge a fee of up to 25 cents per page per copy.

Tips: This purchaser has a serious and legitimate complaint with the strata. They intentionally withheld information that would have influenced her decision to purchase. Both she and her agent had diligently reviewed the records, and the inspection revealed little information. Speak to your lawyer and take every precaution before you buy.

Tony Gioventu is the executive director of the Condominium Home Owners Association. Contact CHOA at 604-584-2462 or toll-free 1-877-353-2462, fax 604-515-9643 or e-mail tony@choa.bc.ca.