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Spring 2026

The Condo Industry Runs
on People: Let's Start
Treating It That Way

8 Signs of a Toxic Condo
Owner & How to Handle Them

When the Work Never Stops:
Stress, Self-Care & Support
in Condo Management

Wellness at Work

Supporting the Mental Health of Condominium Managers

Canada Post Publication Agreement Number 40011809





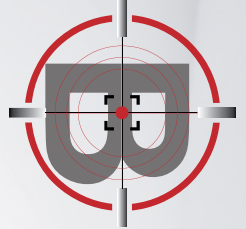
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Magazine Theme

This issue explores how condominium managers can foster wellness in the workplace by promoting mental health, balance, and resilience in the demanding world of community management. It emphasizes that wellness is not a luxury, but a professional necessity for sustaining performance and leadership in the industry. Credit: © iStock.com/Rowan Jordan

Volume 47, No. 1 Spring 2026

Contents



Burnout is not a personal failure, and resilience is not about endless endurance. Preventing it is a shared responsibility shaped by team culture, leadership behaviour, and how we support one another under pressure. Learn more on page 14.

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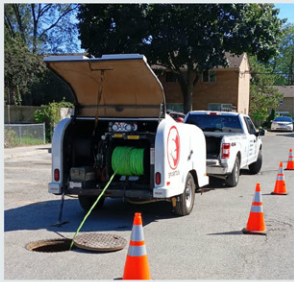
In Every Issue

- 7 Message from the Executive Director
- 9 Message from the President
- 11 Snapshot
- 65 RCM Profile

Features

- 14 The Condo Industry Runs on People: Let's Start Treating It That Way**
BY ANDRÉE BALL
- 18 When the Work Never Stops: Stress, Self-Care, and Support in Condominium Management**
BY DR. WENDY MANEL
- 23 Caring for Buildings Starts with Caring for Yourself**
BY DANA DEORAJ
- 25 When Emergencies Hit: Balancing the Operational and the Human Side of Condominium Management**
BY JENNIFER RICCI
- 28 Wellness at Work: Practical Approaches to Supporting Mental Health in Condominium Management**
BY MOE SAAD
- 31 Boundaries Are Not Optional: Protecting Mental Health in a 24/7 Role**
BY KAREN RUBIN
- 35 From Stress to Success: The Legal & Human Side of Mental Health in Condo Management**
BY DEBORAH HOWDEN
- 39 When Everything Feels Urgent: Reducing Decision Fatigue in Condo Management**
BY TIM BOLIVAR
- 43 Mental Health Isn't a Seminar — It's a System**
BY JESSICA ANSAH





- **KITCHEN STACK POWER FLUSHING**
- **DRAIN INSTALLATION AND REPAIR**
- **DRAIN CAMERA INSPECTION**
- **UNDERGROUND GARAGE WATERPROOFING**
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The Editor
CM Condominium Manager
c/o ACMO
2121 Argenta Rd., Suite 101
Mississauga, Ontario L5N 2X4
Tel: 905-826-6890/1-800-265-3263
Fax: 905-607-6172
Email: editor@acmo.org
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CM Condominium Manager magazine is the flagship quarterly publication of the Association of Condominium Managers of Ontario (ACMO) and for more than 30 years has served as the leading source of in-depth coverage of industry news, issues, information, education and best practices for condominium management professionals and service providers.

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45 Wellness at Work: Practical Strategies to Support Condo Managers

BY FURQUAN KHAN

48 8 Signs of a Toxic Condo Owner & How to Handle Them

BY ANTHONY ING

50 Wellness at Work: Be Kind to Yourself (and Breathe)

BY SHIONA NIVEN

53 Mental Health is Infrastructure: Supporting Property Managers to Stabilize Communities

BY LUZ HADDAD

Your Condo

59 Shared Facilities Offer Extra Benefits But Come with Risks

BY BRANDON MURPHY

61 What's Under the Surface? Following the Flow from Fixture to Finish

BY SIMON PIGNATARO & SALLY THOMPSON

News & Views

66 Member News





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Wellness is an Inside Job



In a world obsessed with optimization — productivity hacks, morning routines, wearable trackers, and the relentless pursuit of “balance” — wellness has become something we chase outside ourselves. We buy it, schedule it, download it, and hope it will fix the parts of us that feel frayed. Yet the most meaningful form of wellness doesn’t come from anything we can purchase or perform. It comes from the quiet, often uncomfortable work of tending to our inner landscape.

Wellness, at its core, is an inside job. Over the years, I have been better and worse at this job. The most important one I’ll ever have and one I can’t delegate, be promoted out of or get fired from. Despite how well anyone might know you, no one can know your inner world (and how you’re either coping or struggling). Why was I sometimes great at this and sometimes terrible? Sometimes it was easier, sometimes it was harder. Sometimes I sought help, sometimes I fought it. Sometimes I struggled alone and told myself that I was a baby because I couldn’t manage — because I found something hard.

I haven’t always been proud of the ways in which I undertook this job in the past: I was sometimes a workaholic, sometimes depressed, a perfectionist, anxious. But when I knew better, I did better. I have since forgiven myself for what I didn’t know.

What I have learned over the years is that there is more empathy and compassion than anyone might imagine. Care, consideration and help can only be found through vulnerability. As a big fan of Brene Brown, I believe that success in every way comes from vulnerability. And vulnerability is a leadership requirement.

In the past, I suffered from false bravado — from “powering through,” and it hurt me more than it helped me. I thought for a while I could will myself from “feeling” (hint — trying to avoid mine made them bigger and scarier — sharing them lessened their hold).

I hope you read this wellness-focused magazine, reflect on what you already know about yourself and get excited about what you have yet to learn. This job will be lifelong. It won’t be easy, but it will be worth it!

The Myth of the External Fix

Modern culture sells the idea that if we can just find the right supplement, the right planner, the right meditation

app, or the right fitness routine, we’ll finally feel whole. These tools can absolutely support us (and I personally have my favourites), but they can’t substitute for the deeper work of self-awareness.

External solutions are attractive because they’re tangible. They give us the illusion of control. But when we rely on them exclusively, we end up treating symptoms rather than causes. Stress, burnout, and emotional exhaustion don’t originate in our calendars or our inboxes. They originate in our beliefs, our boundaries, our habits of thought, and the stories we tell ourselves about what we “should” be.

Inner Work Is Not Soft Work

There’s a misconception that inner work is indulgent or optional — something to get to once the “real” work is done. In reality, it’s the foundation that makes everything else sustainable.

Inner work looks like:

- Noticing the moment your body tenses and asking what emotion is underneath
- Challenging the belief that your worth is tied to productivity
- Setting a boundary even when your voice shakes (I promise, it gets easier)
- Allowing yourself to rest without guilt
- Choosing curiosity over self-criticism (pretend you’re talking to a friend or your younger self)
- Listening to your intuition instead of overriding it with obligation (obligation is the fertile soil of resentment)

This is not soft work. It’s courageous work. It requires honesty, patience, and a willingness to sit with discomfort and uncertainty — qualities far more demanding than any fitness challenge or detox plan.

The Nervous System: Your Internal Compass

One of the most overlooked aspects of wellness is the state of our nervous system. When we’re constantly in fight-or-flight mode, even the healthiest habits can feel like chores.

But when we learn to regulate from the inside out, everything shifts.

Practices like breathwork, grounding, mindful movement, and reflective journaling help us tune into our internal signals. They teach us to respond rather than react. They create space between stimulus and response — the space where choice lives.

When we learn to work with our nervous system instead of against it, wellness stops being a performance and becomes a lived experience.

Self-Compassion: The Engine of Inner Change

Many people try to “fix” themselves through discipline or self-critique. But research consistently shows that self-compassion — not self-judgment — is what fuels lasting change. When we treat ourselves with the same kindness we extend to others, we create an internal environment where growth is possible.

Self-compassion doesn’t mean avoiding responsibility. It means acknowledging our humanity. It means recognizing that struggle is not a personal failure but a universal experience. It means choosing to be on our own side.

Wellness as a Daily Relationship

Wellness isn’t a destination. It’s a relationship — one we cultivate with ourselves over time. Some days it looks like deep reflection; other days it looks like drinking water and going to bed early. Some days it’s about saying yes; other days it’s about saying no. The point is not perfection. The point is presence.

When we stop outsourcing our wellbeing and start listening inward, we discover that we already have the wisdom we’ve been seeking. The tools and practices we use become amplifiers, not replacements, for our inner knowing.

The Quiet Revolution

There is a quiet revolution happening — a shift from performing wellness to embodying it. People are beginning to understand that the most profound transformations happen not when we change our schedules, but when we change our relationship with ourselves.

Wellness is not something we achieve. It’s something we practice. It’s something we return to. It’s something we build from the inside out. And when we do that inner work, the outer world begins to shift in ways that feel less like striving and more like alignment.

ACMO is excited to bring some specific tools to our members this May – Mental Health Awareness Month. ■

Sincerely,



Katherine Gow
Executive Director, ACMO

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Shavasana: Supporting the Mental Health of Condo Managers

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Shavasana (Sanskrit: *śavāsana*), or Corpse Pose, is a foundational posture in hatha yoga and modern yoga practice. Performed lying on the back with legs comfortably apart, arms relaxed at the sides, and eyes closed, it invites complete stillness. The body softens into the floor while the mind follows the gentle rise and fall of each breath. It is a moment of conscious rest—simple, but profoundly restorative.



I first tried hot yoga about twenty years ago with a friend. It was something new, something healthy, something to do together. We went a few times, then she moved to Switzerland, and I stopped going. The stressors in my life, however, didn't stop. They grew—right alongside my career and responsibilities.

For years, I coped the way many people do. A glass of wine after work. A few pints on the weekend. Staying up late to finish tasks or to carve out a sliver of “me time.” Weekends became recovery missions: catching up on sleep, trying to reset, and often ending in that familiar dread of Monday morning. Sound familiar?

The Hidden Weight of Condo Management

Condominium managers operate at the crossroads of customer service, building operations, legal compliance, financial oversight, and community leadership. The role demands diplomacy, stamina, and the ability to juggle competing priorities under pressure. Yet despite its complexity, the mental health of condo managers has rarely been part of industry conversations.

The profession often celebrates resilience—being available, being steady, being unshakeable—without acknowledging the emotional labour and constant demands placed on those

who keep communities functioning. The toll is real.

A Shift Toward Wellness

Fortunately, the landscape is changing. Wellness is no longer seen as a perk or a personal indulgence. For condo managers, it has become a professional necessity—a foundation for sustainable performance, ethical leadership, and long-term career satisfaction.

Supporting mental health in “condoland” isn't just about preventing burnout. It's about creating environments where managers can thrive, adapt, and lead with clarity and confidence.

Understanding the Pressures

Many condo managers work long or irregular hours, responding to after-hours emergencies, navigating emotionally charged disputes, or managing urgent maintenance issues. The pressure to always be available blurs the line between work and personal life, making it difficult to decompress. Over time, this can lead to chronic stress, compassion fatigue, and isolation.

Recognizing these pressures is the first step toward building a healthier workplace culture. When organizations acknowledge the emotional and cognitive demands of the role, they can begin designing systems that support—rather than strain—the people carrying these responsibilities.

Building Resilience Through Wellness

Physical wellness plays a crucial role in mental wellbeing. Encouraging managers to take breaks, stretch, walk, or incorporate movement into their day improves mood, sharpens focus, and strengthens resilience.

Resilience itself is often misunderstood. It isn't about “toughing it out.” It's the ability to adapt, recover, and continue leading effectively despite challenges. For

condo managers, resilience enhances decision-making, communication, and conflict resolution.

Training in conflict management and emotional intelligence can be transformative. When managers feel equipped to navigate difficult conversations, stress decreases and confidence grows. What once felt overwhelming becomes manageable.

Connection is equally important. Condo management can be isolat-

ing, especially for those overseeing multiple sites. Peer networks and mentorship opportunities create space for shared experiences, guidance, and camaraderie. These relationships reduce isolation and reinforce a sense of community.

Recognition also matters. Celebrating achievements, acknowledging effort, and expressing gratitude all contribute to a culture where managers feel valued. When people feel appreci-

ated, they meet challenges with greater optimism and persistence.

Wellness as a Professional Imperative

The idea that wellness is optional—or that managers should simply “push through”—is outdated and counterproductive. In today’s condominium industry, wellness directly influences:

- **Performance:** Healthy managers make clearer decisions, communicate more effectively, and handle crises with steadier judgment.
- **Leadership:** Managers who model balance set the tone for their communities.
- **Retention:** Supporting mental health reduces turnover and preserves institutional knowledge.
- **Ethical Practice:** A healthy manager is better equipped to uphold professional standards and serve with integrity.

Investing in wellness is ultimately an investment in the long-term success of both managers and the communities they serve.

Returning to Shavasana

A few years ago, after an especially challenging year, I returned to hot yoga. Shavasana appears not only at the end of class but at key moments throughout the session. Instructors emphasize its importance: it gives the body time to recover and integrate the stress we’ve just placed on it.

The lesson is simple but powerful.

Self-care isn’t a luxury.

Wellness at work isn’t a luxury.

It is the foundation of sustainable performance, strong leadership, and thriving communities. Condo managers deserve environments that support their wellbeing, and the industry has both the opportunity and the responsibility to make that a reality. ■



Mark Daye, RCM
ACMO President

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Snapshot



A quick glance at what's happening with ACMO and the condominium industry.

ACMO Advocates for Limitations on Fire and Life Safety Liabilities

Without question, fire and life safety is a paramount responsibility for all persons charged with responsibilities under the Ontario Fire Code. Unfortunately, these responsibilities are poorly delineated, and condominium professionals can be left in a catch-22 where they are not contractually authorized to resolve violations but can be held legally responsible for them. ACMO's Fire and Life Safety Committee is working to better define the responsibilities of Owners and Managers, educate those having jurisdiction for the issuance of violations such that they are appropriately issued in the first place, and ensure that future contracting clearly articulates both who is responsible and pathways to the resolution of fire and life safety deficiencies and violations. We stand with fire and life safety professionals who seek to protect human life. We want to ensure that all who are charged with fire and life safety understand their roles, responsibilities and work together.

From Liens to Leverage: Strategic Approaches to Maintenance Fee Recovery

Our February 20, 2026, luncheon event broke new attendance records with 559 attendees and 40 exhibitors while presenting on key economic factors driving a new collections crisis: Condoland is experiencing unprecedented

maintenance fee arrears. Our educational session focused on a refresher of routine collections requirements and detailed timelines for next steps: power-of-sale proceedings. Looking ahead, Condoland can anticipate more arrears on its books for longer. Protecting the Corporation's standing is critical in ensuring that all fees can ultimately be collected. Relive the last luncheon by viewing photos from the day at <https://acmo.org/galleries>

Expansion of the CAT

ACMO is honoured to have consulted with the CAO as they consider the implications of the expansion of the Condominium Authority Tribunal (CAT). ACMO views the expansion as an opportunity to uphold consumer protection principles within the unique framework of condominium living. Democratic stability must be supported in disputes.

Equitably Pay for Work

Managing condominiums is hard work, and work for which Managers and Condominium Management Service Providers must be compensated. Too often, good intentions result in the expectation of unpaid work. Looking ahead, ACMO seeks to clarify the roles that professional Managers and Management Service Providers play in assisting Condominium Corporations in addressing their obligations.

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The Condo Industry Runs on People

Let's Start Treating It That Way

The condominium industry is not for the faint of heart. Tight timelines, complex regulations, emotionally charged situations, aging buildings, staffing pressures, and constant change are all part of the job. For condominium managers, administrators, lawyers, engineers, accountants, and all industry professionals, the pace can feel nonstop.

Most professionals don't burn out because of one big crisis. It's usually the slow build. It's the glance given to emails received after hours. The "quick" call at 4:59 p.m. that stretches into a long problem-solving session. The back-to-back meetings with no space to catch your breath. Over time, even the most committed people start running on empty.

Having been a condominium manager earlier in my career, I genuinely remember what the day-to-day pressures feel like. The constant juggling, the urgency, the responsibility, and the emotional weight that comes with being the primary point of contact for EVERYONE. While my role today is that of a service provider, I recognize that the condominium landscape has evolved significantly, with greater complexity and pressure than ever before. Expectations are higher, regulations are increasingly complex, resources are tighter, and the pace feels faster than ever. That perspective has only reinforced how important it is to talk openly about support, balance, and healthier ways of working together.

The conversation around work-life balance in the condominium sector is evolving. It is not only about flexible schedules or vacation time. Increasingly, we are shifting toward peer support and team culture as essential tools for sustaining healthy, high-performing professionals.

The Myth of "Powering Through"

Condominium professionals are problem solvers by nature. We step in, figure things out, and keep projects moving. We are trained to manage risk and respond quickly. While that trait is a strength, it can also make it hard to admit when things are piling up. How often have I said, "It's fine! I'm fine! I got this!" Do I really believe that? And even





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if I do, is that a healthy mindset? No.

For many, stress is managed quietly and individually. We “power through”, assuming everyone else is coping just fine. By the time burnout shows up, it feels sudden, but it has usually been building for a long time.

Burnout is not a personal failure, and resilience is not about endless endurance. Preventing it is a shared responsibility. Team dynamics, leadership behaviour, and day-to-day expectations all contribute. When pressure is treated as an individual's problem, people suffer in silence. When it is acknowledged as a reality, teams can respond more effectively. You are not alone. Let's work together.

Making Peer Support Part of the Culture

Policies and procedures matter, but culture is shaped by behaviour. How leaders react under pressure. Whether boundaries are respected. How mistakes are handled. Providing praise when deserved.

In an industry where urgency is often unavoidable, culture can either add to the stress or help absorb it. Teams that support each other are more resilient, more engaged, and better positioned to deliver quality work over the long term.

Peer support works because it's grounded in shared experiences. It is not about turning colleagues into therapists or fixing every problem on

the spot. It is about creating space for honest conversations, perspective, and shared problem-solving. It sounds like:

- “This file is heavy. Have you dealt with something like this before?”
- “I'm stretched this week. Can we regroup on priorities?”
- “I need a second set of eyes on this before it goes out.”

These moments matter. These conversations reduce isolation, surface issues earlier, and often lead to better decisions. They reduce isolation, help catch issues early, and remind people they're not alone in the work.

Peer support is most effective when it is intentional rather than incidental. Build it into your operations in practical ways:

- Regular check-ins that go beyond project status and allow space for workload and capacity discussions, not just deadlines.
- Mentorship and coaching, particularly for newer professionals navigating the complexities of condominium work.
- Cross-team collaboration helps break silos and reduces the feeling of being “the only one” dealing with a problem.
- Creating an environment where questions, concerns, and differing viewpoints are welcomed. Where asking for help is normal, not a red flag.

None of this requires a formal program or a big investment. It does

require consistency, trust, and leaders who genuinely support it.

A More Sustainable Way Forward

Condominium professionals play a key role in supporting communities across our province and the country. The quality of that work depends directly on the health and sustainability of the people doing it. Supporting the professionals who do this work isn't a “nice to have”; it is essential for the health of the industry itself.

By investing in peer support and intentionally building healthier team cultures, we can move beyond constant firefighting and towards a more viable approach to supporting our communities and their people. This is not about doing less or lowering standards. It is about working in a way that allows people to do their best work, together, for the long haul.

The condominium industry runs on people. If we want it to remain strong and resilient, we need to start treating it that way. ■

Andrée Ball is Vice President, Corporate Services at Keller Engineering, supporting teams across Canada. With a background in property management, she brings practical industry insight, collaborative leadership, and a people-first approach focused on strengthening organizations, projects, and the communities they serve. kellerengineering.com



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When the Work Never Stops

Stress, Self-Care, and Support in Condominium Management



By Dr. Wendy Manel, C. Psych.



Condominium property management is often described as a demanding job, but “demanding” does not fully capture the reality. It is not just busy or occasionally stressful—it is relentless. The work requires constant problem-solving, professionalism, and a great deal of emotional stamina. Property managers carry multiple priorities at once, moving from one concern to the next without a true pause, all while being expected to remain calm, organized, and responsive.

In addition to my work as a Clinical Psychologist, I served on my own condominium board for seven years. During that time, I had a front-row seat to what our property manager dealt with. In the course of a typical day, there were constant “fires” to be put out and issues to address: a contractor running behind schedule, an owner insisting something be addressed

immediately, a resident escalating a complaint, or a board member asking for an update “as soon as possible.” And behind all of that were the parts no one else saw: the documentation, the follow-up, the budget considerations, the legal implications, and the pressure to keep everyone informed and calm at the same time.

What struck me most was the constant pull from all sides. Board members wanted clear answers and responsible decisions, and rightly so. Residents wanted to feel heard, especially when they were frustrated or worried. Owners wanted accountability and results. Contractors had timelines and limitations. The management company had expectations around workload, responsiveness, and performance. Although these demands are part of the job of property management, the challenge is that they rarely arrive one at a time, and they often conflict with one another.

If you work in condominium management, you know how this feels. You can be doing everything possible to address priorities and concerns, and still be perceived as “not responsive enough” because someone else’s issue feels more urgent to them. You can spend hours preventing a problem from escalating, and no one notices because the crisis never happened. You can resolve a situation thoughtfully and still receive criticism because the outcome was not what someone wanted. That is a particular kind of stress: that of carrying significant responsibility in a role where dissatisfaction is often more visible than appreciation.

Many Sources of Stress

Much of the stress in condominium management is easy to see: deadlines, heavy workloads, emergencies, and competing priorities. However, there is also another layer that is less often acknowledged but just as real. Property



managers do a significant amount of emotional labour.

Emotional labour is the effort it takes to stay steady when others are not. It involves managing and regulating one's own emotions and expressions; it is absorbing frustration without reacting defensively, remaining respectful when someone else is not, de-escalating conflict without taking sides, and delivering difficult messages calmly and professionally. Property managers need to do this day after day. Over time, it takes a toll. Being exposed to others' strong emotions while at the same time having to calm our own emotional alarm can be both physically and mentally draining.

There is also another important fact that often goes unspoken. Property managers do not come to work as blank slates. Like everyone else, they are managing their own lives alongside their professional responsibilities. Family obligations, health concerns, financial pressures, relationship stress,

care-giving responsibilities, and major life changes do not pause when the workday begins. For many people, the stress of the job is layered on top of personal stress, not separate from it. When both are present at the same time, even highly capable professionals can find their capacity stretched.

Sometimes stress builds gradually, sometimes it arrives all at once, and sometimes it has simply been there for too long. Whichever way it presents, chronic stress can have a negative impact on our physical, emotional, and mental well-being. If not properly addressed, it can lead to a host of issues, including physical illness and mental health challenges. The impact of stress often shows up quietly at first. For example, you may notice that you feel tired in a way that sleep does not fully fix. You may be more irritable or less patient than usual. You might replay conversations long after the workday ends or find it hard to fully switch off. You may feel behind no matter

how much you accomplish. None of this means you are not good at your job. More often, it means you have been carrying too much – at work, in your personal life, or both – for too long, and with too little opportunity to recover.

Self-Care as Maintenance, Not Indulgence

One of the most important ways to prevent chronic stress from taking a negative toll on our health is to actively engage in strategies that help enhance our well-being; in other words, we need to engage in self-care. Unfortunately, self-care is often talked about as optional or indulgent, something to do if there is time left over. However, in a role as demanding as condominium management, self-care is better understood as maintenance. It is what helps sustain clear thinking, steady communication, and emotional regulation over time.

Self-care does not need to be elaborate or perfect. It is not about eliminating

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stress or becoming unaffected by it. It is about reducing the build-up and creating more opportunities for adaptive and healthy coping.

There is no one “right” way to engage in self-care; it will look different for everyone. The key is finding what works for you. Self-care can involve more active strategies like yoga, meditation, or mindfulness. However, it can also consist of other intentional activities like setting small but meaningful boundaries around availability where possible, taking brief pauses between difficult interactions, creating a short transition at the end of the workday so work stress does not spill straight into personal time, or staying connected with people who understand the work so you are not carrying everything alone. It also includes paying attention to basic needs that tend to erode under stress, such as sleep, movement, and regular meals.

Many property managers resist the idea of self-care because it can feel unrealistic. The question “When would I do that?” is an honest one. But self-care is not about adding another task to an already full schedule. It is not about doing one big time-consuming thing; it is about finding ways to make reasonable adjustments and get small “doses” of self-care throughout the day. This can help to reduce stress levels so that you are not constantly operating in crisis mode.

When Self-Care Is Not Enough

Self-care is important, but self-care alone has limits. There are times when stress becomes so chronic, or the

demands so intense, that individual strategies are no longer sufficient. You can be making intentional efforts to address your well-being and still find yourself struggling and running on empty. When that happens, the answer is not to push harder. Rather, it is often a sign that more support is needed.

Signs that additional support may be helpful include changes to typical functioning, such as feeling persistently exhausted or emotionally depleted, changes in mood (e.g., increased anxiety or irritability), ongoing sleep difficulties, trouble concentrating or making decisions, or a sense of dread about work that does not lift, even after time off. These experiences are not uncommon in high-responsibility roles, and they do not reflect a lack of competence. Rather, they are your body’s way of saying, “Hold up, we need more support”.

Professional Support: A Skilled Resource

In most professions, consulting with specialists is considered responsible and appropriate. If there is a legal concern, a lawyer is consulted. If there is a mechanical issue, an engineer is called. This same reasoning should apply to psychological support: a skilled resource when the human side of the work becomes a challenge, or when we have concerns about our own mental health or well-being.

Many capable, functioning professionals seek therapy or counselling not because they are in crisis, but because

they want support managing chronic stress, navigating difficult interactions, strengthening boundaries, or preventing burnout before it becomes overwhelming. Seeking support is not a sign that someone cannot handle their role. In fact, it is a sign that they are taking both their work and their well-being seriously.

Supporting Sustainability in the Profession

Because they carry so much responsibility, when property managers are depleted, everyone feels it. Communication becomes harder, patience wears thin, and even routine decisions require more effort. This does not reflect a lack of skill or commitment. It reflects limited capacity.

The encouraging reality is that capacity can be supported and rebuilt. Part of that involves self-care. Part of it involves realistic expectations and supportive workplace cultures. And part of it involves normalizing professional support when it is needed.

In May, ACMO will be offering a workshop focused on self-care and wellness for condominium property managers, designed specifically for the realities of the role. The goal is not to offer generic advice or suggest that the solution is simply to relax. The goal is to provide practical, realistic strategies that help protect energy, strengthen boundaries, and support long-term well-being in a profession that asks a great deal of those who do it.

Condominium management is challenging work. Acknowledging that reality, and taking care of yourself within it, is not optional. It is one of the most professional choices you can make. ■

Dr. Wendy Manel is a Clinical Psychologist with extensive experience providing consultation and training to professionals working in high-stress, people-centred roles. Dr. Manel currently practices at the Canadian Mental Health Association as part of Ontario’s Structured Psychotherapy Program, where she provides consultation and training related to evidence-based approaches for depression, anxiety, trauma, and suicide risk assessment and safety planning. Her work emphasizes practical, accessible strategies that support well-being, resilience, and effective practice in demanding environments.







Dana Deoraj, OLCM,
Certified Modo Yoga instructor,
Property Manager,
Icon Property Management

Caring for Buildings Starts with Caring for Yourself

On the evening of Christmas Day, 2016, I found myself struggling to take a full breath. Hyperventilating as I sobbed, my body gutted, and my heart breaking under the weight of devastating news: the death of my ex-boyfriend turned best friend. He had made the conscious choice to end his life, leaving friends and family shocked and shattered during what is meant to be a season of joy.

For the next year, I moved through life purposelessly, drowning in my grief. My body and my mind in utter chaos. Eventually, I reached a quiet breaking point and decided something had to change. In my numb state, I found myself watching a Netflix documentary titled *On Yoga: The Architecture of Peace*. I was deeply moved and unexpectedly inspired by its message of healing. Feeling as

though I had nothing left to lose, I Googled the nearest yoga studio and signed myself up.

Riddled with anxiety, I stepped out of my shadows and into a space that surprised me with its warmth. The environment was friendly, welcoming, and free of judgment. I was surrounded by people of all ages and body types. The instructor described the practice as a moving meditation, repeatedly guiding us back to the audible sound of our breath, also known as *Ujjayi breathing*.

For a brief moment, I forgot about the unbearable weight in my chest. I felt present. I was moving, breathing, and existing in the moment. Over time, the weight inside my heart did not disappear, but the space around it began to grow. Grief is not something we overcome; it is something that we learn to carry.

Today, I speak to you not only as a

yoga instructor, but also as a fellow property manager. I ask you to disconnect—from your computer, your phone, your watch—for one hour a week. Maybe it becomes two hours. Maybe, eventually, you realize how good it feels, and you begin to commit to this time daily. Set aside space to check in with yourself without distractions. Slow down. Pause.

Some days will be easier than others. Some days your mind will wander, and you will feel the urge to run back to emails, notifications, and constant demands. I get it. But at the end of the day, your mental wellbeing is the most vital part of you.

Yoga is not about flexibility. It does not matter if you cannot touch your toes. Yoga prepares the body for stillness and meditation, bringing the body and mind into a state of presence. As property managers, we are constantly

pushed to our limits—looking after everyone and everything except for ourselves. We rarely disconnect from our computers, phones, and smart-watches. Many of us barely even move our bodies between our desks and our cars, only to arrive at home and continue working, caring for our families, and perhaps squeezing in a small window of what we call “relaxation.”

When do we pause? When do we check in with ourselves and ground ourselves in the moment?

Our workloads consume so much mental space that we lose the ability to be present even during our time off, inevitably leading to burnout. Between hectic schedules, large portfolios, demanding boards, residents, and the day-to-day pressures of the job, are we able to breathe amid the chaos? Or are we simply waiting for that one or two week vacation each year to recover?

We cannot wait until we fall apart completely before prioritizing our mental health.

Yoga can feel intimidating or exclusive, but it is important to look beyond it as a purely physical practice. Yoga is deeply mental. Whatever is happening in your life—or in your buildings—will show up on the mat. That is where the work begins. You start to create space around what weighs you down, bringing your body and mind into alignment so you can show up grounded and able to handle chaos with grace.

I urge my fellow property managers to try a yoga class or any form of movement that brings you into the present moment. Find something that suits your body and your fitness level. Call it a distraction if you need to—just let it be something that reconnects you to your breath and your body.

Yoga helps open the body so we can breathe into tension, create space, and release what we are holding onto. It is called a practice for a reason—it is not a onetime solution. It is something we must return to regularly. Without it, we wear down.

No one can do this self-care for us. Think of it as preventative maintenance for your body and mind. We cannot truly look after the people who need us most without first taking care of ourselves.

Find a studio where you feel welcome, safe, and supported—especially as a beginner. Yoga comes in many styles, and most studios offer introductory options to help ease you in. Leave your phone and watch in the change room, and give yourself permission to be fully present. As you step onto your mat and look around, remember that everyone in the room is carrying a weight or fighting a battle that you cannot see.

And let us move away from shaming ourselves when our minds feel busy or our bodies feel tight. This practice is not about perfection; it is about showing up. It takes time, patience, and commitment—but the work is mindful and worth it for our long-term health. ■

Dana Deoraj is a certified Modo Yoga instructor and OLCM Property Manager for Icon Property Management. Dana has worked in the Property Management industry for the last 5 years, and proudly manages TSCC 1708, Kings Court. When not in office, you will definitely find her taking a yoga class! iconpm.ca



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When Emergencies Hit

Balancing the Operational and the Human Side of Condominium Management

By Jennifer Ricci



Emergencies never come at an ideal time, yet condominium managers are expected to respond immediately and effectively, regardless of what else is happening in their day. A flood, fire, power outage, life safety event, or mechanical failure does not pause regular operations; it compounds them. While tending to the many moving parts of an emergency, managers are simultaneously coordinating emergency response teams and trades, communicating with residents, boards, and insurers, and working closely with on-site staff such as superintendents and security. In the midst of all this activity, one critical element is often overlooked: checking in on one another as human beings.

The operational demands of an emergency are undeniable. Decisions must be made quickly. Risks must be mitigated. Documentation must be accurate. Communication must be timely. These responsibilities naturally push managers into an operational mindset, one focused on tasks, timelines, policies, and procedures. This mindset is essential, but when it becomes the dominant mode for extended periods, it can quietly erode our capacity for empathy, connection, and even our own mental well-being.

Small, intentional check-ins throughout an emergency can act as a reset button for both managers and the people around them. Asking a superintendent whether they need a few minutes to eat or step away, checking in with security to ensure they have

the information they need to respond to residents calmly, or acknowledging that a long day has taken its toll are not inefficiencies. They are grounding moments that slow the emotional pace of a crisis just enough to allow people to breathe, refocus, and continue with greater clarity.

These check-ins do more than support others; they also support the manager. Pausing to recognize the human impact of an emergency helps prevent the tunnel vision that can lead to emotional exhaustion. When managers allow themselves brief moments of connection, they are often better able to regulate stress, maintain perspective, and avoid carrying the full emotional weight of the situation alone.

During emergencies, it is especially easy for condominium managers to



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view situations strictly through an operational lens. Residents can unintentionally become unit numbers, repair scopes, and responsibility determinations outlined in governing documents. This structure is necessary; it ensures fairness, consistency, and compliance. But when the operational lens becomes the only lens, interactions can feel transactional rather than relational, increasing frustration for residents and emotional strain for managers.

Emergency communications often rely on mass emails designed for speed and efficiency. While necessary, these messages can feel impersonal to residents whose experience of the emergency may be frightening or deeply disruptive. A brief acknowledgment of stress or uncertainty does not weaken the message; it humanizes it. For managers, this shift can also reduce the volume of reactive follow-up, complaints, and misunderstandings that add to cognitive and emotional overload.

Many residents experiencing an emergency are doing so for the first time. They may be unfamiliar with governing documents, why certain repairs fall to them, insurance processes, and timelines for repairs. Confusion and anxiety often show up as anger or impatience. Approaching these interactions with empathy, while still maintaining clear boundaries, can de-escalate tension and protect the manager's own emotional energy. Empathy, in this context, becomes a tool for sustainability rather than self-sacrifice.

This is where the humanistic mindset becomes not only beneficial but necessary. A humanistic mindset does not replace operational competence; it

complements it. It acknowledges that emergencies affect people emotionally as much as they do physically or financially. Behind every unit number is a person navigating uncertainty. Behind every uniform is a staff member absorbing stress from multiple directions. Recognizing this allows managers to lead in a way that is both effective and emotionally intelligent.

Practical strategies can make this mindset easier to sustain. Preparing email templates that outline responsibilities, policies, and procedures saves time during emergencies, but leaving space to personalize them reinforces connection. Offering opportunities for conversation, whether through one-on-one meetings or informal town halls, can prevent misunderstandings while giving residents a sense of being seen and heard. These moments of dialogue often reduce repeat inquiries and diffuse tension, benefiting both residents and managers.

Follow-up matters as well. Once the urgency has passed, a short check-in call or email can signal that support did not end with the emergency response. For managers, these follow-ups often close emotional loops, providing a sense of resolution rather than lingering stress. They also reinforce trust, making future interactions smoother and less adversarial.

Empathy must extend inward, too. Managers and on-site staff are not immune to the cumulative toll of emergencies. Long hours, emotionally charged conversations, and competing priorities can quickly lead to burnout if unchecked. Encouraging breaks, recognizing effort, and reminding teams and ourselves not to take reactions personally are acts of lead-

ership that preserve mental well-being. When managers model this balance, they create a culture where people feel supported rather than depleted.

Ultimately, managing emergencies with both an operational and humanistic mindset strengthens relationships at every level of the community. Residents who feel acknowledged are more likely to respond with patience and understanding. Staff who feel supported are more resilient and engaged. Managers who allow space for empathy are better equipped to sustain themselves in a demanding role.

Emergencies will always be part of condominium management. They are unavoidable and often unpredictable. But when we consciously step out of constant operational mode and allow room for human connection, we build trust, reduce emotional strain, and protect our own mental health in the process.

Effective condominium management is not only about managing the crises; it is about caring for the people navigating them, including ourselves. ■

Jennifer Ricci, RCM is an experienced Regional Manager with over 18 years in condominium management, education, and leadership. She holds a BA (Honours) from York University, an RCM designation, and a SEDA accreditation, is a Donna Farr Award recipient, instructs a CMRAO course at Humber College, and was appointed to the ACO Board in 2025. Passionate about advancing professional standards and education within the industry, Jennifer is proud to be involved in the ACO Mentorship program. iccpROPERTYMANAGEMENT.COM



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Moe Saad, OLCM,
Principal,
Apex Condo Management

Wellness at Work

Practical Approaches to Supporting Mental Health in Condominium Management

Condominium management is a profession built on responsibility, judgment, and continuous interaction with people. Managers are expected to balance the interests of boards, owners, residents, contractors, and regulators, often in situations that are time-sensitive, emotionally charged, and legally consequential. While the work is rewarding, the sustained pressure associated with these demands can, over time, affect well-being and professional effectiveness if not addressed through thoughtful organizational practices.

Mental health in the workplace is sometimes framed as a purely personal issue. In condominium management, however, it is also an operational and governance consideration. Clear processes, realistic expectations, and consistent communication structures can play a significant role in reducing unnecessary stress, supporting sound decision-making, and promoting long-term professional sustainability.

Understanding Where Pressure Arises

Many of the stressors experienced by condominium managers are structural rather than individual. These include high volumes of daily communication, expectations of immediate response, frequent conflict resolution, regulatory compliance obligations, and the need to manage risk on behalf of corporations. Managers often shift rapidly between strategic planning, technical problem-solving, and sensitive interpersonal situations, leaving limited time for uninterrupted work or recovery.

Recognizing that these pressures are inherent in the role helps move the discussion away from personal resilience alone and toward workplace design. When workflows and expectations are aligned with the realities of the profession, the environment becomes more supportive, predictable, and sustainable.

Mental Health as an Operational Consideration

Sustained cognitive and emotional load can affect concentration, documentation quality, and judgment. From an organizational perspective, this has implications for risk management, consistency, and service delivery. Clear systems reduce the likelihood of misunderstandings, rework, and escalation, all of which contribute to stress for both managers and stakeholders.

Viewing wellness through an operational lens also supports continuity and retention within the profession. Managers who work within well-defined structures are better positioned to maintain professional boundaries, prioritize effectively, and deliver consistent service over the long term.

Communication Protocols that Support Wellbeing

One of the most effective tools for reducing unnecessary pressure is the



establishment of clear communication protocols. These include:

- Defined channels for routine matters versus urgent issues
- Transparent response-time expectations
- Standardized formats for common requests and updates
- Consistent escalation procedures

When boards and residents understand how and when to communicate, and what level of response to expect, the volume of reactive and duplicative messaging decreases. This predictability benefits all parties and allows managers to allocate attention more effectively, reducing the sense of constant urgency.

Standard response templates for frequently raised topics—such as maintenance requests, rule enforcement, and administrative processes—also help ensure consistency and neutrality. They allow managers to focus on substance rather than repeatedly crafting individualized replies, while maintaining a professional and respectful tone.

Reducing Emotional Labour Through Standardization

A significant portion of a condominium manager's work involves addressing concerns, complaints, and disputes. These interactions often require emotional regulation and careful wording, particularly when tensions are high. Over time, this "emotional labour" can become taxing if every situation is handled in a purely ad hoc manner.

Standardized procedures, policies, and correspondence help separate the issue from the individual. Enforcement letters, complaint responses, and decision frameworks that are grounded

in governing documents and established practice reduce personalization and support fairness. This not only strengthens the corporation's position but also provides managers with a clear reference point, reducing the emotional burden associated with difficult conversations.

Aligning Board Expectations

Boards play an important role in creating conditions that support sustainable management. Clear alignment on roles, priorities, and timelines helps prevent unrealistic expectations and last-minute urgencies that can contribute to stress.

Practical tools to support alignment include:

- Annual work plans and priority setting
- Regular, structured reporting
- Agreed-upon communication protocols
- Orientation materials outlining management scope and processes

When boards have a shared understanding of operational constraints and regulatory requirements, discussions tend to be more focused, and decision-making more efficient. This clarity supports both effective governance and a healthier working environment.

Recognizing Early Indicators and Responding Constructively

Early signs that workload or stress levels may be affecting professional functioning can include difficulty prioritizing, reduced clarity in communication, increased reactivity, or persistent backlogs. Addressing these indicators early allows for constructive adjustments, such as refining workflows,

reallocating tasks, or revisiting communication volumes and expectations.

Peer support, professional development, and access to organizational resources can also play a role. The objective is not to medicalize normal workplace stress, but to ensure that systems are in place to support consistent performance and wellbeing.

Building Sustainable Practice

Wellness in condominium management is supported not by a single initiative, but by a collection of practical, well-designed practices: clear processes, predictable communication, standardized documentation, and aligned governance. These measures contribute to professionalism, risk management, and service quality, while also creating an environment in which managers can perform effectively over the long term.

As the profession continues to evolve, integrating mental health considerations into operational planning and governance discussions will help ensure that condominium management remains both effective and sustainable. By viewing wellness as part of sound organizational design, managers and boards alike can contribute to healthier, more resilient communities—both for residents and for the professionals who serve them. ■

Moe Saad, OLCM, is a licensed condominium manager and Principal of Apex Condo Management in Ottawa. He brings extensive experience in condominium governance, operations, and stakeholder communication, with a focus on practical management solutions and professional sustainability.
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Boundaries Are Not Optional

Protecting Mental Health in a 24/7 Role

By Karen Rubin



Condo management has earned a reputation as a job that never really turns off. Phones ring at night or during family events. Emails arrive on week-ends. A minor issue can feel urgent simply because it's happening now. Often, if managers do not treat small issues as urgent, they are met with heightened resident frustration or an escalation of complaints.

Many managers accept this as part of the job. But constant availability isn't a badge of professionalism. It's a fast track to burnout.

Boundaries aren't about doing less. They're about doing the job well, protecting mental health, and creating systems that actually work for everyone. When managers are supported, communities are stronger.

The Expectation of Constant Availability

Most condo managers don't enter the profession looking to set limits.

We care. We want to be responsive. We want residents and boards to feel supported.

Over time, though, that sense of responsibility can quietly turn into an expectation to always be available, always reachable, always "on."

The challenge is that real emergencies do exist. Floods happen. Heat goes out. Life safety systems fail. When everything feels like an emergency, managers never get to turn off, and the workday never really ends. That level of stress doesn't just wear people down. It affects decision-making, sleep, and performance.

Availability does not Equal Effectiveness

A rested, focused manager will always make better decisions than one reacting to every message in real time, which is why clear boundaries around what is, and isn't, an emergency matter. These definitions are not just for residents; they also guide superintendents and concierge staff

so they know what they can address themselves and when management truly needs to be involved. When everyone shares the same understanding of what requires immediate escalation and what can wait, then it prevents frustration before it starts and avoids setting boundaries for the first time in a heated moment.

Handling Pushback Without Guilt

Even with clear systems in place, pushback will happen, and in a role that is so focused on people, it can feel personal. It helps to remember that boundaries are not meant to punish anyone; they exist so managers can do their jobs well and make good decisions. Setting expectations calmly and sticking to agreed-upon processes allows issues to be handled at the right time and with the attention they deserve. People may test limits at first, but over time, consistency leads to understanding for some and simple acceptance for others. Either outcome makes the work more manageable for everyone.



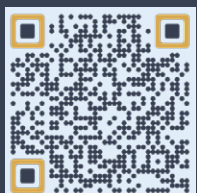


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Why Boundaries Pay Off

Healthy boundaries don't just protect managers. They make the work better. When managers operate within clear limits, there are fewer emotional confrontations, decisions are made with a clearer head, and relationships with boards tend to be more respectful and productive. Boundaries also make it possible to stay in this profession for the long term. A burned-out manager cannot support a healthy community. Sustainable service requires sustainable people.

Leadership That Supports Wellness: What Boards Can Do

Boards quite rightly focus on finances, maintenance, and compliance. But when human capacity is overlooked, problems follow. Chronic stress contributes to mistakes, strained relationships, and manager turnover, all of which ultimately cost time, money, and stability. Supporting manager wellness isn't a favour or a perk; it's a core component of good governance and long-term sustainability.

Often, without realizing it, boards can unintentionally add pressure by expecting instant responses at all hours, undermining management decisions in front of residents, micromanaging day-to-day operations, or allowing owners to bypass established communication channels. These behaviours usually stem from awareness gaps rather than bad intentions, and they are fixable. Boards that support wellness do so by setting and respecting clear communication protocols, designating a single board liaison, consistently supporting enforcement decisions, backing management during resident conflict, and respecting defined working hours and escalation processes. These boundaries give managers the clarity and confidence they need to do their jobs well, without burning out.

Psychological Safety Matters

Managers perform best when they feel safe raising concerns without fear of blame or dismissal. Psychological safety leads to earlier problem-solving, stronger communication, and smoother operations overall. When boards move from reactive oversight

to collaborative leadership, everyone benefits, including residents.

A Shared Responsibility

Manager wellness is not an individual issue. It is shaped by boards, management firms, and industry-wide expectations. When mental health is supported and boundaries are respected, the result is greater stability, professionalism, and better-managed communities. Boundaries are not barriers. They are

what allow managers to stay well, stay present, and stay in the profession. ■

Karen Rubin has over nine years of experience in the condominium sector, including roles in both administration and management. She has experience supporting boards, owner communication, capital planning, and navigating governance-related challenges. Karen is actively involved in the condominium community through industry education and writing.

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Deborah Howden,
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From Stress to Success

The Legal & Human Side of Mental Health in Condo Management

If you are a condominium property manager, your unofficial job titles likely include Noise/Smell Investigator, Parcel Traffic Controller, Part-time Social Worker, and Chief Catastrophe Officer (e.g., the person everyone emails on a weekend when an elevator stops working). The role is an endless cycle of customer service, community building and crisis management. You are expected to do it all with a smile and a cheerful attitude. And this is exactly why your own mental well-being at work is not just a nice added bonus. It's a necessity. It's a right.

The Law, in One Elevator Pitch

While no right to mental well-being is explicitly recognized in Canadian legislation, mental health disabilities are protected under provincial anti-discrimination laws. Under Ontario's *Human Rights Code*, the term "disability" includes mental health disorders.¹

That means that substance use disorder, major depression, PTSD, bipolar disorder and other psychosocial disabilities are protected grounds. Employers (including condominium corporations and property management firms) have a duty to accommodate disability to the point of undue hardship. There are two parts to that duty. The procedural duty requires employers to genuinely consider the needs associated with the mental health condition and to explore options for addressing those needs. The substantive duty requires the employer to provide reasonable accommodation that actually works. If an employer neglects either duty, it is offside the Code.

A Note on Accommodation

Stigma and misunderstanding around mental health can make it very difficult for property managers to speak openly about their own needs

and well-being. In the condominium industry, as in many others, it is often much easier to tell someone you have a cold or back pain than to admit you are dealing with burnout, anxiety, or another mental health concern. While no one would blame a property manager for becoming physically ill, mental health challenges are still too often met with unfair judgment and a lack of understanding.

It is important to remember that property managers have the right to fair and respectful treatment if they are experiencing a mental health issue. The Ontario Human Rights Commission policies are very clear. Accommodation for mental health disabilities is just as rigorous a requirement as accommodation for physical disabilities.² The process and solutions should be individualized, respectful of dignity, and aimed at an employee's full participation in the workplace.



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Accommodation is required to the point of undue hardship, having regard to considerations of i) health and safety, ii) cost, and iii) outside source of funding.³ This is a high threshold. Most mental health accommodations cost little and do not raise safety concerns. Employers must seriously evaluate accommodation options before claiming undue hardship.

One case, *Lane v. ADGA Group*⁴, should be required reading for anyone hiring or supervising staff. In that

worrying that it will label them as weak or ineffective. Remind employees that they never need to reveal a diagnosis in order to ask for help. An employer's job is to respect their privacy to the extent possible and focus on what will help them do their best work.

Document the Process

Condominiums run on documentation – incident logs, mechanical records, meeting minutes. Supporting staff is no different. When a staff member requests

The role is an endless cycle of customer service, community building and crisis management. You are expected to do it all with a smile and a cheerful attitude.

matter, the employee was fired after he disclosed he had bipolar disorder⁵ with potential episodes of mania. He was fired on the basis that he could not perform the responsibilities of his job. The Tribunal found discrimination because the employer barely investigated possible supports for the employee. As a result of the termination, the employer had to pay the employee close to \$100,000 in damages.

Here are some concrete ways in which condominium corporations and management companies can genuinely support building staff.

Create clear policies

Start with the basics. A workplace without clear policies is like a high-rise with no fire panel. Put clear policies in place. At a minimum, employers should have an anti-harassment and anti-violence policy that meets the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* requirements.

Train your People

No one learns how to manage people just by reading policies. Supervisors need periodic refreshers on the duty to accommodate.

Normalize the Conversation

Supporting mental health in the workplace does not mean demanding that people share their life stories. It means giving them permission to speak up when they are struggling without

accommodation, involve the corporation's lawyers in the process as quickly as possible. Ultimately, you should document what the employee requested, the information that was exchanged, the options you explored together, and what you ultimately implemented. An employer should never dismiss accommodation requests out of hand or make decisions on the fly.

Use Person-First Language

Language shapes the community culture. Make it standard practice to refer to someone as "a person living with a mental health issue" rather than using labels like "insane". The goal is to acknowledge the person before their condition.

Similarly, if you hear stigmatizing comments or see behaviour that demeans or dismisses someone's mental health condition, address it. You do not have to lecture anyone. Sometimes a simple reminder or gentle correction prevents harmful patterns from taking hold. A supportive environment starts with the leaders who create it.

Fake Emergencies

Emergencies happen, but not everything is an emergency. When issues arise after hours and can wait, let them. Encouraging directors and residents to understand what counts as urgent is one of the simplest ways to contribute to a healthy work environment.

Celebrate the Wins

Property management is full of invisible victories. Recognize them. A quiet thanks for a crisis handled well, a project completed smoothly, or a difficult resident situation resolved with tact goes a long way.

The Takeaway

Condominium property management is people-focused work. It can be intense and occasionally frenetic. Prioritizing mental health helps keep good property managers in the profession and builds calmer, healthier condominium communities.

Maintaining good mental health in the workplace is not a luxury, a perk, or something people should have to "earn". Every person has a right to feel safe, supported, and able to discharge their workplace duties without stigma or barriers.

Buildings don't stand without support, and neither do the people who care for them. ■

SR - 5364063.1

1. Section 10 of the Ontario Human Rights Code provides a broad, comprehensive definition of "disability," covering mental disorders, including temporary, permanent, or perceived disabilities. It protects individuals from discrimination based on these grounds in employment, housing, services, and contracts.

2. The Ontario Human Rights Commission's Policy on Preventing Discrimination Based on Mental Health Disabilities and Addictions, section 13, the Duty to Accommodate.

3. Section 17(2) of the Human Rights Code.

4. *Lane v. ADGA Group Consultants Inc.*, 2007 HRTO 34.

5. Bipolar I Disorder is characterized by one or more Manic or Mixed Episodes, usually accompanied by Major Depressive Episodes: Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (4th ed. — Text Revision) at 345.

Deborah Howden is a partner in the Condominium Law Group at Shibley Righton LLP. Her practice involves all aspects of condominium law issues for condominium corporations of all sizes across southwestern Ontario, including providing general corporate advice to condominium corporations on governance, building deficiencies, shared facilities disputes and compliance issues. She sits on the CCI - Toronto Legislative Committee and the joint ACMO, CAI and CCI Safety and Security Committee. Deborah can be reached at deborah.howden@shibleyrighton.com. shibleyrighton.com



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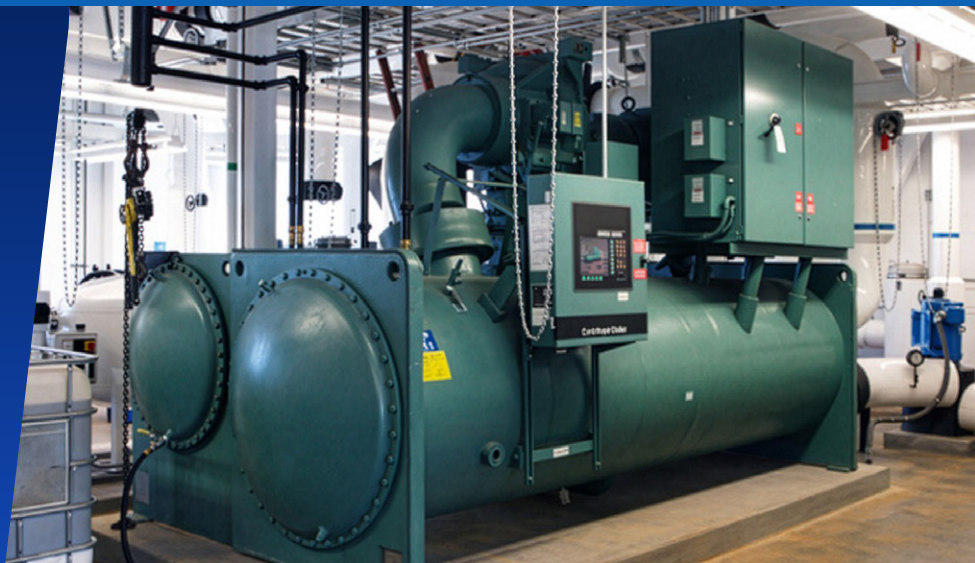
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When Everything Feels Urgent

Reducing Decision Fatigue in Condo Management

By Tim Bolivar



Condominium managers make decisions constantly. The challenge is not the occasional high-stakes issue, but the steady volume of routine judgments, interruptions, and one-off requests that require attention throughout the day. Over time, this creates decision fatigue: slower thinking, more second-guessing, and mental exhaustion that directly contributes to stress and burnout.

A practical response is not to ask managers to simply cope better. The more effective approach is to **reduce the number of decisions competing for attention**. Three operational practices do that consistently in real condominium environments:

1. **Planning** work early so decisions are made proactively, not under pressure.
2. **Chunking** similar work together to reduce context switching.
3. **Policies** that allow boards to decide once and management to apply consistently.

Even on their own, each of these reduces mental load. Used together, they form a system that supports both effective governance and manager wellbeing.

Planning: Deciding Early Instead of Deciding Under Pressure

Decision fatigue is often a timing problem. When work is handled reactively, decisions are made late, quickly, and alongside competing demands. Planning shifts decisions earlier, when there is time to think clearly, sequence

work logically, and prevent predictable issues from becoming urgent.

In practice, planning that reduces decision fatigue usually includes:

- **Working backwards from fixed dates** such as AGMs, audits, contract renewals, and seasonal work, identifying the actions required well before deadlines arrive and sequencing them on a calendar.
- **Using the operating budget and reserve fund together as a decision framework**, so projects are timed realistically, priorities are clear, and unfunded ideas are deferred to future planning rather than debated mid-year.
- **Applying repeatable planning templates for common projects**, using clear checklists for recurring work such as AGM preparation,



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contract renewals, or major maintenance projects, so each step in the process is addressed at the right time without having to rethink how the work should unfold.

When planning is done well, many decisions are effectively made once. What remains during the year is execution, not constant re-evaluation.

Chunking: Reducing Fatigue by Reducing Context Switching

Decision fatigue is intensified by constant context switching. Moving repeatedly between different types of responsibility: resident concerns, building operations, vendor management, board matters, and compliance obligations requires frequent mental resets and makes sustained focus harder.

Chunking reduces this strain by grouping similar types of work so attention is applied in a more focused way. The goal is not to delay action, but to limit fragmentation.

Effective chunking often shows up in a few practical forms:

- **Grouping similar work across properties**, such as sourcing vendors for the same service at the same time or reviewing comparable contracts together.
- **Grouping work by type of task**, for example, consolidating site inspections, vendor meetings, board follow-ups, or owner service request follow-ups into focused blocks rather than scattering them throughout the week.
- **Grouping routine work into planned batches**, so routine items are addressed deliberately rather than immediately, reducing urgency creep while allowing true emergencies to interrupt when they must.

By reducing fragmentation, chunking makes work feel more contained and predictable. That containment is what preserves mental energy over the long term.

Policies: Deciding Once and Applying Consistently

Policies are the most direct way to reduce decision fatigue. They convert repeated judgment calls into agreed frameworks, allowing managers to act confidently without renegotiating expectations each time.

Well-designed policies are the oppo-

site of micromanagement. Instead of increasing oversight, they reduce constant input by replacing ad hoc direction with clear, consistent guidance. The policy becomes the decision, allowing managers to focus on execution rather than repeated approval-seeking.

High-impact policy areas often include:

- **Approval authority and spending thresholds**, clearly defining what management can approve, when consultation is required, and when a board decision is needed.
- **Vendor procurement and contract renewal processes**, setting consistent steps for sourcing, quoting, evaluating, and approving vendors, so managers are not re-deciding the process each time work is required.
- **Enforcement and communication protocols**, establishing consistent notice sequences, escalation points, and standardized communication templates, so managers are not rewriting messages each time an issue arises.

Board meetings play a key role here. Meetings are most effective when they

focus on approving policies and decision frameworks, rather than repeatedly revisiting routine operational decisions. If it feels like the board is micromanaging projects at the table, it is usually a signal that a policy is missing.

Conclusion

Decision fatigue in condominium management is often a structural issue created by volume, repetition, and fragmented attention.

Planning moves decisions earlier and reduces reactive pressure. **Chunking** limits context switching and helps contain mental effort. **Policies** eliminate repeated decisions by creating clear, board-approved defaults. Together, they form a practical system that reduces mental load, improves consistency, and supports sustainable performance in a demanding profession. ■

Tim Bolivar is a former Registered Condominium Manager and the founder of Minutes On-Time. He works closely with condo boards and managers to improve governance processes, meeting structure, and operational clarity. minutesontime.com



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Jessica Ansah, BA, RCM, OLCM,
Condominium Manager,
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Mental Health Isn't a Seminar — It's a System

Condominium management is demanding. The work is complex, fast-moving, and highly visible – where decisions, delays, and outcomes are immediately felt by boards and residents alike. Conversations about mental health in the industry often focus on resilience, self-care, and emotional coping strategies. While those tools have value, they tend to overlook a more fundamental truth: burnout in this profession rarely comes from the work itself. It comes from operating inside systems that cannot absorb pressure.

Most managers' inboxes are museums of little emergencies. Everyone needs something. Essential obligations, minor requests, real emergencies, and imagined ones arrive together, all competing for attention. When there is no structure to separate signal from noise, everything feels urgent. Over

time, clarity erodes, energy drains, and stress becomes the default state.

The solution is not to cope harder. It is to design systems that produce stability by default.

The Misdiagnosis of Burnout

When managers feel overwhelmed, the default assumption is often that they need to “manage stress better.” They are encouraged to build resilience, attend wellness seminars, or adopt new coping strategies. While well-intentioned, this approach places responsibility entirely on the individual while leaving the work environment unchanged.

In practice, burnout in condominium management is frequently caused by excessive reactive work, constant interruptions, and blurred role expectations. When everything is treated as urgent, attention becomes fragmented, and decision-making suffers. Even

highly capable professionals begin to feel depleted—not because they lack emotional strength, but because the system demands constant vigilance to function. Mental health, in this context, is not simply an emotional issue. It is an operational one.

Mental Health as a Systems Issue

People are wired differently. Temperament, capacity, and stress tolerance vary. But regardless of personality, no one performs well for long inside a system that is unfiltered, reactive, and constantly interruptive.

A well-designed system reduces stress before it occurs. It does not rely on individual endurance to compensate for operational inefficiencies.

Common contributors to system-driven stress include:

- Undefined or expanding scopes of responsibility

- Lack of clear prioritization between essential and non-essential work
- Unmanaged after-hours expectations
- Insufficient or poorly utilized administrative support
- A culture that rewards immediacy over judgment

When these conditions exist, managers are forced into perpetual reaction mode. Over time, confidence, clarity, and energy erode.

Burnout in this profession rarely comes from the work itself. It comes from operating inside systems that cannot absorb pressure.

Conversely, when expectations are explicit and work is intentionally structured, pressure decreases naturally. Mental health improves not because individuals are trying harder to cope, but because the environment supports focused, deliberate work.

Essential Work vs. Reactive Work

One of the most effective ways to reduce stress is to clearly distinguish between essential work and reactive work.

Essential work protects the corporation's long-term interests: governance obligations, regulatory compliance, financial oversight, contract management, risk mitigation, and strategic planning. Reactive work—emails, non-essential follow-ups, perceived urgencies—often feels immediate but is not always consequential.

When essential and reactive work are treated as equal, managers become busy without being effective. Priorities blur. Everything feels important, which means nothing truly is.

Clear prioritization restores order. It allows managers to allocate attention where it matters most and address lower-impact tasks within defined limits. This alone significantly reduces mental strain.

Boundaries as Infrastructure

Boundaries are often framed as personal preferences. In professional settings, they function as infrastructure. They shape expecta-

tions, influence decision-making, and determine how work flows. When availability is unlimited, expectations expand to fill it. The result is constant interruption, blurred urgency, and increased reactivity—conditions that erode judgment rather than improve outcomes.

Clear boundaries around work hour availability, response times, and after-hours communication introduce predictability into the system.

They protect focus during the workday and keep work contained within reasonable limits. Importantly, they do not reduce service quality. They improve it by preserving judgment and reducing unnecessary escalation. The benefits are shared. Managers retain the cognitive space required for sound judgment and clarity. Boards receive more considered recommendations. Residents experience steadier, more reliable communication. Teams operate within defined expectations rather than perpetual urgency.

In this sense, boundaries are not about limiting service. They are about stabilizing it. They contain reactivity so that truly urgent matters receive appropriate attention, while routine issues are handled through appropriate channels. Over time, this structural clarity reduces stress at its source and supports sustainable work.

Using Administrative Support Strategically

Administrative support is most effective when used intentionally. When managers retain tasks that could be delegated, cognitive load increases unnecessarily.

The issue is not workload volume alone, but workload composition.

Strategic delegation allows managers to protect their attention for work that requires professional judgment—decision-making, risk assessment, and board communication. When admin-

istrative systems are aligned with this goal, stress is reduced at its source rather than managed after the fact.

Reducing Reactivity Improves Decision-Making

Constant responsiveness is often mistaken for effectiveness. In reality, high-quality work requires space for assessment and reflection.

When managers build intentional pauses—before responding, before deciding, before escalating—communication improves, and errors decrease. Reduced reactivity leads to steadier judgment and more consistent outcomes. Over time, boards and residents benefit from measured, well-considered decisions rather than rushed reactions.

This approach does not slow work. It stabilizes it.

Designing for Sustainability

The goal is not to eliminate pressure. The goal is to design systems that absorb it rather than transfer it entirely onto individuals.

When work is structured, priorities are disciplined, and boundaries are consistent, mental health improves as a natural by-product. Managers are no longer asked to endure unsustainable conditions in the name of professionalism. Instead, they are supported by systems that allow them to perform at a high level over the long term.

Mental health in condominium management should not be treated as a personal test of resilience. It should be addressed where it truly lives—in how work is structured, how expectations are managed, and how leadership is practiced.

Strong systems do not eliminate pressure. They contain it. And when the structure is sound, success follows—not because individuals are trying harder, but because the system is finally working with them instead of against them. ■

Jessica Ansah, BA, RCM, OLCM, is a condominium manager with experience in portfolio oversight, governance support, and operational structure. She is recognized for her clear, systems-based approach to management, enabling consistent decision-making and long-term operational stability.
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Wellness at Work

Practical Strategies to Support Condo Managers

By Furquan Khan



Condominium management is a high-responsibility career requiring a huge amount of decision-making, emotional control, and constant availability. Research has found that long periods of exposure to high workloads, high rates of conflict, and being available for extended periods of time can lead to elevated levels of workplace stress and exhaustion/burnout in the condominium management profession.^{i, ii} This article will discuss the developing best practices that provide practical, evidence-based strategies to enhance the mental health of managers, reduce burnout and encourage resilience within the condominium management profession while giving sustainable

performance and promoting long-term resilience in the profession.

The “Always On” Reality of Condominium Management

Condominium managers work in an inherently unstable environment, where residents are presenting emergencies and regulatory obligations expand. Condominium management’s boundaries between “business hours” and “personal hours” become blurred; thus, the industry continues to evolve towards an “always on” culture based on instant communication through technology.

Studies have found that working in high-stress environments with emotional labour can lead to fatigue and cognitive exhaustion.ⁱⁱⁱ They have less recovery time, are more prone to make mistakes, lose interest in

their work and leave than those who don’t feel being observed. Therefore, supporting individuals’ mental health is an important aspect of this profession for operational effectiveness.

1. The Right to Disconnect is a Professional Protective Measure

Ontario’s *Right to Disconnect* law has prompted companies to think about how employees working outside of regular hours affect employee health.^{iv} However, many condominium managers fear that establishing boundaries may be perceived as neglect. Therefore, the idea of disconnecting from work to **risk management strategy** needs to be reframed.

Fatigue negatively impacts judgement, reaction time and the error rates. All of these issues create a risk when responding to an emergency.





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Practical Application:

In order to reduce potential for errors, companies need to establish and communicate an **Emergency Triage Protocol** for determining the difference between what qualifies as an emergency (e.g., fire, flood, failure of an essential service) and administrative emergencies or urgent matters. Resultantly, this will reduce unnecessary contacts and the stress of being always on alert. Additionally, establishing structured on-call schedules will ensure that residents have access to property managers while allowing managers to take adequate time off from work.

2. Using Conflict Management Skills to Reduce Emotional Burnout

High-conflict relationships are one of the main causes of stress for condo managers. They receive resident complaints about finances, service interruptions, or the board's decisions that they have no control over. Repeatedly handling conflict with a high level of emotional intensity can cause condo managers to feel vicarious stress.^v

Conflict resolution training that focuses on **acknowledgment without emotional absorption** through techniques such as validating a resident's emotions, yet maintaining a neutral and factual tone, will help to reduce escalation without personalizing their hostility.

In addition, recovery after interacting with a resident is equally as important as the conflict resolution itself. A brief physical reset to regulate nerves can include walking, drinking water, or deep breathing. Many occupational health researchers continue to support the use of small interventions (i.e., physical reset) to reduce physical stress during working hours.^{vi}

3. Micro-Recovery to Avoid Burnout

Burnout is often thought of as a result of working too many hours; however, literature indicates that burnout can also be caused by prolonged lack of cognitive recovery.^{vii} Managers often perform various tasks with no break and therefore become mentally fatigued.

One way to support cognitive recovery during the workday is by integrating **micro-recovery strategies** into one's routine. Studies show that cognitive performance suffers due to fatigue if we focus continuously for longer than 90 minutes at a time. By incorporating short, scheduled breaks, you can mitigate some cognitive load and help sustain productivity.^{viii}

These strategies are not luxuries but tools for preserving productivity and helping managers be more successful.

4. Using Technology to Reduce Cognitive Load

Administrative complexity also creates a great deal of stress in the workplace. Repetitive "micro-decisions" like keeping track of multiple maintenance requests via email and Excel spreadsheets also cause mental fatigue.^{ix} To minimize this burden, property managers can create centralized communication platforms, resident portals, and establish automated tracking of all maintenance requests in a single system. By using standardized systems, property managers will spend less energy monitoring multiple communication methods and more time resolving real issues.

Case observations with property management firms that have implemented centralized systems for submitting service requests show reduced after-hours interruptions and enhanced employee morale, which further demonstrates how technology can be a tool for enhancing employee wellness when designed with care.^x

5. Structures Within Organizations That Promote Resilience

The way organizations are designed at the institutional level directly impacts mental health outcomes. The conventional "generalist" model, where one person is in charge of finance, maintenance, administration and emergency management. This can cause cognitive switching and increased risk of burnout.

Building relationships among specialists and rotating on-call schedules have a positive impact on job satisfaction and retention, according to occupationally based research, linking role clarity and the equitable distribution of workload to job satisfaction and retention.^{xi} Additionally, peer support is essential. Opportunities for managers to connect with colleagues, formally or informally, will help alleviate isolation and normalize the challenges of being a manager.

Wrapping It Up: Making Wellness a Fundamental Business Principle

The mental wellness of a condominium manager does not just exist on the outside of the operational process; it plays an essential role in creating stability within the operation, the quality of

service provided, and the longevity of the profession. Managers who are supported with clear boundaries, effective tools, and a practical organizational structure will be better positioned to make sound decisions, resolve conflicts in a constructive manner, and stay involved in their work.

By incorporating wellness into all business practices, the condominium management industry can create sustainable, resilient systems to support management, boards, and communities, creating a more stable management environment. ■

Furquan Khan serves as the Regional Director of Sales and Marketing at Flash Security Services Ltd., bringing vast experience in assisting condominium communities and high-pressure situations. He emphasizes security practices informed by mental health, workplace safety, and assisting with operational resilience. flashsecurity.ca

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8 Signs

of a Toxic Condo Owner & How to Handle Them

By Anthony Ing

If you've been in condominium management for any length of time, you've dealt with difficult owners. That part is unavoidable. Condos bring together strong personalities, big emotions, and people who care deeply about where they live and how their money is spent. But not every difficult owner is toxic.



A toxic owner is someone whose behaviour consistently drains time, energy, and morale. Interactions with them leave people feeling anxious, defensive, or exhausted. Over time, this kind of behaviour wears down teams and pushes good people out the door. This article outlines eight common signs of a toxic condo owner, the real effects this behaviour can have, and a few ways professionals can protect themselves.

The Effects of Dealing with Toxic Owners

The impact of toxic behaviour goes far beyond unpleasant conversations.

Over time, staff may begin to feel anxious about opening emails or answering calls. Anticipating conflict becomes part of the job. That constant tension takes a toll, both mentally and emotionally.

Morale often suffers as well. When toxic behaviour is ignored or minimized, people notice. It creates frustration and disengagement, especially among those who are trying to do their jobs professionally.

High turnover is another common outcome. Most people don't leave the condo industry because of the work itself — they leave because

1

Limited Self-Awareness

One of the clearest signs of toxicity is a lack of self-awareness. Toxic owners often don't see how their words or actions land. They may interrupt, escalate minor issues, or send emails that feel unnecessarily aggressive, all while believing they're being perfectly reasonable.

2

Overconfidence

Many toxic owners are extremely confident in their own understanding of condo operations. They may speak authoritatively about legislation, finances, or engineering matters, even when their information is incomplete or flat-out wrong.

3

Unrealistic Expectations

Toxic owners often expect outcomes that simply aren't realistic. They may demand immediate responses regardless of time of day, expect management to override bylaws or legislation, or insist that their issue take priority over everything else.

4

Self-Interested Behaviour

A strong focus on personal impact is another common trait. Toxic owners tend to evaluate every decision based on how it affects them directly, with little consideration for the broader community.

5

Chaotic or Volatile Behaviour

Interactions with toxic owners can feel unpredictable. One week, they are pleasant and cooperative; the next, confrontational or accusatory. Emails may be long, emotional, or sent at odd hours. Tone can shift dramatically without warning.

6

Avoidance of Accountability

When something goes wrong, toxic owners rarely accept any responsibility. Instead, blame is redirected toward management, the board, contractors, or external circumstances.

7

Disrespectful Conduct

Disrespect is where toxicity becomes especially damaging. This might include dismissive language, personal jabs, raised voices, or thinly veiled threats. Even when it's subtle, repeated disrespect chips away at professionalism and trust.

8

Lack of Empathy

Perhaps the most telling sign is a lack of empathy. Toxic owners often fail to recognize that condominium management involves real people operating within real constraints. Workloads, legal requirements, competing priorities, and human limits are brushed aside. Everything is viewed through an adversarial lens, leaving little room for understanding or cooperation.

of environments where disrespect and hostility are normalized. Replacing experienced staff is costly and disruptive.

There are also real health implications. Prolonged stress has been linked to serious physical and mental health issues, including anxiety, depression, and cardiovascular problems. This isn't just about job satisfaction; it's about well-being.

Eventually, many professionals reach burnout. When that happens, energy drops, cynicism rises, and effectiveness declines. Recovering from burnout often requires stepping away from the role entirely.

How to Deal with Toxic Condo Owners

While you can't always change someone's behaviour, you can take steps to protect yourself.

First and foremost, prioritize your own well-being. No role is worth sacrificing your health. Setting boundaries around availability, tone, and acceptable conduct is not unprofessional — it's necessary. Taking time off and using support resources should be seen as preventative, not indulgent.

When possible, aim for constructive, fact-based dialogue. Keeping conversations focused on process, obligations, and realistic outcomes can help de-escalate situations. That said, it's equally important to recognize when dialogue is no longer productive and formal escalation is required.

Documentation also matters. Keeping a clear audit trail of communications, decisions, and timelines protects everyone involved. It reduces misunderstandings and provides clarity if disputes escalate.

Finally, don't deal with toxicity in isolation. Whether it's colleagues, mentors, or peers in the industry, having a support network makes a meaningful difference. Sharing experiences reminds you that you're not alone, and that these challenges are systemic, not personal failures.

Final Thoughts

Toxic condo owners are not just "part of the job." Their behaviour has real consequences for individuals, teams, and organizations.

Recognizing the signs early and responding thoughtfully can help protect both your effectiveness and your health. Professionalism does not mean tolerating abuse, and setting boundaries is not a weakness. In many cases, it's leadership. ■

Anthony Ing is the Co-Founder of Condonexus, the leading provider of electronic proxy collection, virtual and hybrid meeting hosting, and digital budget delivery solutions. Condonexus is trusted by over 1,300 condominiums and 70+ property management firms across Ontario. condonexus.com



Shiona Niven, BA, OLCM,
Founder & President,
Niven Condo Management Inc.

Wellness at Work: Be Kind to Yourself (and Breathe)

There is a lot of attention today on mental health and the importance of taking care of ourselves in all aspects of our lives. I say – It’s about time! As a society, we have not been very good at being kind to ourselves. We’ve carried forward ideologies and work patterns from a different era, and even when we know they no longer serve us, our brains can have a hard time letting go.

The more we talk about mental health and self-care, the more we begin to challenge what was once considered acceptable and redefine what should be the norm. We all know the saying “happy spouse, happy house,” or in a professional context, though it doesn’t roll off the tongue quite as smoothly, “healthy culture, healthy outcomes.” And yet, so many of us struggle to give ourselves the same care, attention, and grace we

readily extend to others. We forget to pause, reset, and breathe.

We tend to praise resilience, responsiveness, and “pushing through” without pausing to ask what those qualities cost over time. In many professional environments, especially those built on service, like condo management, landscaping, parking enforcement (the list could go on and on), reliability becomes a badge of honour. The person who answers first, stays late, or always “handles it” is quietly celebrated. There is pride in being dependable, in being the one others count on when things get hard.

Taking time to pause and examine the long-term impact of this belief – that resilience, responsiveness, and “pushing through” are the hallmarks of professional success – rarely happens. The constant state of readiness, the inability to truly disconnect, and the

internal pressure to never drop the ball slowly take their toll. What begins as dedication and drive can, over time, turn into quiet depletion, especially when rest and recovery are treated as optional rather than essential. In many cases, burnout doesn’t arrive suddenly; it creeps in slowly, disguised as commitment, professionalism, and simply “doing what needs to be done.”

When I was leading a team, there were many moments when the pace felt relentless. Upset unit owners, unexpected emergencies, yet another garbage chute clog – often layered on top of personal matters, team members were quietly carrying. In those moments, I would calmly say, “*And we are breathing. And we are breathing.*” It was my way of grounding the room, creating a pause, and reminding everyone that they were not



alone and that the moment, however stressful, would pass.

To some, it may have sounded a little silly. But over time, something meaningful happened: my team started saying it to one another. It became a shared language and a small ritual that bonded us. Whether the issue was professional or personal, it reinforced the idea that we were in this together and that it was okay to take a breath and be kind to ourselves.

That phrase – *be kind to yourself* – is something I often said and still do. It is advice that sounds simple yet is surprisingly difficult to follow. We are quick to show compassion to colleagues and friends, but far slower to offer the same grace inward. My husband will sometimes ask me, “*What would you tell me if the roles were reversed?*” He knows the answer before I say it. It is a gentle reminder, and almost permission, to pause and be kind to myself.

From a condominium management perspective, this message matters deeply. Managers routinely navigate multiple high-stress situations at once, regulatory obligations, financial stewardship, competing expectations, and the reality that emergencies do not respect evenings or weekends. The work is meaningful. We are entrusted with people’s homes and, for some, their largest investment, but it is also unending.

Here is a hard truth: the to-do list will never reach zero. There will always be another email, another issue, another follow-up. That is precisely why managers need to be reminded that they are human. It is not only acceptable but necessary to step away, to shut off notifications, and to rest. And just as importantly, managers need to know that their peers and leadership have their backs – not just in words, but in practice.

The familiar airline instruction to put on your own oxygen mask before helping others applies here as well. A manager experiencing significant burnout cannot serve their community, their corporation, their families, or themselves as effectively as they could if they were supported in maintaining their own well-being.

If I had one piece of advice to offer, it would be this: be kind to yourself and breathe. At the end of the day, turn the notifications off. Put the work computer away. Do what brings you joy or helps you reset. Spend time with family and friends. Read. Walk. Write. Laugh. Whatever it might be. For me, it might be snuggling down with a good book, writing the next chapter in the book I have been trying to write for way too many years now, or being the occasional clown who makes those around me laugh.

The work will be there tomorrow. You need to be, too. ■

Shiona Niven, BA, OLCM, is the Founder & President of Niven Condo Management Inc., a boutique condominium management firm serving Waterloo and Wellington Regions grounded in thoughtful leadership, strong governance, and a people-centred approach to sustainable condominium management. nivencm.com

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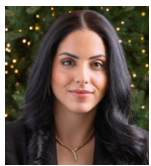
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Mental Health is Infrastructure

Supporting Property Managers to Stabilize Communities

By Luz Haddad



This article is about mental health. It will not be a comfortable read. It's not meant to be. If we are serious about stabilizing condominium communities, we must be serious about the psychological weight carried by the professionals at their center. So let's be direct.

In property management, endurance is often mistaken for commitment and exhaustion becomes normalized. Emotional strain is absorbed quietly and labelled as professionalism. But property management is never just “property” management. It is conflict mediation, crisis containment, emotional regulation, financial oversight, and legal navigation. It is managing building systems while simultaneously managing human systems — stress, frustration, fear, and at times, volatility. Property managers are expected to stabilize environments that are often unstable.

Other professions that involve similar emotional exposure, such as mental health practitioners, have structured safeguards built into their professional framework. Supervision models, peer consultation, psychological support systems, and recognized decompression. Property management does not. Managers routinely navigate high-conflict situations without formalized psychological support, institutionalized



boundaries, or mandated protective frameworks. Over time, cumulative exposure erodes resilience.

Our Boundaries Are Only as Strong as Our Support Systems.

When support systems are weak, escalation becomes more likely.

In December 2022, the Bellaria Residences condominium community in Vaughan, Ontario, experienced one of the most tragic events in Canadian condominium history. A prolonged and escalating dispute between a resident and the condominium board intensified over several years. Legal proceedings unfolded. Tensions increased. Warnings accumulated. The situation ended in violence. Five lives were lost — including board members serving their community.

This was not a routine conflict. It was an extreme outcome resulting from

sustained strain, prolonged hostility, and insufficient structural protection for those positioned at the center of the dispute.

While such events are rare, the underlying pressures are not. Property managers frequently operate in environments where harassment, verbal aggression, and chronic escalation are normalized as “part of the job.” This normalization is dangerous.

The psychological state of property management teams directly influences the emotional climate of the community. When managers operate in a constant state of heightened stress — in fight-or-flight mode — the ripple effect is operational. Communication shortens. Tolerance narrows. Trust weakens.

Residents experience instability even when they cannot identify its source—this is not about blaming residents. The vast majority are reason-

able and respectful—This is about acknowledging a structural gap. Mental health within property management has been treated as a personal resilience issue rather than an operational design issue. It is time to correct that.

Structural Action — Not Symbolic Concern

If property managers are central to community stability, then their psychological protection must be embedded into industry standards.

Regulatory bodies and licensing authorities should formally recognize the emotional exposure inherent in this profession and incorporate structured mental health safeguards into professional requirements.

Property management firms should implement:

- Confidential access to psychological support
- Post-incident debrief protocols for high-conflict events
- Clear anti-harassment protections

- with enforceable consequences
- Defined after-hours communication boundaries
- Training in conflict de-escalation and stress resilience

Industry associations have already begun advocating for stronger legal protections for condo directors and managers in response to rising aggression and threats. That advocacy must continue, and broaden. Policies designed to protect condominium corporations must also protect those who operate them.

Supporting managers is not about reducing standards. It's about stabilizing leadership capacity. When those at the center are protected, supported, and regulated within healthy boundaries, communities operate more effectively.

Mental health is not an optional wellness initiative. It is infrastructure. And infrastructure, when neglected, eventually fails. If we want safer buildings, more stable governance, and stronger communities, we must design systems that protect the people responsible for maintaining them.

Property managers are not shock absorbers for conflict. They are licensed professionals operating within complex legal, financial, and human environments. Expecting them to absorb unlimited psychological strain without structured protection is a design failure.

The future of condominium living will not be defined solely by engineering upgrades, legislative amendments, or capital improvements, but by whether we have the discipline to support the professionals at the center of our communities.

Supporting mental health in property management is not charity. It is governance maturity. It is operational intelligence. It is long-term risk mitigation. The question is no longer whether the strain exists. The question is whether we are prepared to address it structurally — before the next preventable crisis forces us to. Because strong communities are built on supported leadership. ■

Luz Haddad, B.A. (Education), B.A. (Communication), is the Co-Owner of 4Seasons HVAC Solutions, a Canada's Choice Awards winner for Best HVAC Contractor in 2024 and 2025, and a 2026 nominee. She is also the founder of The Avant-Garde Project, empowering the condo community through education.
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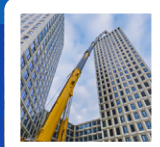
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Shared Facilities Offer Extra Benefits But Come with Risks

By Brandon Murphy



Brandon
Murphy

In a world of offering more for less, it is becoming increasingly common for condo developments to share facilities. These range from joint parking garages to heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems, and even elevators and recreation centres. Frequently shared between two or more corporations and, in mixed-use sites, between residential and commercial entities, these allow facilities to offer residents better and improved amenities.

But while these arrangements offer added benefits and spread costs across more parties, they do raise questions around access, who pays for upkeep, ongoing maintenance and most importantly, how conflicts are resolved if they occur. They also create unique governance and insurance challenges.

While Section 21.1 of the *Condominium Act, 1998* has yet to be proclaimed into force, its potential introduction continues to generate discussion within the industry. There is a potential that every shared facility arrangement may soon be required to have a registered agreement in place. Informal arrangements may no longer be sufficient in the future, and corporations that do not prepare may risk leaving themselves financially and legally exposed.

At the heart of managing shared facilities is ensuring that the cooperating bodies have the rules, regulations and clearly written governance documents in place. Declarations should outline each corporation's responsibilities and share of expenses, while reference and condominium plans show boundaries and common elements.

The shared facilities agreement itself is meant to establish how the parties will operate, maintain, and fund the

facilities. When these documents are carefully drafted and consistent, governance tends to flow smoothly. But when they are vague, incomplete, or overly rigid, disputes can arise. Some agreements fail to list all the shared assets, leaving boards unsure who should pay for maintenance.

The structure of the arrangement also matters. In simple cases, such as two condominiums sharing a small parking lot, expenses can be tracked directly by each corporation. In larger or more complex communities, however, it may be far more effective to establish a separate shared facilities corporation. This allows for its own budget, reserve fund, and financial statements, ensuring that each party contributes fairly and can see where funds are being spent. Not every site needs this structure, but failing to set one up where complexity warrants can result in inequities, deferred maintenance, and even legal disputes.

Insurance plays a central role in protecting corporations and the individuals who serve them. Property and liability insurance are the most obvious coverages, as they protect against damage to physical assets and third-party injury or damage occurring in shared spaces. But these are only the beginning. Shared facilities may involve expensive equipment shared between corporations, such as boilers, chillers, elevators, and HVAC units.

While property insurance may respond to fire or storm damage, the policy will not cover sudden or accidental mechanical breakdowns. This is where equipment breakdown insurance becomes important. While it is uncommon for corporations to directly share responsibility for major systems such as boilers, chillers, or elevators, it does occur in some cases.

In those cases, equipment breakdown coverage ensures that sudden mechanical failures can be repaired or replaced without leaving corporations exposed. Ideally, if the shared facilities agreement is clear and concise, there should be no disputes over which corporation is responsible, but having proper insurance provides an added layer of protection.

Some condominium directors and officers (D&O) policies extend coverage to board members when they act on a shared facilities committee, but some may not. This is why it is always important to consult your insurance broker and confirm exactly what is and is not covered. In smaller, straightforward arrangements, an extension of the condo's D&O policy may be sufficient in covering a board member for the condo corporation who is on the committee for the shared facilities.

In larger multi-tower developments, serving on a shared facilities committee can carry significant financial risk. These committees often oversee high-value assets such as parking garages, HVAC systems, or amenity complexes. Decisions about funding, maintenance, or how costs are divided between corporations can be controversial, and if disputes arise, committee members may be drawn into claims. Without the protection of proper D&O liability insurance, those individuals could find themselves personally responsible for the outcomes of those decisions.

The risks of poor planning are real. One corporation may find itself subsidizing another because cost formulas no longer reflect actual use. Mechanical systems may fail without the funds to replace them. Reserve funds may be inadequate, forcing special assessments. Uninsured gaps can leave not just corporations, but also individual directors and committee members financially exposed.

Accurate appraisals tie these insurance considerations together. They establish the replacement cost of shared facilities and form the foundation for both equitable cost-sharing and appropriate insurance limits. Without an appraisal, a corporation could risk being under-insured, leaving itself exposed, or overpaying into cost-sharing arrangements that do not reflect its true share of the risk.

Property managers are in a unique position to help boards navigate these risks. While lawyers, engineers, and brokers will often need to be involved, managers can add significant value by reviewing the governing documents

early, mapping out which assets are shared, and confirming whether the insurance program extends to the shared facilities arrangement. They can also promote transparency by encouraging clear reporting at the shared facilities committee level, and by recommending professional appraisals to keep both insurance values and cost allocations precise.

Shared facilities offer tremendous benefits to condominium communities, but only if they are properly structured and protected. With Section 21.1 aiming to make agreements mandatory and enforceable, boards and managers will need to ensure not only that documents are in order but that the insurance program is comprehensive.

Property, liability, equipment breakdown, and especially D&O coverage, must be considered together and supported by accurate appraisals. By doing so, boards can protect their corporations, safeguard their volunteers, and ensure their communities remain financially strong and well-governed for years to come. ■

Brandon Murphy is a client executive at BFL CANADA Risk and Insurance Services Inc., one of the largest employee-owned and operated commercial insurance brokerage and consulting services firms in Canada. Our Realty Division, with a team of over 200 real estate professionals located in 27 cities across the country, understands the risks faced by all types of properties, from strata and condo corporations to apartments, commercial and bare land properties. To learn more about us and what we do, visit www.bflcanada.ca/realty-insurance-services

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Let's Talk About Your Condo's Needs.





What's Under the Surface?

Following the Flow from Fixture to Finish

By Simon Pignataro & Sally Thompson

Infrastructure that is critical for the everyday operation of condominiums



Simon
Pignataro

sometimes gets forgotten and overlooked because it's hiding below the surface. Rainwater, sewage, and groundwater-related infrastructure must be properly managed in a well-functioning condominium. Regular maintenance and check-ups of these systems are required to comply with municipal codes and policies and to ensure the safe operation of a building.



Sally
Thompson

This article will cover a few key aspects of building sewage and drainage systems and provide condominium managers with a basic understanding

of their role in keeping these critical systems functioning.

Decoding What Disappears Down the Drain

When you watch the water drain from your sink or see catch basins collect rainwater after a storm, you probably don't think twice about it, but not all sewage is the same. Most older buildings have their systems divided into two streams: sanitary and storm. Additionally, some newer buildings have groundwater as a third, separate stream. Each stream is looked at differently by the authorities.

Sanitary sewage is wastewater collected from various fixtures, including sinks, showers, toilets, and floor drains, which is conveyed via a private, municipal, or provincial sanitary sewer system to wastewater treatment plants/facilities.

Storm sewage is rainwater and snowmelt collected from roof and site drains

and conveyed via a private, municipal, or provincial stormwater sewer system to natural water bodies downstream of a site. Sometimes this stormwater is retained on site for partial re-use or detained on-site to slow the rate of discharge to the municipal sewers. This can be done using a large tank/cistern, or, occasionally, by temporarily storing water on a roof using flow-restricted drains.

Lastly, groundwater is water that exists underground in the saturated layer of the soil and is generally collected by weeping tiles at the foundation of a structure and directed to either the sanitary or storm sewage systems, depending on the jurisdiction and the quality of the water.

While these three types of sewage are distinct, there are several scenarios where the lines blur, which can confuse managers. Firstly, if an area drain is open to the sky above, on a roof, or at grade, it would

be directed to the storm sewer. However, if that same drain were located under a roof structure – such as a covered walkway – it would be directed to the sanitary sewers. Snow that melts outside drains to the storm drainage system, but snow that is tracked into parking garages on vehicles and melts is collected via sanitary drains.

To make things more confusing, some localities have combined municipal sewer systems, where both storm and sanitary water are collected in the same sewer within the street. These are no longer

permitted to be constructed, but still exist in many older areas. In these cases, the building will have multiple discharge streams, but they may be discharged into the single combined municipal sewer. This sewer, under the street, directs the combined sanitary and storm drainage to wastewater treatment plants, creating a significant challenge for municipalities during large storm events when rainwater can overwhelm the facilities.

Costs related to sanitary water treatment plants are generally funded via the

incoming water bill. That is, the municipality charges you for the fresh water, knowing that most of this water will be discharged back to the sanitary sewers for treatment.

Stormwater and groundwater arrive on the site from nature. For stormwater, there is often no charge to discharge it to the storm sewer system, as it simply flows into the natural water body downstream. Where groundwater is handled separately, it will be metered, and you will be required to log discharge volumes and complete annual chemical testing, all of which will be set out in a discharge agreement. If, due to the chemical properties of the water, you are required to discharge your groundwater to the sanitary sewers, you will pay a significant fee for every cubic meter of water you discharge. In some unlucky buildings, this can result in annual charges in excess of \$100,000.

In some cases, there is no excess capacity at the treatment plants or within the local sewer systems, even if the discharging party were to pay a fee. This is one reason that has led to Toronto's current Foundation Drainage Policy which does not permit the discharge of groundwater to *either* the sanitary or storm sewer systems. Instead, these newer buildings must be fully waterproofed below grade so that no groundwater enters the building or they may be required to deal with groundwater on site via a groundwater recharge system. It's our understanding that the City is undergoing a detailed review of this policy, and revisions may be made in Fall 2026, as it can be quite restrictive to condominium designs.

Understanding the differences between sewage types and where they are permitted to be directed is important for ensuring compliance with municipal codes and bylaws. In summary, there are several key scenarios, and a manager should know which exist in their buildings:

- An older building with storm and sanitary discharge, where groundwater was likely not distinguished from stormwater at the time of construction. There is generally no discharge agreement.
- A building with a separate groundwater stream, where the groundwater quality is acceptable to be discharged to the storm sewer.



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There is likely a storm discharge agreement, and there may or may not be a charge related to this discharge.

- A building with a separate groundwater stream, but where the water quality is not acceptable, and the groundwater must be discharged to the sanitary sewer. There is a sanitary discharge agreement, and there is a significant charge related to this discharge.
- A more modern building where the foundation is waterproofed, and there is no groundwater to discharge.
- A more modern building where groundwater enters the building but is returned to the ground via a groundwater recharge system

Interestingly, for older buildings, the municipal wastewater treatment regulator typically has the authority to require further streaming of water (such as separating out groundwater) if the building applies for a permit to make significant repairs to their existing system. Although this is currently a rare occurrence, it may happen soon.

Beyond Gravity

Water from the above-grade portions of a building will typically drain to the municipal sewers via gravity. However, below-grade portions of the building are usually unable to drain by gravity, and this water must be discharged using pumps. In this case, the below-grade piping will feed into one or more sump pits located at the lowest level of the site, equipped with one or more pumps, to direct drainage up to the external sewer.

Stormwater sump pits are usually paired with a settlement pit, where sand and debris can settle out before the water is discharged, whereas sanitary sump pits are usually single pits. Sanitary sump pits occasionally have macerating pumps to deal with solid waste or a separate grease-separation pit. Additionally, there is sometimes a separate elevator (sanitary) sump pit which may drain directly, or which may flow into the main sanitary sump pit. Lastly, some foundation wall water collection systems incorporate a series of pits around the perimeter of the basement to collect sand and debris that flows in with the groundwater.

As a result, there can be many different pits in any given basement or garage. Condominium managers need to be aware of the various pits in their base-

ment and know which pit serves which type of water. Settlement pits will require at least annual cleaning to remove debris. All pumps will require routine maintenance, including confirming that alarms are active in the event of pump failure to prevent flooding. Groundwater sumps, particularly those that discharge to the storm system, will need to be kept clean to maximize the likelihood that the water meets the stringent discharge agreements. In addition to sumps, groundwater meters will need periodic recalibration, as required by the municipality or the meter manufacturer.

In addition to the basement sump pits, your building may also have clean-outs and control maintenance holes at ground level. On the surface, these may look like small, plastic covers or larger, cast-iron covers. These features allow for access to observe that sewage is flowing as expected, as well as acting as a starting point for repairs and regular cleaning. They are a vital part of an effective sewage system and should be inspected regularly, as well as after any plumbing work is done, or if any operational concerns are observed.

In addition to these basic features, more complex systems may incorporate greywater systems and various filtration systems, which are beyond the scope of this article.

Final Flush

While it is tempting to ignore water once it goes down a drain, condominium managers must understand the drainage systems in their buildings to ensure that appropriate maintenance is completed. ■

Simon Pignataro is a Professional Engineer with over 8 years of civil engineering experience in condominium and high-rise building projects across the GTA. He is an Associate and Project Manager with R.V. Anderson Associates Limited, who specializes in site servicing, stormwater management, and municipal infrastructure design, and can be reached at spignataro@rvanderson.com

Sally Thompson is a Professional Engineer who has been practicing in the condominium sector since 1990. She is a Managing Director at Synergy Partners Consulting Limited, author of Condo Questions and Answers: Ontario Edition, and can be reached at sthompson@synergypartners.ca

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Rosali Ventura, RCM, OLCM

Company: Melbourne Property Management

Year entered the profession: 2019

Year RCM obtained: 2025

Other education: Social Communication and Journalism

Mentor(s) in the industry: Shari Grenade, Darla Ahmeti, and Sonela Kola

What inspired you to pursue a career in condominium management, and what was your path to get here? To be honest, it was not part of the plan, but somehow I ended up here. I began my journey as a patrol guard in a beautiful condominium community in the Bayview area, creating many amazing memories at my first job as an employee and a newcomer to Canada. While patrolling, I consistently offered assistance to residents and the concierge desk, stepping in to cover concierge shifts whenever necessary.

After about a year of dedication to the site, I was promoted to head concierge. Shortly thereafter, I was presented with an opportunity to become the scheduling manager for one of the concierge services. However, I soon realized that my true passion lay in directly interacting with residents and being present on-site to assist them.

After returning to the head concierge position, I became increasingly interested in the role of a condominium manager, thanks to the encouragement of several managers who recognized my efforts in engaging with residents and supporting property management. In July 2019, I took on the role of condominium administrator, and since then, I have continually pursued growth in this profession.

If you could teach only one skill to a new condo manager, what would it be, and why is it essential? Multitasking and mentally preparing yourself,

knowing that anything can happen. It is essential because we learn something new every day in the industry. Having the mental set and the capability to adjust and constantly change it is a plus for what we are doing as condominium managers.

Describe a memorable moment or personal victory on the job that made you feel proud. Completing the ACO Courses, getting my General License, and obtaining my RCM.

What's the most unexpected challenge you've faced as a manager—and how did you tackle it? Being in a position where I needed to deal with Board experts on micro-managing, trying to convince me to act against my principles. I have always said respect first, and the rest will follow through. Setting boundaries and making sure everyone understands that this is a profession for me, and that I professionally perform my job. I do have a reputation to maintain, and I take it extremely seriously.

What part of your job gives you the most satisfaction? The challenges that we constantly face, and also seeing communities happy through the accomplishment of their needs, with the help of condominium managers, by following the proper guidelines.

Complete the sentence: I'm an RCM because... I'm proud of being a condominium manager and enjoy every aspect of my job.

Please share a specific way your ACO membership has made a

difference in your work or career development. I'm definitely being more noticed than I thought, and it is very satisfying to know that somehow an impact has been made, directly or indirectly.

Imagine it's five years from now, and everything has gone better than expected—what does your ideal professional life and/or the industry look like? Between a regional director and a VP of Operations, leading and mentoring people and making a difference.

Just for fun...

What's your secret talent (work-related or not)? I can see and hear almost everything; my brain unintentionally catches multiple conversations and people's actions while very busy resolving issues. Shhh, that is not good at all. I'm also addicted to coffee.

What three items are always on your desk—and what do they say about you? Stress balls, a sign saying, "This office runs on hard work, laughter, notes, and a lot of coffee", and a set of timers. Sometimes, it's good to put office visitors on a timer. Real plants.

What's your 'manager mantra'—a quote or phrase that you live by at work? Everything is possible, and there is a solution for anything that arises. My favourite advice is: control your personal emotions and keep them separate from business. ■

Member News



We're celebrating real-world examples of condominiums that go beyond standard amenities, whether through innovative shared spaces, resident-led initiatives, unexpected amenities, or strong community connections. These stories help inspire and inform condominium managers across Ontario while celebrating what makes each community distinct.



Condo Bands Together at the 120 Promenade Tower

Over the last two years, a unique situation has developed at the 120 Promenade Tower in Thornhill. The building's demographic is mainly adults and retirees, with the more recent addition of younger families. The condominium manager, Melalong, along with several other residents, recognized each other's unique musical talents and formed a band, aptly named the "120 Band", each contributing their individual skills with both instruments and vocals.

In the summer of 2024, the band's inaugural performance for the building's residents was a roaring success, with standing-room-only crowds. So much so that a second performance was quickly organized for the annual holiday party and was followed by this year's holiday party to a full house once again. It seems the residents can't get enough.

David Wiener, a featured vocalist who has had such experience in the past, manages the group as they work together on music and song choice. Multi-talented resident Nadine James, also a featured vocalist, plays both guitar and is a seasoned drummer. The condominium manager, Mel, has a unique ability to play several styles of acoustic and electric guitar and maintains a personal collection of them. Additionally, Pat, whose talent extends beyond playing the guitar, is also a skilled sound mixer, adding another dimension to the band. Surprisingly, and recently, a resident and young university student, Sasha, asked to join the band and has added his specialty of electronic keyboard to the mix.

The 120 Band has become a centrepiece of the community, adding new life to this 35-year-old building and bringing together all residents through music, song and enjoyment. ■



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