

WHY EDUCATE?



By Michael Kennedy, CCI NS Board Director and Education Chair

In 2007 I bought my condo unit. It was the first time I owned one and the first time I lived in one. I read all the required documents and thought I was prepared. I thought that since it was a requirement to sign as accepting the conditions as laid out in the ruling documents that everyone understood them and would abide by them. Boy, was I naïve.

changes in ownership and some major repairs including the discovery and repair of elusive water leaks. We have also had personality conflicts and different opinions in how our affairs should be conducted that have led to some serious challenges. It has been quite an experience and I have learned a lot. I imagine that many of you have had similar experiences.

I wish that I had known more before I bought, but then again if I had known then what I know now I sometimes wonder whether I would have bought. However, here I am 14 years later in the same condo-

At that time, the developer was still managing the property and in control of the Board. When the opportunity came and control of the Board shifted to the owners I put my name forward. I was elected and except for a few years when I took a break I have been serving as my Board's president since. Our developer still owns several properties and therefore maintains a significant number of votes. We have had three different property managers, different auditors and engineers for our reserve fund studies, several superintendents, a mix of owners and renters living in the building, many

minium and relatively content. I am much more knowledgeable of condominium operations, have worked through a number of issues and feel confident in our future. That's not to say there won't continue to be issues with the building and with people. There will be, but with continuous learning efforts I know that we will prevail.

I ran for the Board of CCI-NS to specifically work on the education programme and hopefully help others going through similar circumstances that I have gone through and maybe prepare them better than I was for situations our members will face. It is not a question of if, but when. I believe strongly that the proper education can help anyone weather the trials and tribulations of condo life whether as a condo owner, a board director, a property manager, a real estate lawyer, a realtor, a building contractor, developers and anyone else involved in condominium operations.

Condominium corporations can be complex beasts especially given that you have more than one owner and often many owners. Owners who have different needs, desires, thoughts, beliefs, and temperaments that create various personalities. Unlike owning your own house where you have all the decision-making power, being in a condominium requires power sharing where majority rules. To assist in this power sharing the Province has developed legislation that confines corporations, especially Boards and Management companies, to operate within certain boundaries and rules. Despite this, people will often "interpret" these boundaries and rules differently from one another or may decide not to follow the rules for any number of reasons. The Province has created legislation to assist corporations in gaining compliance, but it



can still be a difficult road to take and may be costly, take a lot of time, and may create animosity, and in certain cases, a toxic living environment. Because of that potential, people are often loathe or hesitant to take action hoping that things will sort themselves out, convincing themselves that nothing would change anyway, and therefore not worth the effort or it will make things worse.

One way I hope to challenge that perception and assist others in managing their affairs is in creating a robust and useful education programme for CCI-NS. I had an ambitious programme set for 2019-2020 increasing the number of seminars but then in March 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic arrived and disruption ensued. That situation was not in the playbook, but it came nevertheless.

We had been delivering our programmes in person. We had a successful CM course in the Fall of 2019 conducted in the SMU Atrium building. Our seminars were held at the Future Inns Halifax, as it was convenient for those living in HRM. The pandemic caused us to cancel some of our seminars and shift our delivery to an online platform. Our Board Secretary had a license and some experience using Zoom and was instrumental in getting us back in the game including hosting a series of “coffee” Zoom meetings where anyone could join and discuss condo issues especially regarding the effects of the pandemic. These were a great hit.

Making the shift to online and inspired by the interest shown with the coffee Zoom conferences, I went for an even more ambitious plan this year including conducting both CM courses and increasing the number of seminars. We have had reasonable turnouts with increasing numbers of members. We have had excellent presentations that have helped our members. All in all, a success story.

A great benefit to using Zoom is that we can easily reach our members throughout the province and have reduced our costs to host the courses and seminars. As such, the Board decided to include the educational programme at no cost, contrary to what we had before, as a benefit of being a member. The Board further limited the education programme to members only, except for one session in the fall that was an introductory session to the benefits of CCI-NS. We hope that this decision is creating more value to our members. Whether we go to

a physical location or hybrid in the future for our courses and sessions once the pandemic is no longer, we have yet to decide. My plan for the next series starting in September is to continue with what we are doing at present.

The format for the seminars and courses is more conversational than lecture, where appropriate. The major cornerstone of CCI-NS is to educate. We do this through our educational programme, the newsletter, our website, our Zoom coffee mornings, our representation to the various legislative bodies, and our dialogue with our members through email or telephone. All of our educational efforts are in an effort to influence behaviours. Specifically, we educate:

- a. To inform, in order to develop awareness**
- b. To explain, in order to create understanding**
- c. To persuade, in order to move people in a particular direction**
- d. To inspire, in order to motivate people**

What form or style of education we need is very dependent on the context and circumstances that we are trying to address. Sometimes informing people of a situation is enough for them to take appropriate actions or make better decisions. At other times, people may be aware of something but do not fully comprehend it and therefore may be confused as to what actions or decisions to make. Explanation may reduce that confusion and allow people to feel more confident in taking action or making decisions. Sometimes people may be aware and even understand, but for whatever reason may feel stymied or even refuse to take desired actions or make appropriate decisions. At this stage, our educational efforts are more focused on overcoming resistance and moving people towards a desired behaviour. Finally, we hope that our efforts can create the right climate to motivate people in creating a strong and active condominium community.

I look forward to hearing your comments on what we can include in our programme and any ideas regarding education to further increase the value of CCI-NS membership. I also look forward to meeting with you on Zoom in our educational sessions. Come join us, it's included in your membership. You'll never know what you'll learn. At the very least it is an opportunity to meet with other members and to know you are not alone in facing the challenges of condo living. ■