

# GATHERING NUTS

Like a squirrel storing food in fall, it's time to get your condo ready for winter



As the long lazy days of summer become shorter and the leaves begin to dance with colour, summer slowly fades into the recesses of fall. With the drop in temperature and the threat of future snow, sleet and ice, it is time to start thinking about getting your most precious asset ready for winter – your home.

Fortunately, when it comes to winterizing town homes and apartment style condominiums the regime is not overly onerous. Your condominium management company in conjunction with your condominium association's board of directors is responsible for co-coordinating all maintenance on the homes' exteriors. That includes all aspects of landscaping, exterior home maintenance on town homes and exterior and common area maintenance for apartment style condominiums. Owners are responsible for everything inside their homes.

Maria Bartolotti, owner and managing

director of New Concept Management, a condominium management company says that condominium owners should expect an excellent fall landscaping clean up that includes pruning of any branches or trees that overhang the building or town home, power raking and a final watering and grass cutting. The landscapers should also drain and shut down the irrigation system. "If it is not done properly then it can cause a considerable amount of damage to the system and to the lawn," says Bartolotti. She also notes that most newer town homes have a separately metered irrigation system.

It is also the responsibility of the condominium management company to arrange for eaves cleaning in October or November and to hire a snow removal company and to design a snow removal schedule.

When all is said and done, apartment style condominium owners can pretty much leave the winterizing to the management company. *Town Home owners, however, should consider the following additional preventative measures when preparing for winter's harsh chill:*

- Ensure that the water supply to your outside water tap is shut off and drained.
- Have your furnace cleaned and replace the filter.
- Check thermostats for operating condition. Turn up the temperature and wait to see if the furnace responds.
- Clean humidifier. Not doing so may cause

- health problems due to airborne bacteria.
- Ensure that downspouts are pointed away from your home.
- Ensure that exterior electrical plugs are working.
- Ensure that all exterior light fixtures on your home are working.

Not all condominium associations include the cost of energy and heat in the overall monthly condominium fees. With energy prices on the rise, it is important to ensure that your heating dollars aren't being wasted. *A few simple techniques should keep the escalating energy bills at bay whilst making your home more comfortable when cold weather approaches.*

- Check around doors and windows for leaks and drafts and if necessary add weather stripping and caulk any holes.
- Seal electrical outlets and switches on exterior walls with foam gaskets.
- Remove all furniture and items obstructing heating vents on floors. Check to see if drapes are preventing the heat from circulating.
- Have your fireplace inspected and close the damper unless it is in use.

To avoid pipes freezing Bartolotti stresses that windows and patio doors should never be left open in the winter and that the thermostat should never be set lower than 18C.

No matter what the precautions, when temperatures dip below -40C, the possibility of pipes freezing and rupturing is always a looming reality, so it is important to know where the main water shut off valve is in your unit and how to use it. As any damages sustained due to owner neglect are the owners' responsibility, it makes sense to double check that you have the proper unit insurance coverage before winter begins.

If you are unsure of what to do or what your responsibilities are most condominium associations send out a notice during the fall outlining winterization procedures and snow removal schedules. So, until then you can just sit back, relax and enjoy the crisp autumn days. **CL**