

## Suggestions for Condo Buyers

### 1 Ask questions.

Read the minutes of strata council meetings as far back as you can obtain them. Use a highlighter pen and mark any references to water and moisture problems. Find out how these problems were dealt with. Were further investigations carried out beyond identifying one specific problem? Were there any inspections carried out for the strata council or the property management company and are these reports available for perusal? If repairs were performed what assurance is there that they were properly done? Are there any planned major expenditures for the building?

### 2 Check the building's design.

Some buildings are more prone to leak than others. One of the most significant design features is the absence of adequate roof overhangs to protect the walls from rain. Obviously the less rain that hits the building the less likely it is to leak. Deck and balcony design are important. Decks and balconies which rely on small drains which are prone to plug, decks over living areas, "solid" railing designs, balconies which slope toward the building are more likely to result in leaks. Buildings with open walkways and stairwells are vulnerable to leakage and rot damage. Earth-filled planters in contact with the walls of ground floor units are potential problem areas.

### 3 Look for previous repairs.

Is there visual evidence of exterior wall patching? Has caulking been installed in some areas and not in others? Check the wall penetrations on the walls most exposed to the weather. If the building has a stucco covered exterior have any water resistant coatings been applied subsequent to the original construction? The presence of any of these items should raise a red flag.

### 4 Find out the warranty details.

If purchasing a new unit read and understand what items are covered and for how long. Is there a warranty against water penetration? How long does it last? What assurance is there that the builder will still be around to make the repairs? If the building is not new what time, if any, is left on the warranty? If repairs have been carried out are they covered by a warranty?

### 5 Hire a professional home inspector.

Make your offer to purchase subject to a professional home inspection. Hire a registered home inspector (RHI) who is a member of the Canadian Association of Home Inspectors (CAHI). Go through the unit and the building with the inspector. The process should take 2-1/2 to 3 hours and should include a detailed written report. Be aware that a home inspection is a visual inspection and does not involve drilling holes and using instruments to check moisture levels. An experienced and competent inspector can go through a building and give an opinion on the probability of problems based on the design features present and may also identify previous repairs but leaks may go undetected if there are no visible signs present. The inspection is valuable but should not be considered a substitute for obtaining all available information about the building.