

Condo lifestyle comes with new responsibilities

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Don and Helen Adams don't make important decisions on a whim. So, when it came time for the retired couple to consider selling their elderly character home in favour of a condominium, there was much weighing of pros and cons.

"Our home was built back in 1912. We'd lived in it for 23 years, but it needed continuous care and attention so we'd had our eye on the condo market for a while," explains Don.

In the early summer of 2003, they attended an open house at one of the units at Merivale on Main, a "newish" condominium complex in their neighbourhood. They were immediately captivated.

It was bright and cheerful, and was just what they were after. An offer was made and accepted.

"Then the fun began. We had to look at the bylaws, the condition of the building, something called the "estoppel certificate," which provided information about the condo corporation's finances, etc. We had to think about what kind of community we were to become part of," he says.

After living in their new home about a year, Don was asked to let his name stand for election to the condominium board. He realized that he'd embarked on another steep learning curve, as he discovered the role and responsibilities of the board.

"I knew I had a lot to learn so attended a seminar sponsored by the Canadian Condominium Institute (CCI)," he explains.

During the session, Don found there had been recent changes to the Condominium Property Act that affected all condos. The workshop also covered bylaw enforcement, insurance and reserve fund studies. Along with his studies, he heard a fascinating presentation on helpful hints for condominium boards.

"This experience opened my eyes to my broad responsibilities as a board member. I concluded that the CCI was an organization that could benefit us all," he says.

Adams was so impressed, he followed up on the suggestion that people who live in a condominium could both benefit from and contribute to the work of CCI and he joined the board of the organization's North Saskatchewan chapter. It's been a good fit, he says.

"Living in a condominium has freed us from some of the responsibilities of looking after a house, but presented new opportunities and obligations."

If you're currently living in a condominium or thinking about buying one, Adams recommends thinking about taking one of the Canadian Condominium Institute workshops.