



## Information Sheet - Balconies

### **Introduction:**

Article 3.2 of the Declaration (Exclusive Use of Parts of Common Elements) read as follows – “Subject to compliance with the Act, the Declaration, the by-laws and rules passed pursuant to the Act, the Owners of dwelling units whose unit provides sole access to any balcony as shown on Part 1 of the description of the common elements shall have exclusive use thereof”.

By virtue of the Condominium Act, the Board of Directors who is charged with the care and control of the common elements therefore is responsible for decisions pertaining to balcony modifications and/or floor coverings.

### **Primary Cause of Concrete Damage**

Carpeting and other similar permeable/semi-permeable material installed on balcony floors tend to trap water against the concrete surface, thereby setting up a freeze/thaw cycle during the colder months which has been shown to cause damage to the concrete surface. This cyclic freeze/thaw action slowly causes pitting and scaling of the concrete and eventually causes crumbling which are at the root of expensive repairs in many high rise buildings.

### **No Permanently Affixed Floor Coverings:**

After several years of research and in consultation with several structural engineering firms, in 2008 the Board of Directors of Westpark undertook to remove all permanently carpets which had been permanently affixed to balcony slabs over the years. This project was undertaken in order to inspect the status of all balcony slabs as well as to stop or prevent future damage to slabs.

Subsequent to the completion of this phased project, the Board has not allowed carpeting, or any other permeable or semi-permeable material to be permanently affixed to balcony floors, as such materials have a strong potential to damage the concrete slab.

### **Loosely Laid Carpeting**

An acceptable alternative to permanently affixed carpeting is to allow loosely affixed carpeting during the summer and early fall months. Carpets that are loosely installed (perhaps using double sided tape) can be removed by mid-October allowing the concrete surface to dry out before experiencing winter temperatures. Re-installing can be done about mid-May. Building staff will be pleased to assist Owners with the removal, storage and re-installation of loosely laid balcony carpeting.

The Board will not approve painting of balcony ceilings because of their visibility from ground level, the difficulty of obtaining proper surface preparation and obtaining a uniform color. The matter of addressing balcony railings was addressed in the August 2005 Newsletter and is now formalized in this rule.

### **What other options are available to Owners who wish to modify the aesthetics of their balcony floor?**

Owners may apply to the Board of Directors for authorization to proceed to alternate flooring solutions, provided they submit written specifications for the installation prior to commencement of the project.

Each submission received by the Board will be subject to an engineering evaluation performed by the Corporation's engineering firm as assigned from time to time by the Board (at the owner's expense) and will be approved or disallowed by the Board of Directors based on the results of this engineering study.

Such installation, if approved by the Board of Directors is to be inspected by the Corporation's Engineering firm (at the owner's expense) upon completion to assure that the installation has been performed in accordance with the submitted specifications.

Such installation, which is considered to be a permanent modification to a common element is also subject to registration on title in accordance with requirements of the Condominium Act, 1998 (also at the owner's expense)

### **Were Other Products Considered by the Board?**

Yes, several other alternatives have been considered and rejected by the Board based on recommendations received from the various engineers who have collaborated with the Board in this project.

#### **Rubber tiles**

Specifically, the installation of rubber tiles which are available at various local retailers are banned because they retain water and keep moisture trapped underneath, causing the same concrete spalling as permanently affixed carpeting. Residents who may have had these types of rubber tiles installed on their balconies over the last two years are requested to remove them. It should be noted that cost of repairs of all structural damage to the concrete slab caused by rubber tile installation will be charged back against the present or future owners of the unit.

#### **Ceramic tiles**

While the prospect of permitting installation of ceramic tiles was entertained for some time, based on the research conducted by our engineers, it has become clear that there is not currently suitable adhesive and grout products on the market for this type of application. While certain product are available, the manufacturers of these products does not support their use in this applications and will not guarantee the products performance, nor will they guarantee that water will not penetrate under the tiles and cause delamination. For this reason, the alternative has been eliminated by the Board of Directors.

#### **Membrane Topping**

This option was deemed to be cost prohibitive as it requires that many unit owners agree to this installation, which has to be done via swing stage. Consultation with other condominiums who have had this type of membrane installed has also revealed a general dissatisfaction with the application, given that the rough surface becomes very difficult to clean.

#### **Interlocking Composite Tiles**

The Board considered endorsing this type of application, however the consistent availability and costs of the products considered were deemed to be prohibitive.