



Leaky Condos

What to Look For

Have you looked up at your ceilings recently? Now that we are well into the rainy season, some homeowners will have the unfortunate experience of seeing the telltale signs of water ingress. While many people will dismiss the fear of a “leaky condo” because they live in a single family home or concrete high-rise, no structure is immune from water damage.

A building envelope, or building enclosure, separates the interior and exterior of a building, and includes walls, roof, foundation walls, windows and doors. While this may sound simple, the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Commission (CMHC) found through a decade’s worth of studies across Canada and across all building types that damage from water ingress is still the most significant factor in the premature deterioration of buildings.

A building is like a living organism. The envelope not only protects the people inside from the elements, it also acts like a building's skin, protecting the structure as well. Just as a cut or bruise can lead to an infection if left untreated, deficiencies and defects in a building's envelope can lead to much more serious damage over time.

There are therefore two basic approaches to managing moisture: prevent it from getting in to your walls in the first place; or, allow it to get in but control it.

Most high-rise towers have been built using face-sealed outer wall assemblies. Developers refer to the face of the building as 'cladding'. If water does penetrate past the cladding it cannot readily drain out of the wall and remains relatively stagnant within the assembly. If building owners could ensure that no water penetrates the outer cladding, everything would be fine; however, it is extremely difficult to fully seal the exterior cladding and ensure that absolutely no water will ever enter.

In contrast, rainscreen walls manage water in a different fashion.

The exterior cladding is still intended to deflect most of the water that contacts the wall. However, an air cavity is provided behind the cladding. If water does penetrate the cladding it reaches the cavity and does not move further into the wall assembly. Instead, the rainscreen is designed to drain water in the cavity down the inside face of the cladding or on the waterproof membrane at the far side of the cavity, and then deflect it out of the assembly at cross-cavity flashing. Air vents or weep holes are installed above the flashing to allow moisture vapour to escape.

part of a building maintenance program.

Finally, when looking to buy, it is important to ensure that a strata is working towards having a healthy contingency reserve relative to the age of the building, including a budget item for ongoing envelope maintenance and annual inspections.

A fear of 'leaky condos' should not deter you from the lock-and-go lifestyle that many people love about strata living. By working with

Whether your home is built with a rainscreen or not, the following basic maintenance tasks make a dramatic difference to preventing moisture damage:

Replace worn caulking

Keep gutters clean and attached properly to down spouts

survey residents regularly for any signs of leakage

Repaint the exterior on a regular basis

Clean and maintain dryer vents and connections to prevent interior moisture build-up

A proactive strata council will also have an envelope consultant perform an annual check-up and follow their guidelines for repair as

a qualified Realtor® who understands construction, you will be able to make a sound investment in your next real estate purchase.



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~ David Victor Setton



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