
RISKBOSS

Preventing the Predictable

Riskboss White Paper Series



*Protecting Condominium
Residents & Site Personnel*

Protecting Condominium Site Personnel

Overview

Over the past few years tragic shootings and other aggressive incidents in condominium communities have changed the public psyche in the Greater Toronto Region (GTA). What is commonplace in many places around the world landed at our residential condominium doorstep. Yes, there have been several shooting deaths in condominiums in downtown Toronto illegal short term rental sites, but never the scale and escalation of aggressive behaviour into the suburbs and throughout the GTA.

Condominium communities have also been subjected to a noticeable and sustained increase in workplace harassment against property managers and onsite service personnel. Physical attacks against onsite personnel such as the mass execution of condominium Board members in Vaughan in December 2022, and the October 2023 double stabbing in Toronto of a husband-and-wife condominium superintendent team, where the husband succumbed to his injuries are just some of the most severe examples of such aggression. These and many more aggressive incidents against condominium site personnel have police authorities and property management firms very worried and rightly so.

Such incidents prompted the Association of Condominiums Managers of Ontario (ACMO) to put out an unprecedented media release on August 4, 2023. ACMO is quoted as follows.

“Condominium managers in Ontario are facing an escalating wave of harassment and abuse from an increasing number of condominium corporation directors and condo owners, contributing significantly to the acute shortage of qualified professionals in this vital sector. This distressing trend is leading some skilled condominium managers to abandon their careers due to the relentless pressure and lack of support. The Condominium Management Regulatory Authority of Ontario (CMRAO) reports that 124 managers, nearly 5% of all General Licensees, chose not to renew their licences as of March 31, 2023, a 107% increase over 2022.”

As a result of the increase in aggression in condominium settings, Riskboss has been inundated with requests for information on what prudent measures should be taken to protect residents, property managers, Board members and other site personnel. In response to these inquiries, Riskboss has created this White Paper on best practices that when implemented, will make your condominium community more resilient against unwanted attention and aggression, and better prepare you to deal with emergencies when such incidents occur.

Riskboss offers the following information in our latest White Paper free of charge to clients and non-clients alike in the hope of assisting to make condominium settings a much better and risk-free place to live.

Riskboss has been engaged in conducting comprehensive condominium risk assessments for well over a decade. With over seventy-five large and small scale condominium assessments being completed, Riskboss has been able to accumulate, analyze, and determine best practices for all instances that condominium communities may possibly face.

During these assessments Riskboss has also analyzed unfortunate incidents that have negatively affected the community, many that have stigmatized the reputation of the condominium. Riskboss has found that in most cases where negative incidents have occurred, the cause of these incidents were both predictable and preventable.

Despite the best of intentions, the following are just some of the contributing factors to these negative outcomes:

- ✘ Poor decision making - groupthink
- ✘ Getting / giving bad advice
- ✘ Using online resources (e.g. Google) to obtain cheap / free legal advice
- ✘ Rushing to inaccurate conclusions and judgements before getting all the facts first
- ✘ Using unaccredited resources in creating processes, governance, and training
- ✘ People extending far past and outside their established roles

When done properly, and assisted by accredited professionals, risk mitigation and emergency preparedness should be both seamless and completely invisible until critical incidents actually occur.

The following information will help you and your community get to a place of comfort that everything that can be done, will be done to prepare for major incidents. This Whitepaper should be considered an introduction to risk mitigation and should be used as a starting point in the process. The focus of this Whitepaper is on operational readiness and emergency preparedness that can greatly improve the safety and security of condominium site personnel and as such, the community as a whole.

For more information on this and other important information on reducing risk in condominium living settings, please go to www.riskboss.com and www.riskbossmagazine.com.

Mental Health in Condominiums

Much has been written about mental health in condominiums. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines mental health as:

“Mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community. Mental health is more than the absence of mental disorders. Mental health conditions include mental disorders and psychosocial disabilities as well as other mental states associated with significant distress, impairment in functioning, or risk of self-harm. People with mental health conditions are more likely to experience lower levels of mental well-being, but this is not always or necessarily the case. Individual psychological and biological factors such as emotional skills, substance use, and genetics can make people more vulnerable to mental health problems.”

The Ontario Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) reports that one in five Canadians will have a mental illness or an addiction problem at some point in their lives.

It is an absolute certainty that Board members, property managers and on-site staff will have to deal with people with mental health issues during their working hours. The question is: Are you properly prepared?

Emergency Preparedness

It is important to note that relying solely on emergency services as the first line of defense is not a generally accepted standard of preparedness for large buildings, especially residential communities. Due to dramatic annual increases in GTA population and the reduction of funding for emergency services over the past decade, it has been widely reported that it will take much longer for emergency responders to react to site emergencies, particularly large-scale incidents. In critical incidents seconds can and do count.

Calling 911 and waiting for emergency services to arrive is not the standard of care that is expected in high rise communities. Site personnel should be prepared to react quickly and effectively to all emergencies whether it be a building disaster or an active aggressor prior to emergency services arriving. Riskboss also recommends not to rely exclusively on the Fire Safety Plan for guidance on emergency preparedness. The Fire Safety Plan is a very small piece of the emergency preparedness toolbox.

The time to look up procedures and processes is not when an emergency is actually taking place. This means that regular training on resilient professional processes and governance must be a key element in your success strategy. Process, governance, and training should be resilient against any and all mental health challenges that your community may face. This can be anything from disorderly behaviour to resident hoarding. Active aggressor, shelter in place and designated site command center location(s)/protocols for emergency responders should be part of your site emergency preparedness toolbox.

Riskboss recommends getting your processes in order first by commissioning an independent condominium comprehensive risk assessment. Risk assessments should not be conducted by contracted security companies unless accredited to engage in such an analysis. If your risk assessment company engages in the practice of, or pushes to refer CCTV, lighting, access control (etc.) companies, you know you have the wrong firm conducting your risk analysis. Risk assessments must be objective, completely independent and completed by industry professionals without exception. Next, get an accredited source to write governance based on resilient processes. Property managers cannot and should not do this. And lastly, have a certified professional train all site personnel on that governance. To ensure your community is ready for emergencies this must be done in that order.

Property managers should never be placed in a position to create such plans, write governance, or conduct emergency training as they are neither accredited, qualified nor certified to conduct such work



Risk Rating: High

Recommendations:

- ✓ Riskboss recommends that condominiums engage in a process of emergency preparedness.
- ✓ Accredited outsourced resources must be used for this purpose.
- ✓ The starting point for all site specific emergency readiness protocols is always a risk assessment.

Remaining Within Clearly Defined Roles

Board members and property managers are perceived by many in high rise communities as having a position of authority, power, and influence that may have an impact or control over their lives. For some people, this perception is their reality. It is critical that Board members and property managers remain within their respective roles. Riskboss recommends never to stray or extend beyond what is expected and required by law as you may become the subject of unwanted attention and possible harm.

When dealing with people with mental health issues that are exhibiting behaviour that is affecting others, or where there may be a cause for concern, the role of property managers is strictly limited to being fact collectors, never acting as an investigator, or trying to diagnose incidents, or by rushing to judgment and conclusions before all the facts have been collected and analyzed by professionals.

Board members are decision makers (policy makers) and should never, under any circumstances engage directly with matters that property management and other site personnel are clearly defined, trained, licensed, and certified to handle and administrate. Outside of Board meetings, Board members should be considered as residents referring all inquiries to property management

Using resources like corporate lawyers to help guide you to stay within clearly defined roles will be better serve the community and also, protect against unwanted negative attention. Please be aware that when anyone extends past clearly defined roles, corporate errors and omission insurance may be negatively affected or possibly voided.



Risk Rating: High

Recommendations:

- ✓ Riskboss recommends that Board members and property management remain within clearly defined roles.
- ✓ Riskboss recommends seeking out quality professionals when faced with incidents outside clearly defined roles.

Command and Control / Single Source / Centralized Direction

Centralized command structures should always be adhered to in condominiums. Board members are policy makers and while not in an actual meeting, are residents like everyone else. Property managers should always be the central clearing house for all communication and direction without exception. Front line workers take direction only from property management who provide feedback back to property management.

Effective communication is one of the most important areas of focus when conducting Riskboss risk assessments. The practice of command and control being delivered multilayered (By management, Board, and service providers all at the same time) is difficult if not impossible to administer to ensure clear unfiltered direction and feedback.

Single source direction provides two things: consistency and control. These are critical success factors in all organizations, not just condominiums. In highly effective organizations:

- ⇒ **Directors set policy and direct managers**
- ⇒ **Managers create direction based on policy**
- ⇒ **Supervisors supervise on manager's direction**
- ⇒ **Workers do the work as prescribed**



Risk Rating: High

Recommendations:

- ✓ A single-source command and control structure is the best practice and is highly recommended through property management.
- ✓ Command and control should be centralized and directed through supervisors of trades only and not to subordinates or front-line tradespeople.

Managing Expectations & Control of Information

The anticipation that those with mental health challenges will immediately adhere to direction from the corporation is unrealistic and will likely inevitably lead to unrealized expectations and frustration on both sides of the equation.

In such cases, you may expect to see slower responses in compliance. Aggressive attempts at intervention may lead to an escalation in negative behaviour and result in unwanted attention. Inevitably some condominium residents living with mental health challenges may not be able to fully comprehend and understand common obligations of living in a high-density communal environment. As such, they likely will have no perspective or reference point on adherence to building rules and social norms.

Language barriers, substance abuse, and dependence can aggravate those living with mental health challenges limiting the effectiveness of those trying to help and intervene. Corporations must be prepared to deal with such circumstances using tried, tested, and preplanned approaches so that behaviour does not lead to critical incidents. This includes communication strategies to affected residents so that their behaviour does not aggravate an already negative situation.

Third party intervention by members of the family, friends, and/or professional organizations is definitely the preferred first point of attempting any sort of intervention. Going it alone rarely works out well for the corporation or the affected residents.



Risk Rating: High

Recommendations:

- ✓ Riskboss recommends that a preplanned communication strategy be prepared for the eventuality of escalating behaviour and critical incidents.
- ✓ Riskboss recommends third party intervention strategies.

Chat Room Style Web-Based Social Media

Social media very often leads to negative commentary that sparks incorrect and inflammatory communication that can lead to unintended consequences and certainly, unwanted attention. In short, Riskboss highly recommends that Board members and property managers never engage and stay away from all online forums as part of their roles.

All resident concerns must be channeled through property management in writing without exception. Riskboss does not recommend social media-style chat rooms as these cannot be centrally controlled and are predominantly anonymous. Property management firms that had previously launched social networking sites in condominiums (e.g. Bazinga, and other web-based chat room programs) are now moving away from these formats, and for very good reason.

Feedback from organizations, condominium managers, and Boards is that maintaining and reacting to online forums monopolizes far too much time and circumvents traditional and reliable methods of complaint investigation. Follow-up can be better maintained and controlled through property management as sources of information can be verified. Holding people to account for fictitious and vexatious claims is rarely possible using online networks as the source of information.



Risk Rating: High

Recommendations:

- ✓ Riskboss recommends that the Board and property management do not implement or engage in chat rooms or social media online forums.

Workplace Abuse & Harassment

Workplace harassment is defined as, "Engaging in a course of vexatious comment or conduct that is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome." Despite the law in Ontario being explicitly clear, and the obligations to act immediately when incidents of workplace harassment occur well defined, Riskboss often finds that condominium corporations either do not have such a program in place, or do not take the appropriate steps when such incidents occur.

To guard against any initial or escalating negative attention to Board members or site employees a clearly defined and communicated workplace harassment program is not only recommended, but it is required by law in Ontario. When incidents of workplace abuse and harassment occur, Riskboss recommends that these incidents are dealt with quickly and effectively by industry professionals.

Handling such incidents professionally will reduce the likelihood of any reoccurrence and further unwanted attention will be minimized greatly. It should be noted that property managers are neither trained nor licensed to conduct such investigations and as such, the corporation lawyer and third-party professional investigators should be engaged when such incidents occur. Property managers should never be placed into a situation where they feel pressured to go past their defined mandate to solely handle such situations.

Support for workers whether directly or indirectly affected should occur immediately and without delay. The use of registered professional such as psychologists expert in Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Vicarious Trauma (VT) should be engaged within 48 hours of the event(s) to conduct a Critical Incident Debriefing. The Workers Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) prescribes that they be notified of any workplace incident that requires medical attention. Such debriefings meet this standard therefore requiring notice to WSIB.



Risk Rating: High

Recommendations:

- ✓ Riskboss recommends a robust workplace harassment process and policy.
- ✓ Riskboss recommends immediate attention to all incidents of workplace harassment by industry professionals.
- ✓ Riskboss recommends the use of industry professional to assist in cases of workplace harassment.

CCTV & Audio

Sites should be properly prepared for all major incident emergencies and be able to effectively provide evidence when asked or compelled to do so. CCTV/audio camera optimization should be a high priority as a first step to mitigating risks.

Strategically placed CCTV/audio can lead to very effective and preventative outcomes. There should always be both CCTV visual and audio at the security desk and the property management office. All business telephones should be recorded similar to that found in all banking institutions. Property management, Board members, and site personnel parking spots should have CCTV camera surveillance. Such surveillance is not only legal, but prudent, and highly necessary in all condominium settings.



Risk Rating: High

Recommendations:

- ✓ Riskboss recommends all areas where site personnel work to have CCTV /Audio surveillance.
- ✓ Riskboss recommends that CCTV surveillance be maintained for parking areas for site personnel and active Board members.
- ✓ Riskboss recommends that all telephones used by on site personnel have audio recording.

Criminal Background Checks & Photo Identification

Onsite personnel must interact each and every day with corporation contractors (HVAC, elevator, snow removal, plumbers, landscaping, window cleaners, etc.). Security companies by Ontario standards must have all their employees screened with a criminal background check prior to licensing and employment. It is important to note that other service providers and contracted personnel working in condominium communities have a remarkably high level and mostly unfettered access to all areas of the site, information, and in many circumstances, this includes access to residential units yet there is no requirement for criminal background checks. With a dramatic increase of residential condominium break-ins through the GTA, this is of concern.

It is highly recommended that all contracts for site service providers and site contractors hired by the corporation include the necessity for criminal background checks for people working on site for the corporation. This along with other similar preventative measures will assist to make the community a safer place to live and work. As a further mitigation to risk, all site contractors (regardless of those hire by the corporation or unit residents) should be required to provide photo identification (to be scanned) prior to being allowed to work at the site.



Risk Rating: High

Recommendations:

- ✓ Riskboss recommends all contracts for site service providers and site contractors include the necessity for criminal background checks.
- ✓ Riskboss recommends that all contractors must provide photo identification before entering the site.

Preparing for the Inevitable - Document & Secure All Evidence Contemporaneously

Time and time again condominium corporations find themselves embattled in lengthy and very expensive judicial and quasi-judicial proceedings leading to Boards and managers having to justify processes and vulnerabilities in their communities.

These can range from civil actions due to for example, slip and fall incidents to attending Coroner's Jury Inquests regarding deaths by drowning in swimming pools. Most of these processes are the direct result of onsite incidents. These battles almost always negatively impact communities and very often result in severe consequences both financially and by way of community stigmatization.

When attending such proceedings lawyers will work through their tried and tested checklist of questions. The following are questions that lawyers will ask governors and managers alike when dealing with errors and/or omissions that were the direct or indirect causes of such events.

- ✓ **What did you (or didn't know) ?**
- ✓ **When did you know about it ?**
- ✓ **What did you do about it ?**
- ✓ **When did you do it ?**
- ✓ **Who did you tell ?**



Risk Rating: High

Recommendations:

- ✓ Riskboss recommends standards be created to document and secure critical evidence in advance of authorities asking/compelling such information.
- ✓ Riskboss recommends a record retention schedule in accordance with the law

Health & Safety Program (Committee)

The Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) requires that a Health and Safety Program be developed and maintained in condominiums in compliance with the Act. Inasmuch as the Act prescribes a minimum number of employees at a site prior to the requirement for such a committee, it has been the interpretation by several property management companies and condominium law firms that given the number of contracted workers at most condominium sites, this exceeds the mandatory minimum standard and therefore, most condominiums should have such a program in place.

Health and Safety Representatives should be selected, and a workplace inspection program should be implemented. Regular meetings of a Health and Safety Committee are recommended to be undertaken with Minutes taken for future reference. Regular meetings should include issues and solutions to all workplace health issues including aggression to onsite workers. Training on aggression de-escalation in the workplace should form part of mandatory training for all onsite staff.



Risk Rating: High

Recommendations:

- ✓ A Health and Safety Program & Committee is recommended
- ✓ Updated OHSA booklets must be prominently displayed in workplaces and available to all employees under Ontario law
- ✓ Employees should be trained on de-escalation and reporting of all workplace aggression

Key Control - Property Management Office

Riskboss often finds that the property management office is not controlled as well as it should be. The property management office contains critical, highly sensitive, and private information for the corporation. The office should be secured with a very high-grade deadbolt lock. The access key for the property management should be unique to the site. The key should be managed in a separate lockbox at the security desk or beside the property management office door anchored to the wall with the code only accessible by property management personnel.



Loxbox for
Property Management Office

Risk Rating: High

Recommendation:

- ✓ Riskboss recommends that the property management office be secured with an exclusive lock.

Health & Safety - Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

All site employees that work in travelled areas such as driveways, underground garages, and other areas where the risk of vehicular injury is high must use safety protective apparel such as reflective safety vests. Security personnel should always wear PPE vests while on patrol and responding to calls for service. With increases in trespassing in condominiums, it is difficult for would-be criminals and the homeless looking for shelter to distinguish a security guard (concierge) wearing a business suit from ordinary residents. Wearing PPE reflective vests increases the safety of security guards as this reinforces to intruders that that the security guard is in a position of authority acting on behalf of the corporation.



Risk Rating: High

Recommendations:

- ✓ All employees should have uniform equipment to protect themselves in their workplace
- ✓ Building staff should have access to and be instructed to utilize proper safety equipment while on duty in key areas
- ✓ Security guards should always wear PPE reflective vests while on patrol and when responding to calls for service

About The Author

Quintin Johnstone

CEO, Riskboss Inc. www.riskboss.com/ca
CEO, Samsonshield Inc www.samsonshield.com/ca
Business: (416) 863-6666 / (416) 214-1717
Direct: (416) 402-4444
quintin.johnstone@riskboss.com
quintin.johnstone@samsonshield.com



Founded in 2009, Riskboss™ (www.riskboss.com) does one thing and one thing only. Riskboss provides outstanding investigative, risk analysis and management, and organizational protection advice to notable organizations throughout the Greater Toronto Region (GTA). Since inception, Riskboss has had one purpose in mind: *To create a company that specializes only in independently and objectively identifying and mitigating risk and providing industry unique and outstanding client service, nothing more.*

As a founder, and CEO of Riskboss Quintin Johnstone brings a wealth of public sector and private sector experience and expertise also brings with him a vast list of professional contacts and resources all of which provides distinct and unique benefits to his clients. Prior to creating Riskboss, Quintin had a thirty year public career with the Toronto Police Service (TPS) working and supervising in the areas of criminal investigation, major criminal case management, internal investigations, drug enforcement, major case management, fraud, Asian crime, prostitution, youth crime, prostitution and undercover work. He was handpicked amongst his peers to lead 31 Division, Detective Operations where he was in charge of the largest investigative team in the Toronto Police Service (and the country) overseeing the work of seventy-five detectives.

Being selected to become a member of the exclusive Chief of Police Headquarters Executive Staff in the Corporate Planning Unit, he was involved in creating organizational programs and governance, and overseeing recommendations from Coroner's Inquest Juries. Quintin has been awarded and is widely recognized as a subject matter authority in the creation, review, audit, legal compliance and maintenance of organizational governance and has created and implemented some of the most complex business systems and processes that have been realized by the Toronto Police Service.

In 2004, Quintin was the architect and project leader in one of the largest business re-engineering projects regarding criminal disclosure that the TPS has ever undertaken. This project has dramatically changed the businesses practices between the TPS and the Crown in the Public Prosecution Service of Canada (PPSC) (formerly the Federal Department of Justice - DOJ) and the Ministry of the Attorney General (MAG) positively impacting thousands of end users with this new process. He was seconded to the Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General assisting in organizational changes Ontario-wide.

In 2006, Quintin was contracted to reengineer the corporate governance for one of the largest universities in North America. This project spanned three separate campuses over two Municipal jurisdictions that involved a complete retooling of the policies of the University of Toronto Campus Police.

In 2009, Quintin was commissioned by the prominent Toronto condominium law firm: Gardiner, Miller, Arnold, LLP to lead and re-engineer the business practices of the largest Hong Kong holdings of condominiums and commercial properties in Toronto. While reengineering the organization to a more efficient and productive culture, he also conducted risk assessments on the organization, residential condominiums, and commercial properties.

Quintin has been elected to four boards and has sat on countless committees. He has also been contracted to help many condominiums Boards with his unique experience and contacts. This provides him with a unique perspective that assists to exceed Board member client expectations. He is heavily involved in municipal and provincial politics and routinely called upon as an advisor and to Chair committees. The relationships that Quintin has developed through the years allows for a unique appreciation of how to assist with problem solving and process creation designed to enhance the long-term benefits of organizations and communities.

Members of the Riskboss team are on the speed dial of and are routinely called upon to provide advice and consult with law firms, Boards, leaders of property management companies, general managers of large corporations and have agreed to assist by sitting on and leading (sub)committees regarding risk related issues. We are often requested to chair annual general meetings, to intercede as mediators in problematic organizational issues. We are regular key note speakers with property management firms during their training sessions.

Quintin is also the CEO of Samsonshield Inc. (www.samsonshield.com) that is a premier security service provider to residential condominiums across the GTA. Samsonshield is a proud member of the Association of Condominium Managers of Ontario (ACMO), the Canadian Condominium Institute (CCI), the Toronto Region Board of Trade, and PAN-ETHIC. Samsonshield is proud to be included on the *Preferred Vendors' List* for many prominent property management firms in southern Ontario.

Quintin has provided advice for over two decades to law firms and property management companies on the application of criminal, provincial and municipal law and process as it relates to condominium communities. He has participated as a guest author creating articles in such publications as Canadian Security Magazine, CCI's - Condo Voice Magazine, Condo Business Magazine, and Condo News Magazine. Quintin is the founder of Riskboss Magazine that is the premier source of information on organizational and community risk that is widely distributed throughout Ontario (www.riskbossmagazine.com).

Suffice it to say that Quintin and his team of professionals under his direction know how to identify and mitigate risk. All of this experience has assisted Riskboss to deliver intuitive and superior client service that mitigates risk to Boards, property managers and organizations.



Riskboss Inc.
1033 Bay Street, Suite 315
Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M5S 3A5
riskboss.com/ca
416.863.6666

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