

## What a Community Association Should Be (What constitutes a *bona fide* Community Association)

A *bona fide* Community Association<sup>(a)</sup> has the following characteristics:

- A) The association has a constitution or by-laws to describe the objects of the association and how it operates.
- B) The association operates within a defined geographic area<sup>1</sup> normally delineated in the constitution or by-laws.
- C) The association welcomes participation by all who reside<sup>2</sup> within its defined geographic area. It may maintain a list of its members or supporters<sup>3</sup> but does not restrict participation to its members.
- D) The association has an executive or board of directors composed of volunteers<sup>4</sup> who are democratically elected at a publicly-announced meeting, normally an annual general meeting.
- E) With limited restrictions, the association conducts its affairs in open meetings<sup>5</sup>. There will be regular communication of the association's activities with its members.
- F) The association keeps minutes, that is, a record of motions and decisions, and makes them accessible<sup>6</sup>.
- G) Activities (mandate) of the association include **at least one** of the following<sup>7</sup>:
  - organizing community events and recreation
  - providing a forum for discussion of community concerns
  - promoting communication among residents
  - a mandate which included improving the quality of life in the described neighbourhood
- H) Activities of the association are not directed toward the economic advantage of specific residents within its community, but to the welfare of the community as a whole.
- I) The association encourages public participation in civic affairs, particularly knowledge of municipal issues and voting by citizens in elections for all levels of government.

(a) Much of this definition was adapted from the FCA in Ottawa - <http://www.fca-fac.ca/>

1 In some circumstances there may be overlap, in which more than one legitimate community association serves a particular geographic area.

2 Some associations open participation to all who reside in **or work in** the designated geographic area.

3 Some associations collect voluntary or mandatory membership fees and maintain membership lists, usually only used to indicate eligible voters in Annual General Meetings. Other associations are funded through moneys collected at events and consider all residents to be members along with those who have paid as supporters.

4 A community association could have employees, but the direction of the association is in the hands of unpaid volunteers.

5 Circumstances in which decisions would be taken in closed meetings would include employment or legal issues.

6 Associations report to their communities through e-mail, community newspapers, telephones, and websites.

7 Associations may engage in additional activities but at least one of these should be the *raison d'être* of the association.

**Note:** To be more inclusive, **it should be considered** that non-profit, voluntary community, neighbourhood, strata council, property owners', tenants' or other association or group based in DNV, having as its objective to serve community interests, may become a member of FONVCA, subject to the latter's requirements.