

REAL ESTATE

Key fob copying seen as threat to condo security

By Tess Kalinowski
Real Estate Reporter

It's the highrise dweller's key to everything from the front door to the parking garage and gym. But condo board officials are worried about the proliferation of electronic fob copying they fear could compromise building security.

To discourage condo-dwellers from losing their fobs, many buildings charge upward of \$50 for replacements or additional copies — where they are permitted — for residents wanting to provide a key to their parents, child care provider or cleaner.

But the Star recently visited two downtown shops that copy fobs in under five minutes at a lower cost.

FobCopy.ca near Sherbourne and Bloor Sts., took less than two minutes and charged \$35 to copy a Star employee's fob.

Employee Riley Haas simply inserted the fob in a hand-held machine that reads the radio frequency identification and copies it to a chip. The existing machine could only copy one of three different fobs, but Haas said there's a new machine on order that would copy more kinds.

Haas said the company has been copying fobs since last spring but "it's a good week when we do five."

It was busier at the start of the school year when students were copying their fobs, he said.

Jacobs Hardware has a similar machine near Queen St. West and Spadina Ave. Staff there say they might copy 12 to 20 fobs a week.



FobCopy.ca near Sherbourne and Bloor Sts., took less than two minutes and charged \$35 to copy a Star employee's fob. ANNE-MARIE JACKSON

Todd Hofley of the Liberty Village Residents Association said fob copying is one more challenge in securing condos.

"When somebody comes in and scans the fob it's an electronic signature. We know exactly whose fob that is, and the owner. But if you've got a bunch of cloned fobs, we can't tell which one is cloned and which one is the original," he said.

"If we can't offer security in our buildings, then it can just become a disaster," Hofley said.

At Maple Leaf Square a single fob gets

you in the front door and into each unit, unlike most condos that still use a traditional key for apartment entries, said Davin Garg, vice-president of the condo board.

With short-term rentals it's pretty easy to predict when they are likely to be empty mid-week.

"You rent out your unit for one weekend but that person now, if they wanted to, could have access to the building and the unit whenever they want because they can clone the fob," he said.