

Legal Resource Centre

**Residential Tenancies Legal Information Program
Year End Report
June 2011**

Prepared for the Alberta Real Estate Foundation

Program Objectives

The Residential Tenancies Legal Information Program encompassed five distinct objectives, with the focus group for 2010-2011 being low literacy Albertans and immigrants. The five objectives were identified as enhancing the legal knowledge and understanding of landlords and tenants in Alberta through:

- 1) developing and updating plain language resources about new and existing laws and regulations;
- 2) increasing the ability of landlords and tenants to find and effectively use current resources to educate themselves;
- 3) training intermediaries (people who work with the public, for example, teachers, social workers, and librarians) to efficiently access information about residential tenancy law;
- 4) responding to questions from the public about residential tenancy law; and
- 5) working with other organizations with similar goals to avoid duplication of resources and to maximize efficiency and expertise.

Highlights

- The demographic for the Residential Tenancies Legal Information Program 2010 – 2011 year was new Albertans. The main priorities were:
 - to gather information
 - conduct research
 - make contacts
 - determine appropriate resources for this audience
 - create print and digital resources

A resource guide, *Landlord and Tenant Law in Alberta: The Basics*, was developed to assist immigrant serving organizations assist new Albertans in understanding residential tenancy law in Alberta.
- *Renting 101: A Guide for Students and First Time Renters* continues to be a popular resource, and makes up over 40% of the material distribution. *Renting 101* was revised this year and the second edition will be printed in the summer of 2011. We received \$3,500.00 from Service Alberta and an additional \$3,500.00 from AREF to assist with printing costs.
- Additional funding in the amount of \$4,095.24 was received from Service Alberta for the printing of the *Seniors' Housing Series* and the *Sample Roommate Agreement for Alberta Renters*. The Landlord and Tenant Board of Wood Buffalo also covered all travel expenses for the Coordinator's visit to Fort McMurray (\$1100). The Legal Resource Centre provided an estimated \$18,000 to provide clerical and management support, promotions, network access, material distribution and infrastructure.
- 4,121 items were distributed during the year, with the majority of the publications being ordered from the Legal Resource Centre's e-store.
- Two new publications, *Foreclosure for Landlords and Tenants in Alberta* and *Foreclosure in Alberta*, were developed in response to the increased number of reference questions received from tenants and landlords that are involved in the legal process of foreclosure. The publications are currently in review.
- Two sample agreements, the *Sample Roommate Agreement for Alberta Renters* and the *Sample Room Rental Agreement for Alberta Renters*, were developed as a guide for alternative housing arrangements. The agreement can be viewed online, printed and used by the public.

- The Program Coordinator conducted 31 information workshops to over 600 people, which is a substantial increase from the 5 workshops that were conducted the previous year. Workshops were held across Alberta, including sessions in Fort McMurray, Grande Prairie, Edmonton, Red Deer, Calgary, Lamont and Andrew; the feedback received from the audiences was overwhelmingly positive. The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo paid for all of the Program Coordinator's expenses for her to travel and conduct community presentations.
- Evaluations of presentations were done wherever possible. The charts below indicate the general feedback

Training Sessions, Presentations, & Workshops

The number of presentations and workshops increased substantially from previous years. In 2010-2011, 31 presentations and workshops were conducted across Alberta, up from 5 in the 2009-2010 year. Legal information was provided to over 600 people during these sessions, and feedback received from the audiences was overwhelmingly positive. Workshops were conducted in Red Deer, Fort McMurray, Grande Prairie, Edmonton, Calgary, Lamont and Andrew. PowerPoint presentations were developed for each session.

- *5 Things You Need to Know About Renting.*
Information session for newcomers to Alberta.
 - Two presentations for NAIT students enrolled in the English as a Second Language Program, Edmonton. November 2010. 33 attendees.
 - Presentation for students enrolled in the Grande Prairie Council for Lifelong Learning English as a Second Language Program, Grande Prairie. February 2011. 23 attendees.
 - Presentation for students enrolled in Keyano College English as a Second Language Program, Fort McMurray. March 2011. 12 attendees.
 - Presentation for YMCA Immigrant Settlement Services Program, Fort McMurray. March 2011. 19 attendees.
 - Presentation for Independent Living Resource Centre of Calgary, Calgary. March 2011. 5 attendees.
- *Alberta's Residential Tenancies Act: an In Depth Look at the Law in Alberta.*
Presentation for audiences who are already familiar with residential tenancy law in Alberta.
 - Law Information Centre, Grande Prairie. February 2011. 7 attendees.
 - Landlord and Tenant Advisory Board, Fort McMurray. March 2011. 6 attendees.
- *An Introduction to Renting: Your Rights and Responsibilities.*
Information session for students and first-time renters.
 - McMan Youth Family and Community Services Association - Supported Independent Living (SIL) program. November 2010. 18 attendees.
 - CALM 20 students at Lamont High School, Lamont. November 2010. 15 attendees.
 - Grade 10, 11 and 12 students at Andrew School, Andrew. November 2010. 18 attendees.
 - CALM 20 students at Archbishop Oscar Romero High School, Edmonton. February 2011. 22 attendees.
 - CALM 20 students at Grande Prairie Composite High School, Grande Prairie. February 2011. 104 attendees.
 - CALM 20 students at Westwood Community High School, Fort McMurray. March 2011. 78 attendees.
 - CALM 20 students at Lamont High School, Lamont. April 2011. 11 attendees.
- *Housing Options for Seniors.*
Information session about housing options available for the elderly.
 - Golden Circle Seniors' Housing Conference, Red Deer. January 2011. 108 attendees.

- Central Lions' Senior Centre, Edmonton. May 2011. 18 attendees.
- *Residential Tenancy Law in Alberta.*
Workshop for settlement practitioners in immigrant serving organizations, who assist in immigrants in finding and keeping rental housing.
 - Edmonton Immigrant Services Association. December 2010. 17 attendees.
 - Grande Prairie Immigrant Settlement Services. February 2011. 4 attendees.
 - Fort McMurray. March 2011. 7 attendees.
- *Residential Tenancy Law In Alberta for Property Managers.*
Workshop for people involved in specialized housing for the homeless and for seniors.
 - Operation Friendship Seniors' Society, Edmonton. February 2011. 8 attendees.
 - Session at Grande Prairie Legal Guidance. February 2011. 5 attendees.
 - Piper Creek Foundation, Red Deer. March 2011. 10 attendees.
- *Rights and Responsibilities of Landlords: An Introduction to Residential Tenancy Law in Alberta*
Information workshops for new and experienced landlords.
 - Grande Prairie Council for Lifelong Learning. February 2011. 27 attendees.
 - Fort McMurray. March 2011. 21 attendees.
- *Rights and Responsibilities of Tenants: An Introduction to Residential Tenancy Law in Alberta.*
Information session for tenants.
 - Fort McMurray Landlord and Tenant Advisory Board. 9 attendees.

Organizations and Community Connections

Many new working relationships were developed between the Program Coordinator and organizations from across Alberta that are involved in aspects of residential tenancy law.

- Alberta Residential Tenancies Advisory Committee
- Calgary Legal Guidance
 - Collaborated with CLG to develop the "Sample Roommate Agreement for Alberta Renters." August 2010 to February 2011.
 - Met with CLG to discuss the development of plain language resources for immigrants. March 2011.
- Edmonton Immigrant Services Association
 - Met with settlement practitioners who assist immigrants in finding and keeping rental housing to discuss the need for residential tenancy materials for immigrants.
- Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers
 - Met with Suzanne Gross to discuss legal information needs for immigrants.
- Grande Prairie Legal Guidance
 - Met with intake personnel and Provincial Court staff to discuss legal information needs for Grande Prairie residents.
- Legal Aid Alberta
 - Met with front line workers in the Legal Service Centre in Edmonton to find out what resources were needed to assist new Albertans with renting problems.
- Legal Information Centre in Grande Prairie

- Met with Provincial Court staff to discuss legal information needs for Grande Prairie residents.
- Service Alberta
 - Met with Beth Jenkins to discuss plain language immigrant resources
 - Received funding assistance for printing the Sample Roommate Agreement for Alberta Renters, the Seniors' Housing Series and Renting 101.
 - Assisted the Residential Tenancy Dispute Resolution Service with drafting legal precedents.
- Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo Landlord and Tenant Advisory Board
 - Met with board members and municipality staff to discuss legal information needs for Fort McMurray residents in regards to housing.

Conferences

7 Cities on Housing and Homelessness: The Road Home Conference. Three day conference. Sponsored by Homeward Trust. November 2010.

Golden Circle Seniors' Housing Conference. Red Deer, January 2011.

Publications

Foreclosures in Alberta. Pending Review. June 2011.

Foreclosure for Landlords and Tenants in Alberta. Pending Review. June 2011.

Landlord and Tenant Law in Alberta: The Basics. Resource Guide for immigrant serving organizations across Alberta. Pending Review. June 2011.

Life Leases. Senior's Housing Series. September 2010.

Renting a Condominium. Senior's Housing Series. September 2010.

Renting Out a Room in Your Home. Senior's Housing Series. September 2010.

Reverse Mortgages. Senior's Housing Series. September 2010.

Sample Roommate Agreement for Alberta Renters. Developed in cooperation with Calgary Legal Guidance. February 2011.

Sample Room Rental Agreement for Alberta Renters. May 2011.

Foreclosure for Landlords and Tenants in Alberta. Pending Review. June 2011.

Statistics

Website User Statistics

An average of 798 people visited the site a day, which is an increase of 70 people visiting a day from last year. Interestingly, there has been a substantial increase in visitors to the site starting in 2011 and continuing. For example, in May and June 2011, the number of visits per day increased 30% in comparison to May and June 2010. We attribute this increase to the rural outreach that was undertaken this year. Over the course of the year, use of the website increased 9.7% from last year, for a total of 291,364 visits and over 1,380,000 page views. On average, each visitor goes to 4.76 pages when they visit the website, and the average amount of time each visitor spent on the website is 3:53. The bounce rate, which means the users who only visit one page of the website, is 32% which is an increase from last year.

Rural Albertans continue to be proportionally greater users of the site than people in Edmonton and Calgary who have access to other services.

Reference Statistics

Staff responded to 624 questions, which is a decrease of 14% from the previous year. Ultimately, our goal is to eliminate the need for a reference service at all, as the Program Coordinator's time is spent more effectively by developing new resources. Visitors to the website have increased, while reference questions received have decreased, illustrating that the increased number of publications and other materials presented on the website is providing people with the information they require. We also attribute the decrease in the number of reference questions to the increase in the number of workshops that were available this year.

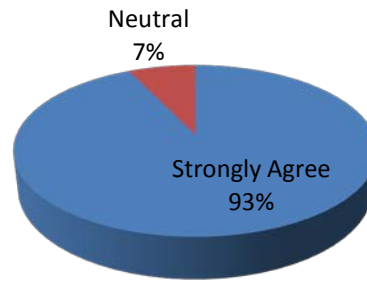
Distribution of materials increased from the previous year, with 4,121 publications and 1,602 bookmarks being distributed. All of the booklets are now available online in Adobe .pdf format, and can be printed by the user. Renting 101 continues to be the most popular resource, and made up 44% of the total distribution. We anticipate that distribution numbers will continue to increase for the second edition of Renting 101.

Priorities for 2011-2012

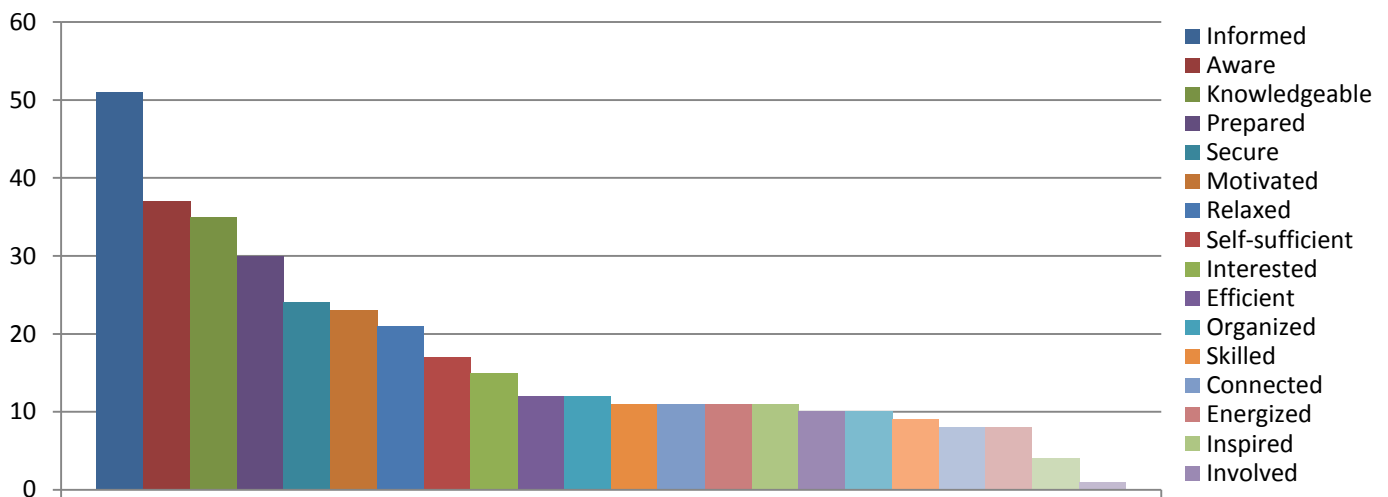
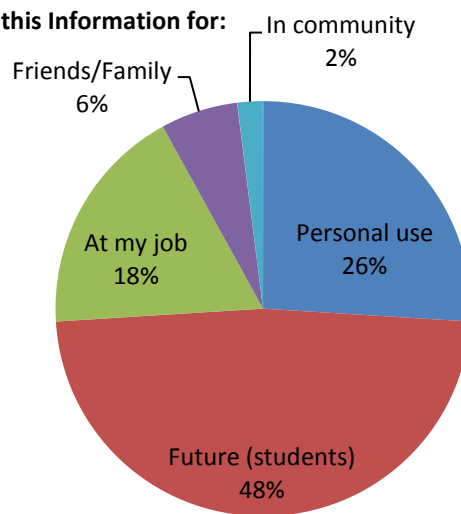
Specifically for 2011-2012, we plan to:

- Provide 25-30 presentations to various target audiences
- Distribute 5000 information items
- Meet arising needs (e.g. in the last year, the roommate agreements and the foreclosure publication arose from an expressed need).
- Review, update, and reprint major publications
- Usability and technical study of the website and a plan for revitalizing the website using current design and technology practices.
- General evaluation of the program's success
- Continued committee work and networking with other providers.
- Continue to respond to email queries (600-700).
- Increase promotional activities to targeted groups.
- Ensure that the AREF contribution is recognized.
- Set up a communication tool that will help get the message out to key stakeholders
- Continue to respond to requests from schools, seniors, and the public for information
- Review online resources for the ease of retrieval via PDAs such as Blackberrys, iPhones, and iPods.

After this Presentation, I feel like I know more about my rights and responsibilities as a tenant:



I May be Able to Use this Information for:



As a result of this presentation, I feel more:

Financial Year End

	AREF 2010/2011 Approved	AREF 2010/2011 Year End
Revenues		
AREF Core	60,674	60,674
Printing grant		3,500
Balance forward June 2010		4,024
Total Revenues		68,198
Expenses		
Coordinator (.8 FTE) (Salary+Benefits)	43,900	39,749
Lawyer	900	275
Technical support/Other	1,200	6,078
Supplies	200	272
Postage/Courier	250	1,424
Printing	2,500	3,814
Promotions	1,500	1,720
Telephones	510	500
Travel	1,800	1,394
GST		265
Total Costs	52,760	55,491
Administrative Costs 15%	7,914	8,214
Total Costs	60,674	63,705
Accounts Payable		3,500
Carry Forward to 2011/2012		993