

It's a mouthful for sure - Manitoba Life Lease Occupants Association or MLLOA for short!

The MLLOA became an unincorporated entity with its Constitution adopted on October 4, 2005. Garry Brickman, Don Boehmer, John Lohrenz, and several other determined life lease occupants spearheaded the creation of the Manitoba Life Lease Occupants' Association when they saw the need for an organized means of conversation and communication among the growing number of life lease complexes in Manitoba.

There is no actual individual document listing life leases despite the fact that the buildings are registered at Land Titles. Some 'guesstimates' put the figure at over 100 life lease developments in Manitoba. MLLOA is working to contact life lease buildings to try and get a better understanding of the numbers.

The need to share ideas and concerns peculiar to life lease buildings was increasingly apparent once communication started. The originators discovered that individual life lease organizations implemented different policies, procedures and practices with respect to governance, management and systems.

It appeared critical to have an association that had expertise to consider the numerous issues presented by the Life Leases Act and accompanying Regulations, review policies followed by the Residential Tenancies Branch (RTB), and monitor proposed legislative changes.

It is apparent that life lease accommodation continues to be misunderstood and changes to The Act are required. The MLLOA began consulting with the government over 15 years ago to bring about policies and changes to the legislation; modifications that would ensure more consumer protection for life lease residents in Manitoba, while still considering other stakeholders (sponsor organizations and management companies).

Over the last two years, the MLLOA has collaborated extensively with the Government and has been able to effect key changes to The Act. The three important amendments contained in Bill 29 ensure a life lease tenant's equity interest in a rental unit cannot be terminated because of a mortgage sale, tax sale or foreclosure; require life lease complexes to conduct a reserve fund study and up-date the study from time to time; and require that audited financial statements be prepared in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles.

Watch for future articles specifically addressing The Act and legislative changes being advocated by MLLOA members.

The MLLOA provides expertise and assistance for members facing issues, with respect to their particular building, with the goal of exploring solutions or remedies for the benefit of the tenants and other relevant stakeholders.

A number of life lease complexes we have spoken with indicate they 'have no problems or issues' so they don't really need to be members. This author has no 'issues' with our building but as members of MLLOA we expanded our knowledge and understanding not only about life lease living, but about the Life Leases Act, insurance for tenants and a few other issues we never even thought of.

A large part of the MLLOA mandate is to be a resource for life lease tenants and their councils; to provide education by way of 'round table' presentations. Over the years, member buildings have hosted presentations on insurance, independent living, reserve funds, and information sessions presented by the RTB on the Life Leases Act and residents' rights and obligations as tenants.

Occasionally, the MLLOA has sent out 'mini' surveys to member buildings on topics such as amenities, vacancies, number of suites, parking, tenant rep voting rights on their board, and reserve fund study just to name a few.

As the old saying goes, "We don't know what we don't know". Knowledge is power. Networking with people living in similar situations creates a great opportunity; offers us the potential of building relationships, combining skills, sharing knowledge and experiences while interacting with tenants residing in different life lease complexes.

In the last year, the MLLOA collaborated with the Manitoba Non-Profit Housing Association (MNPHA) to develop a board training workshop directed specifically toward the unique issues of life leases. Tenant representatives, property managers and board of director members were invited to attend these free sessions. The workshop program is still under review and development and we are hoping to be able to offer these sessions on a yearly basis. Stay tuned.

Over the years, the Manitoba Life Lease Association has received numerous calls and emails from life lease organizations outside of the province; from Ontario, Nova Scotia and as far away as BC. We reviewed the recently enacted Saskatchewan Life Lease Act at the request of a life lease group in that province.

In the last few years, MLLOA committees developed model By-laws and a sample tenant representative job description to be used as templates by member life lease tenant councils. Several life lease buildings collaborated to help a member building develop a 'new tenant' handbook.

As you can see, the MLLOA is a great resource for life lease residents and their tenant councils. We are not 'looking for trouble' - we are helping to avoid conflict through education, networking and collaboration.

Alastair Humphreys once said "Every day is a school day". It might be 'cheesy' but it's true. We do learn new things every day (even at our ages), but just think what life could be like if you proactively searched out new information.

If you live in a life lease building that is not a member of the Manitoba Life Lease Association (MLLOA) and would like to learn more about the organization and what we offer, please reach out to us on our website: www.mlloa.ca Or call Jerry Kies, member recruitment (204) 990 - 8053

Lori Blande
Member at Large, MLLOA and
Resident of Colorado Estates, life lease
Winnipeg, MB