



Legal Resource Centre of Alberta

Relating Law to Life

Six Month Activity Report July - December 2010

Program Highlights

ACJNet becomes LawNet

The goal of the ACJNet upgrade project was to create an updated, user-friendly and public face for the ACJNet website. A provincial advisory committee was gathered with public legal educators, public and law librarians, and community members providing insight and advice throughout the project.

Our goals were met and surpassed with the December launch of LawNet, three web portals that help the public find legal information and understand the legal system when dealing with a legal problem.

With funding from the Alberta Law Foundation and the Department of Justice Canada, the upgrade team was able to:

- Create a new name and tagline for the portal;
- Create a new interface and “look” for the website;
- Implement improved navigation with an improved taxonomy and information architecture;
- Improve the search component and the ability of the public to find the information they need;
- Create more informational content for the website as well as re-assign thousands of records to the new site with improved abstracts and keywords;
- Develop a documentation wiki to ensure consistency of procedure and promising practices.

LawNet
Alberta

Linking Albertans to legal information, education and help

Reference and Referral Services

About 406 queries were answered in the first six months of the year. Family law, residential tenancies, employment and labour law were the most frequent topics.

Canadian Legal FAQs

New material is continually added as new issues and questions are raised by our users.

In the last six months, staff:

completed or updated:

- 80 FAQs on “How old do I have to be?” for youth
- 100 FAQs on *Alberta Guardianship and Trusteeship Act*
- 10 FAQs about Temporary Foreign Workers updated

drafted:

- 16 FAQs on Retainer Agreements and Retainer Fees
- 11 FAQs on Foreclosure
- 20 FAQs on Planning your own Funeral
- 27 FAQs on Seniors: Dating and New Relationships



Oak-Net: Older Adult Knowledge Network

A total update to *Oak-Net: Older Adult Knowledge Network* site is essentially complete. The change has moved the emphasis away from abuse, to include a wider range of topics.

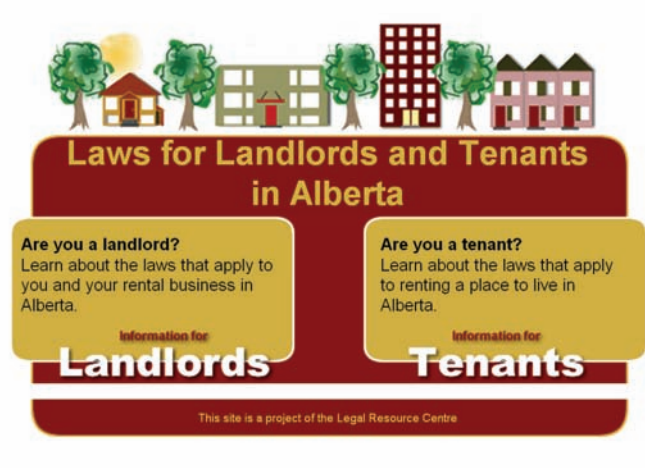


Residential Tenancies Legal Information Program

The priority for this year is to develop new materials for low literacy Albertans and immigrants, as well as materials for frontline workers within service organizations throughout Alberta.

The website (landlordandtenant.org) continues to be the Legal Resource Centre's most popular website. The overall activity on the website has decreased slightly by 2.5%, but there has been a substantial increase of people accessing the website via mobile devices, with increases of over 605% in iPhone users, and over 1,100% in BlackBerry users.

The reference questions received have decreased by 7% over this period last year. Perhaps this is a reflection of the current renter's market which may lead to less conflict between landlords and tenants, or it may mean that more people are finding answers on the website. Questions were received on a variety of topics, including: security deposits, giving notice, sharing the premises with the landlord, utility charges, health and housing standards, problems between roommates, and evictions.



ABC LawNet

During the summer of 2010, the LRC had a STEP student, whose duties included: updating, adding links, and creating resources for the LRC's *ABC LawNet* website. She was a recent graduate of the Education program at the University of Alberta.



Projects

About half of the work of the LRC relates to projects funded by a variety of funding agencies. Brief descriptions of the projects are provided here.

Charity Central: Road to Accountability

A new project, *Road to Accountability*, funded through a contribution agreement with the Charities Directorate of the Canada Revenue Agency, began in May, 2010.

This project includes the development of print and web resource materials on accountability and transparency.

Final draft of the *Self-Diagnostics Pack* designed for charities to assess where they are with their accountability practices and to plan how to go about establishing practices to ensure accountability was completed incorporating feedback from participants of four usability test session. A unique feature is that of using videoconferencing for one of the testing sessions.

A draft of the *Road to Accountability Handbook* is also completed.

The Charity Central Help Line has answered over 50 questions from charities.



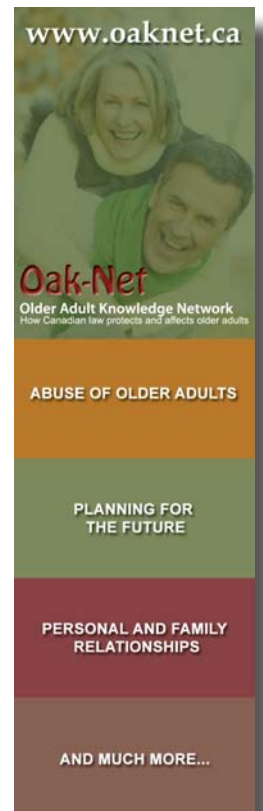


Rules of Court Project

This project is funded by the Alberta Law Foundation and Justice Canada. It will result in a series of print resources on the new Rules of Court. These resources are being designed specifically for the public. The first pamphlet was completed and a draft of the second is done. The project is also being supported by the work of 3 Pro Bono law students from the University of Alberta.

The Oak-Net Update Project

This project is funded by Justice Canada. It includes: creating a new skin for the website, added a broader selection of senior's related topics and upgrading the sections pertaining to the abuse of older adults. It continues from last fiscal year and will be completed in this fiscal year.



Presentations

Staff conducted 15 training sessions over the six month period to about 310 people. Several more sessions are already scheduled for the spring. Presentations were done at conferences, literacy sessions, seniors groups, libraries, teachers' conventions, schools, and churches.

Aippersbach, Carole. *Adult Guardianship and Trusteeship Act*. LRC staff training. November 2010. 5 attendees.

Aippersbach, Carole. *Adult Guardianship and Trusteeship Act*. Westend Senior's Centre (Edmonton). November 2010. 28 attendees.

Aippersbach, Carole. *Introduction to the Legal Resource Centre and our Resources*. Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers. July 2010. 12 attendees.

Aippersbach, Carole. *Personal Directives*. Video Presentation to the Alberta Literacy and Learning Conference (through ICCAN). October 2010. 22 Attendees.

Aippersbach, Carole. *Wills, Personal Directives and Powers of Attorney*. St. Thomas Health Centre. August 2010. 25 attendees.

Aippersbach, Carole. *Wills, Personal Directives and Powers of Attorney*. Community Learning Network and ICCAN. October 2010. 41 attendees.

Aippersbach, Carole. *Wills, Personal Directives and Powers of Attorney*. Edmonton Skills Society. September 2010. 15 attendees.

Conley, Lesley. *Obtaining Charitable Status*. Presentation for ECVO. September 2010. 15 attendees.

Johannson, Rochelle. *5 Things You Need to Know About Renting*. NAIT English as a Second Language Program students. November 2010. 33 attendees.

Johannson, Rochelle. *An Introduction to Renting: Your Rights and Responsibilities*. CALM 20 class in Lamont, Alberta. November 2010. 15 attendees.

Johannson, Rochelle. *An Introduction to Renting: Your Rights and Responsibilities*. Andrew School, Andrew Alberta, Grades 10, 11, and 12. November 2010. 18 attendees.

Johannson, Rochelle. *An Introduction to Renting: Your Rights and Responsibilities*. Youth in the supported independent living program with Edmonton McMan Youth, Family and Community Services. November 2010. 18 attendees.

Johannson, Rochelle. *Introduction to Residential Tenancy Law and to landlordandtenant.org*. Workshop for settlement practitioners at the Edmonton Immigrant Services Association. December 2010. 17 attendees.

Wurmann, Kirsten. *Introduction to the Legal Resource Centre*. Presentation to community librarians at the Edmonton Public Library. August 2010. 22 attendees.

Wurmann, Kirsten. *Reference Services – the good, the bad and the ugly*. Presentation to LIS 503 (Reference and Information Services) at the School of Library and Information Studies at the University of Alberta. December 2010. 41 attendees.

Networking Highlights

Meetings were held with the following organizations or individuals:

- Association des juristes d'expression française de l'Alberta
- Centre for Constitutional Studies
- City of Edmonton - Community Developers
- Community Initiatives Against Family Violence
- Community Learning Network
- Edmonton Chamber of Voluntary Organizations
- Edmonton Immigrant Services Association
- Edmonton Law Library Association (ELLA)
- Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers
- Educaloï Conference on Plain Language and the Law (October)
- GELA Prison Library and Reintegration Subcommittee
- Grande Prairie Legal Guidance
- Grande Prairie Council for Lifelong Learning
- National Justice Institute
- Law Information Centre – Grande Prairie
- Legal Aid (Edmonton)
- MLA Heather Klimchuk
- NAIT English as a Second Language Department
- National Justice Institute
- Pro Bono Law Alberta
- Public Legal Education Association of Canada (PLEAC)
- PLEAC annual conference (October)
- Public Legal Education Group of Edmonton (PLEGGE)
- Public Library Services Branch – Municipal Affairs (Diana Davidson)
- Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo Landlord and Tenant Advisory Board
- Service Alberta (Beth Jenkins)
- The Road Home Conference: 7 Cities on Housing and Homelessness

Volunteers

In the last six months, the work of the Legal Resource Centre was supported by 60 volunteers.

They included university and college students, academic, lawyers, and teachers.

Publications and Podcasts

The demand for our publications continues to grow. The request process has been simplified by using the new LRC E-Store, which indicates which of our publications are free and which have costs. We estimate that about 75% of requests are now coming in through the store.

Publications in the first six months were:

Aippersbach, C. *Guarantees* (pending review).

Aippersbach, C. *Dating and New Relationships for Seniors*. (pending review).

Aippersbach, C. *The events at the G20*. July 19 2010. Vue Magazine. An independent weekly newspaper in Edmonton. <http://www.vueweekly.com/podcasts/>

Aippersbach, C. and R. Johannson. *Foreclosure in Alberta* (pending review). In cooperation with Witten LLP.

Aippersbach, C. and R. Johannson. *Foreclosure for Landlords and Tenants* (pending review). In cooperation with Witten LLP.

Johannson, R. Revision of *Hot Topics* (pending review).

Johannson, R. *Sample Roommate Agreement for Alberta Renters* (pending review). In cooperation with Calgary Legal Guidance.

Shared Accommodation December 2010

The Residential Tenancies Act (RTA) sets out the rights and obligations that a tenant has to a landlord, and the landlord has to a tenant. The RTA does not apply to the rights and obligations that roommates have to each other. It is common for roommates to enter into roommate agreements so that each roommate knows what is expected of them in the rental property.

TENANT

A tenant is anyone who is allowed by the landlord to live in the rental property under a residential tenancy agreement (a "lease"). If you are a tenant, then you are bound by the RTA. You are a tenant if:

- You've signed the lease with the landlord.
- You haven't signed the lease, but your roommate has and the lease allows you to live in the rental with your roommate.
- You haven't signed the lease, but you have signed a sublease agreement, or an assignment agreement.

If you do not fall into any of these categories, then you are not a tenant and the landlord can serve you with a Notice to Vacate.

ROOMMATE AGREEMENT

If you are planning on living with someone, you should have a written agreement that sets out how the responsibilities of renting will be shared between the roommates. You can agree about things like:

- Responsibility for bills.
- How rent is to be split.
- How the rental property will be shared.
- When notice to move out must be given to the other roommate.
- How the security deposit will be handled if one roommate leaves, and
- Responsibility for chores in the rental property.

You can also add any other terms that you and your roommate(s) agree on.

SECURITY DEPOSIT

The landlord is under no obligation to return the security deposit until the lease is at an end. This means that if one roommate leaves, the landlord does not have to return their portion of the security deposit. The landlord is also only obligated to return the security deposit to those persons named on the lease. If you paid a portion of the security deposit and are not included on the lease, then the landlord may not be obligated to return any of the security deposit to you.

To avoid problems with the deposit, you may want to one landlord about adding a term what will happen to the security deposit does leave. If your Agreement, then you may want to the lease that addresses the deposit.

IF YOU HAVE A PROBLEM WHILE RENTING... December 2010

If you encounter a problem while renting, the following steps may help you.

STEP 1: TALK TO YOUR LANDLORD

If you have a problem while you are renting, you should contact your landlord and let them know about the problem right away.

If you have a problem with the landlord, then you should try to talk to the landlord.

If the landlord has a complaint about something that you are doing, then you should also try to discuss this with the landlord and see if you can come up with a solution between the two of you to solve the problem.

STEP 2: LEARN THE LAW

If you and your landlord can't come up with a solution to the problem, then you should find out about the law in Alberta. You should be aware of your rights and responsibilities and you should be aware of the landlord's rights and responsibilities.

To find legal information about renting in Alberta, try the following resources:

Laws for Landlords and Tenants in Alberta
www.landlordandtenant.org
Email: info@legalresourcecentre.ca

Service Alberta: Consumer Contact Centre
Edmonton Area: 780-427-4088
Alberta: 1-877-427-4088
http://www.servicealberta.gov.ab.ca/landlords_tenants.cfm
Email: service.alberta@gov.ab.ca

To find a lawyer to receive legal advice, contact:

Lawyer Referral Service
1-800-661-1095
In Calgary: 403-228-1722
http://www.law.society.ab.ca/public/lawyer_referral.aspx

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Vue Weekly Podcast July 19
Mon. Jul 19, 2010

VW_podcast_July19

This week on the podcast Carole Aippersbach with the Legal resource centre of Alberta, Aippersbach wrote two blog posts on the LRC's website about the mass arrests and legal rights to free speech in the light of the over 1000 arrests that happened in Toronto at the G20 protests. We talk to Aippersbach about police handling of rights to free speech, what your rights are in a protest and some of the implications of the mass arrests just one month ago.

Information Distribution

- Over 10,600 items distributed in response to requests or at presentations. Many of these were repeat requests.
- Items went to colleges, senior's homes, libraries, law offices, schools, legal studies programs, community organizations, non-profit groups, and individuals.
- Over 271,000 visitors used the Legal Resource Centre sites during the six months. Overall, the number of users of LRC websites is down by 4% over the same time last year.
- The number of website visitors using alternative access methods (iPhone, Blackberry, PS3, iPod) continues to increase dramatically.

Displays

Adult Learning Conference (October 28 and 29, 2010)

Calgary Legal Resources Fair – Calgary Public Library (October 27, 2010)

Educaloi – Conference on Plain Language and the Law (October 21 and 22, 2010)



Blogosaurus Lex

www.legalresourcecentre.ca/blog

Staff have posted 19 information items since July, covering a wide range of topics, including:

- Kids these days! (age-related questions)
- Do you want a hyperlink with that? (copyright)
- So, I've called the police...now what? (criminal)
- Baby, its cold outside! (landlord responsibility for heat)
- Beware, distracted drivers! (new legislation)
- Top current issues about renting (landlord/tenant)
- Four and twenty blackbirds (copyright)
- The importance of PLE for youth
- G20 and Public Reviews (criminal law, human rights law, legal proves)
- Powers of Attorney
- Thanks very much, I 'll take the money (Robertson v. Morrell Estate)
- Are you a wanna-be Steven Slater (employment law)
- The AGTA (seniors' law)
- Pardons legislation (criminal law)
- The new *Oak-Net* website (criminal law, estate planning law, seniors' law)

In the last 6 months, the blog has had over 2700 visits.

Blogosaurus Lex is linked to by numerous other blogs and websites like LawMatters, and Library Boy. Top referrers to the blog include ABLawg, Lawiscool, and UAlberta Law blogs.



Feedback and Support

- *Thank you for forwarding the booklets in the series The Law and You. I want to do as much as possible on my own and at this point, read the Enduring Power of Attorney... Keep up the good work, am sure the booklets are helpful to many.*
- *I went to a course and everyone was asking me where I got my information because I knew so much and asked the right questions.*
- *It's so helpful to have something that helps people educate themselves. When people have this information when they go to the lawyer it makes their time their more valuable.*
- *It's important to have these documents in place. I've seen what can happen when someone doesn't have a will and if you love your people you don't do that to them. Thank you for all you do to help people.*
- *Again, I really appreciate you sending these [booklets] to me! The library customers love them. I find I am constantly putting out new copies as they disappear rather quickly!*
- *Thank you incredibly for sending me this vitally important information. I truly doubt that I would have ever found it on my own!!!*
- *Thank you for your prompt response after our phone call. I appreciated your patience with our questions and your efforts in trying to understand our situation.*
- *I am a librarian at MacEwan University. I have included a link to your Canadian Legal FAQ page on my legal assistant subject guide page. It is an excellent resource! Thank you for working so hard to put together this resource for the public.*

Workshop Feedback

Feedback from people attending presentations indicated that 81% felt that the session exceeded their expectations, 15% said it met their expectations, with 4% rating the presentations as neutral.



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