

Benefits of a tenant's association

Are you a tenant in an apartment building with repair or security problems? Do you complain to the landlord or to the superintendent and find that you are ignored? Choices are that if you have these problems, your neighbors do, too.

Maybe you need a tenants' organization in the building. What can a tenants' association do that you can't do yourself? It can help tenants to work together to deal with problems in the building. If you work together, you may be able to get something done.

Some tenants fear that participation in a tenants' association could lead to the landlord retaliating by evicting them. Tenants should be aware that under the Landlord and Tenant Act, a landlord cannot evict a tenant for being a member of a tenants' association, or for trying to organize one.

How would a tenants' association benefit you? Members of the association can talk, as representatives or as a group, to the landlord. Also, the very fact that the association exists may prevent problems from arising.

The association can also help to educate all of the tenants about their legal rights, obligations and remedies under the Landlord and Tenant Act and under the Rent Control Act. By educating themselves and each other, members of a tenants' association can help to solve problems that arise and provide support in dealing with them. For example, a tenants' association can learn about the landlord's obligation to do repairs and the steps that can be taken if he refuses to do them. Members can present a united front to the landlord. If he still refuses, they work together in requesting assistance from the local property standards office or in applying to court to get the repairs done.

The Federation of Metro Tenants' Association suggests a number of steps in starting an association. The first step is to get interested tenants together. Talk to other tenants to determine who else might be interested in starting an

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association. An initial meeting can then be arranged for a small group. At the first meeting, you can discuss what problems people are having. A general questionnaire and a maintenance questionnaire can help to find out what other tenants are experiencing. Those present can complete it, and may be willing to take the questionnaire door-to-door in the building. This will all help to establish what priorities there might be for the association.

At the first meeting you may also want to elect a group of people to be on an executive or steering committee for the association. Or you may want to wait until the second or third meeting to do this, and operate with an interim steering committee until more people come forward to be elected to a permanent executive.

It is important to have regular tenants' committee or executive meetings, but the number and frequency will depend on what you are working on. Your group may also want some subcommittees to deal on a particular task, such as lobbying local officials, meeting with the landlord, planning a fundraiser.

The association can also arrange for speakers to educate the tenants on their legal position as tenants.

For further information on forming a tenants' association, you can contact the Halton Hills Community Legal Clinic at 877-5256.

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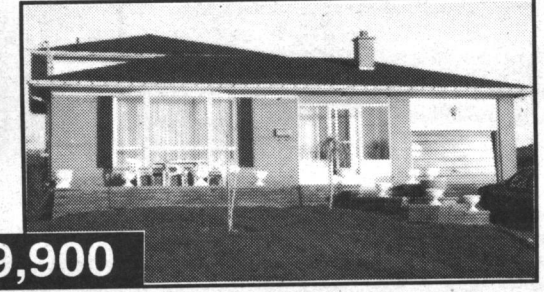


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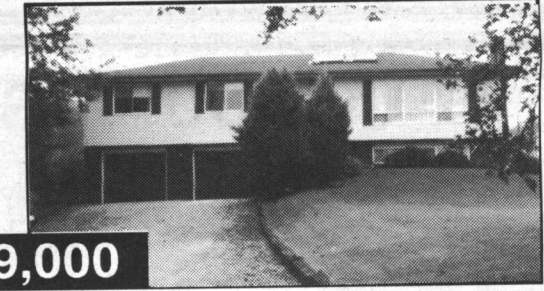
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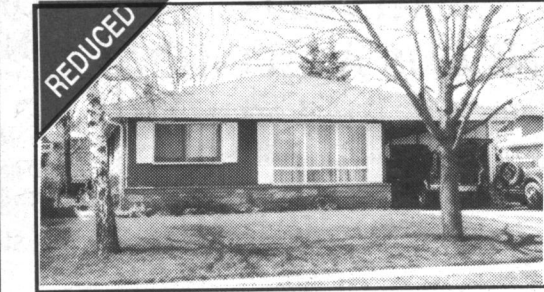
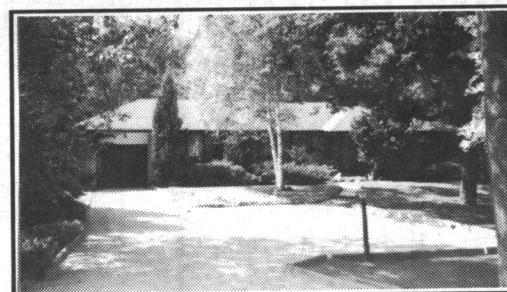
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