



Lakewood Manor Housing Co-op

As part of Saskatchewan Co-operative Association's ongoing series of co-operative profiles, we interviewed Henry Schellenberg at Lakewood Manor to find out more about housing co-operatives for seniors in Saskatchewan. Henry currently serves on the Board of Directors and is president at Lakewood Manor Housing Co-operative. He also is on the Board of Directors and is the past president of Co-operative Housing Association of Saskatchewan. Having been involved in co-operative housing in Saskatchewan for 18 years, Henry provides insight into the benefits of co-operative living for seniors and the future of co-operative housing in Saskatchewan!

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What is your role at Lakewood Manor and in the co-operative movement in general?

I am on the Board of Directors and president at Lakewood Manor and on the Board of Directors and past president with Co-operative Housing Association of Saskatchewan (CHAS). I have to admit that it is only within the last 18 years that I have been involved with co-op housing and even more recent that I became actively involved. The reason for my current interest is the fact that I believe co-operative housing is a great concept that I wish had been pursued more vigorously in the past and I hope will revitalize to the point of getting new and better senior co-operative housing built in the near future. I believe it is a better quality of life for seniors than any other type of housing.

What is Lakewood Manor?

Lakewood Manor is a co-operative housing facility designed for seniors, located in the northwest of Regina. Lakewood Manor was officially opened in May 1988, although some members moved in and took up residence in late 1987. To my knowledge Lakewood Manor has not had an empty unit since the first move in. For the members it is not only a home but a community of friends. We had a yearlong 20th anniversary celebration in 2008; that is, we made special efforts throughout the year to celebrate the anniversary. It was a lot of fun.

As far as I know we have never had a mission statement as such, but I think it has been understood from the beginning that our facility is our co-operative home in which we enjoy both the privilege and responsibility of maintaining it as we would our personal home and that we live together as a co-operative family.

What community need does Lakewood Manor address?

Lakewood Manor is not only our home, but in a very real sense it provides a community in which we make friends and enjoy each other's company and friendship. Residents share morning coffee a couple of mornings a week as well as frequent catered meals. There are card games, shuffleboard, pool and other games almost every day in which all can participate and enjoy. There are also activities in which individuals and groups can exercise their skills and talents.

As a senior's facility, Lakewood Manor does not provide homecare services, although some have homecare come in on a regular or temporary basis according to their needs. If their situation comes to a point where this is not sufficient, we recommend they move to a facility that can provide that. It would be great if we were set up to provide homecare as some of our members would certainly avail themselves of that service.

Who are the members of Lakewood Manor? How are they expected to participate in the co-operative?

Lakewood Manor is a facility for seniors, which means persons that are retired are welcome, provided they are not in a situation needing care we do not provide. We have 50 units (17 one bedroom and 33 two bedroom units) and on average there are about 70 members made up of singles and couples ranging in age from early 60s to 96. As for the people that make up our membership, they come from all walks of life: farmers, teachers, bankers, city workers, and salespersons, to name a few.

We are always looking for people that can and will contribute to the maintenance and care of the facility and otherwise help where assistance is needed. In addition members are expected to serve on the Board of Directors and Committees, attend general and special meetings -- in other words, be involved. We have a part time caretaker and a bookkeeper. Member participation is important to fill in the gaps and for the most part we always have volunteers willing to do their part. Volunteers participate in maintenance, social, financial, office and other areas.

Very few people move out unless they have health needs that cannot be addressed by Lakewood Manor. We still have members that moved in when it was first opened in 1988, that is 22 years ago, and I would say that the majority of members currently are at least 10 years in residence. There are still some of the original members in residence.



“... the people that make up our membership, they come from all walks of life; farmers, teachers, bankers, city workers, salespersons and the list goes on.”

Who makes up the board of your co-operative? How are the bylaws, rules and policies of the co-operative determined?

Our 12 member Board of Directors started off with 4 elected to a 1 year term, 4 elected to a 2 year term and 4 elected to a 3 year term, so that there would be a rotation of new members to the board each year. Each board member can be elected for a second three year term, but then must be a year off the board before he/she can be elected again to a 3 year term. This allows for new people to be elected to the board. Our elections are held during the Annual General Meeting, usually in April. The Vice-president selects a nominating committee before March 15th, who then approaches members to stand for election. Nominations are also made from the floor at the meeting. The election is done by secret ballot.

There is a set of by-laws that were established during incorporation. New proposed by-laws are presented to the membership at the AGM, which, if accepted by the majority, are sent to the Justice department for approval before the change is made.

House rules and policies are determined and set by the Board of Directors and presented to the membership at the AGM. If there are objections or modifications proposed by the membership, then a vote is taken to determine if the new policy is accepted, modified or rejected.

What is the procedure if one wishes to become a resident at Lakewood Manor?

We have a criterion which we follow, starting from the first inquiry. If the potential applicant is interested and they appear to fit our criteria (for example, are retired), they fill out an application. After the application is reviewed by the membership committee, they are called in for an interview. During the interview, the committee explains to them what it means to become a member of our

co-operative and questions are asked from both the committee and applicants. If, after this process, there is still interest on both sides, the application is taken to the Board of Directors for approval. When the Board approves the application, the applicants are asked to submit a refundable Share Capital Deposit of \$100. When an opening comes up the committee goes over the needs of our co-op (i.e. do we need members that are good in the office or maintenance, etc.) and compares them with the applicants on file to see who would fill that need best. Once a person or couple is agreed upon by both the committee and the Board, arrangements are made for membership and residency.

What makes Lakewood Manor different from non-co-operative housing complexes in terms of how people interact and relate with each other?

The beautiful part of life in Lakewood Manor compared to a non-co-operative is that we are a family living in our own units with privacy, yet anytime we leave our unit we are likely to meet up with a neighbor down the hall or in the lounge. We can visit over coffee, join in a catered meal or join one of the many occasions when there are games. We can have a movie night or watch a sports event in the lounge. This is what I call community life for seniors at its best.

In your opinion, what is the most interesting part of living in a co-operative? What are the greatest challenges?

The most interesting part of living in a co-operative like ours is the members. When new members first move in at Lakewood Manor you get to know them individually, slowly at first, but as you get to know them you discover the many different walks of life that we all have come from and the different skills and talents that are assembled in one community.

The challenges are finding ways for the members to channel their skills and talents into useful and productive contributions. As you can imagine, we are all adults with many years of experience and it's sometimes quite challenging for us to find a way to work harmoniously, yet it always turns out well.

Can you tell us a little about the current challenges housing co-operatives are facing in Saskatchewan, particularly co-operatives that provide senior housing?

Most housing co-operatives in Saskatchewan have been in operation some 20 years and although they were in communication and worked with each other on issues at first, they are not doing that anymore. Most housing co-operatives are very independent and find themselves struggling through problems on their own instead of co-operatively.

The challenge most housing co-operatives are facing today is the fact that the facilities are fast coming to the point where major repairs and upgrades are needed. Some have done a better job at preventive maintenance, but even these are faced with major challenges, both financially and in maintenance, and in determining when or which

problem to tackle first. Often breakdowns happen unexpectedly and then the question is whether to upgrade or repair. Since these are older facilities that were built before environmental concerns were an issue, the challenge for us now is where, how and when can we make improvements that will be cost effective and

environmentally friendly.

Seniors housing constantly faces the challenge of determining when is it time for members to find a place that will provide a higher level of assistance that they need. Often these members don't realize it themselves and reject suggestions from the board that it might be time to make the move. This is also difficult for the members on the board to deal with, since they are our friends.

The question of funding and self-sustainability is not really being dealt with in a realistic way by our co-op or any other housing co-op that I am aware of. Often, the attitude seems to be to let the next generation deal with it. This is a concern for me. How can I and other likeminded members find a way to convince our members and our boards that it is our concern and it needs to be addressed?

Meeting the needs of our senior citizens has not been adequately addressed by governments. It comes up at Co-operative Housing Association of Saskatchewan meetings, and while I am not sure we at CHAS have a good answer as to how to meet that need, it is being worked on.



Music nights are held during the winter months

One of the most pressing needs is that there are not nearly enough senior housing facilities. I know all the housing co-ops have long waiting lists. The same goes for senior care facilities. It is shameful that senior couples have to be separated due to the lack of sufficient spaces for couples. The last thing seniors need is to be put in separate facilities at the time when they need each other for support and companionship.

How have other co-operatives/organizations, supported the development and work of your co-operative?

My understanding is that the early days of co-operative housing development was supported primarily by Co-operative Housing Association of Saskatchewan (CHAS) and the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada (CHFC). They provided direction, training and did a lot of the lobbying and intervention with all levels of government to get the paperwork and approvals for the Co-operative Housing projects off the ground. Without their diligent work most of our housing co-ops would not be in existence today.

Lakewood Manor in particular owes a lot to CHAS, since it seemed that at every step there were roadblocks that without their help would in all likelihood have resulted in failure. Originally, the funding and all administration came from CMHC, but since the middle to late 90's the federal government unloaded co-op housing to most of the provinces, at which time the Saskatchewan Government started administration through the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation (SHC). CMHC still provides the funding which is now distributed by SHC according to our housing agreement. This funding was designed to provide affordable housing by doing two things: first, provide mortgage assistance throughout the life of the mortgage with CMHC; and second, to provide rent geared to income assistance for those with an income below a certain level. There are not enough units allotted to this, in my opinion, at least not for seniors. It is said that it is the seniors that have the money in our part of the country. That may be so but there are a lot of seniors that are also struggling financially here in Saskatchewan.



Meals in the lounge are well attended events

“Developing senior homecare co-operatives would be a wonderful thing for the seniors of Saskatchewan.”

What do you envision Lakewood Manor, and housing co-operatives in general in Saskatchewan, will be in the next five years?

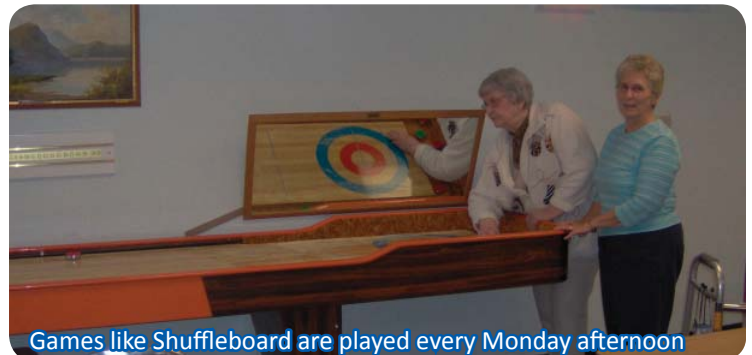
I expect that Lakewood Manor and the housing co-ops in general will find it more difficult to maintain the co-op housing standard of living as co-operative communities. I find more and more people are joining housing co-ops because they are more affordable and not because they are housing co-operatives. The co-op model seems to get lost in all of this, especially since the housing costs have gone up so drastically in the last few years. But that is not the only reason. We have become complacent in our attitude as leaders and have not promoted the model among our members as we could have, and now that we realize it, we are having a hard time getting the members to pay attention.

Developing senior homecare co-operatives would be a wonderful thing for the seniors of Saskatchewan. This is something CHAS has been thinking about a lot and I think in the next short while that will be on our agenda to pursue with our government. Can you imagine the interest there would be from our seniors as well as their children? I know children of the elderly have

been very concerned with a need for such facilities and I think our government would be pleasantly surprised by the acceptance of our population, seeing that our senior population is growing. I believe there would be a substantial improvement in the quality of life as well as a financial benefit for the government.

How can people find out more about your co-operative?

They can go to our website at www.lakewoodmanor.ca



Games like Shuffleboard are played every Monday afternoon