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Board Game Report #1
Lords & Leases

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CART 215: Introduction to Game Design

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

RESEARCH ON THEME AND MECHANICS	1
RULEBOOK	4
AN EXAMPLE GAME	8
GAME MATERIAL	11
PLAYTESTING REPORT	14

RESEARCH ON THEME AND MECHANICS

The game **Lords & Leases** draws inspiration heavily from **Bill 31**. Bill 31 proposes crucial changes to leases, such as **modifying eviction processes and transferring leases**.¹ *"Tenants aren't happy. Landlords aren't happy. But I think it's quite balanced,"* says the Housing Minister of Quebec . Although the Minister acknowledges **no one is happy about the outcome**, tenants and landlords beg to differ on the balance of the bill.



Both parties have taken the initiative to be heard by the ministry and change the discussed regulations. **Montreal Autonomous Tenants' Union**² went on **strike** against the bill , and Martin Messier, the president

of the **Quebec Landlords Association**, stated that the only benefit they are gaining from Bill 31 is the end of lease transfers and that **the bill does not address their main concerns** .

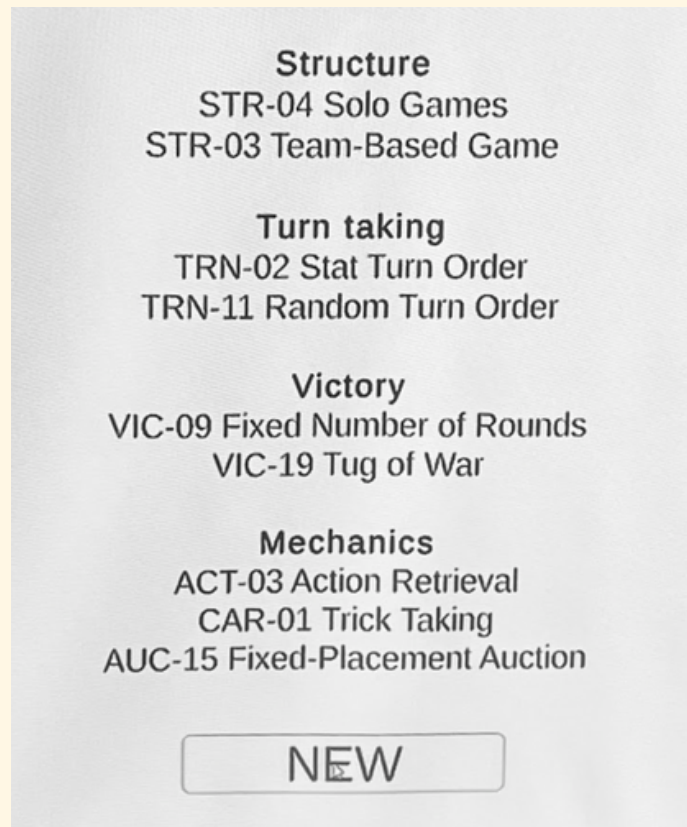
1. Morris, "Landlords Could Cancel Rental Lease Transfers under New Quebec Bill."

2. Wong, "200 Montreal Tenants Have Pledged to Go on a Rent Strike This Fall. Why More May Join Them."

3. Morris, "Landlords."

RESEARCH ON THEME AND MECHANICS

The real-life events surrounding this matter are directly parallel with the parameters and mechanics in Lords & Leases. Each game lasts **fixed rounds(VIC-09)** of **twelve**, representing the months of the year while also urging the player to strategize accordingly with the remaining matches.



The game board visually serves as a representation of the **Ministry of Housing** and is intently divided into **two sections**, picturing the tensions between the two parties, **landlords and tenants**, fostering a **team-based game(STR-03)** dynamic.

At the center of the game board, **the Bill chip**, depicting Bill 31, initiates the players into a game of **tug of war(VIC-19)**, a board game mechanic that requires players to move **up and back on a track from a neutral position**, encapsulating the disputes between the parties in real life.

RESEARCH ON THEME AND MECHANICS

At the end of every round, teams **bid influence points** to shift the bill to their site in a **stat turn order(TRN-02)**, with the **losing team** in the last round **starting first**. The bidding continues until one team passes, and the team that bids **the most influence shifts the bill**.

To earn influence points, players must play **action cards** by **action retrieval(ACT-03)**, with three action cards available for acquisition at the start of every round to be performed once by one player until retrieved again. Acquiring the cards with **money or influence chips** further emphasizes the **real world's power dynamics** between tenants and landlords while prompting the players to manage their resources wisely.

Likewise, the tenants **receive a salary**, and landlords **collect rent** at the end of every round to further facilitate the game's **realism**. The actions played by action cards simulate the real-life strategies tenants and landlords utilize to transform the bill, such as striking, protesting, or lobbying. After playing a fixed and predetermined round of twelve total rounds, the team that shifts and **keeps the bill in their area wins the game**.

I. SET-UP

1. Lords & Leases is a game that can be played by **four to six** people, with each team being two to three people. Select your team.
2. Teams sit on the same side, with tenants and landlords **sitting across from each other**.
 - a. The players sitting across from each other are **each other's tenants/landlords**.
 - b. Therefore, the tenant will pay their rent to the landlord sitting across and play action cards accordingly. This means **a tenant can only affect their own landlord** with action cards and vice-versa.
3. Place the board vertically with landlords sitting next to the "In the favor of landlords" area while tenants are sitting next to the "In the favor of tenants" area.
4. Place the action card decks next to the game board.
5. Landlords take **nine** money chips each and **one** influence chip for the team.
 - a. Keep in mind that influence points are shared between your team.
6. Tenants take **seven** money chips each and **three** influence chips for the team.
 - a. Keep in mind that influence points are shared between your team.

II. STARTING A ROUND

Each game of Lords & Leases takes place over **multiples of 12 rounds representing 12 months of a year**(12,24,36 etc.) Before each round, each team shuffles their own action cards face down, places them to their side of the game board, and draws **three cards** from on top of the deck facing them up on the surface. **Tenants start the first round**, although, in the rest of the game, the team losing the bidding starts the round. In the case of a tie the turn will be given in order.

III. PLAYING A TURN

Turns happen **in order**. For instance, if a tenant starts the turn, the turn will switch to the landlord across from them and will switch to the next tenant. **Each player plays an action card**, allowing them to **gain influence and money chips**. Out of the three drawn action cards, each card can only be **played once** unless stated otherwise on some special cards. Therefore, after an action card is played, the card will be turned **upside down** to indicate that the card was played. The player has the option to not play any cards and **skip** their turn.

IV. ENDING A TURN

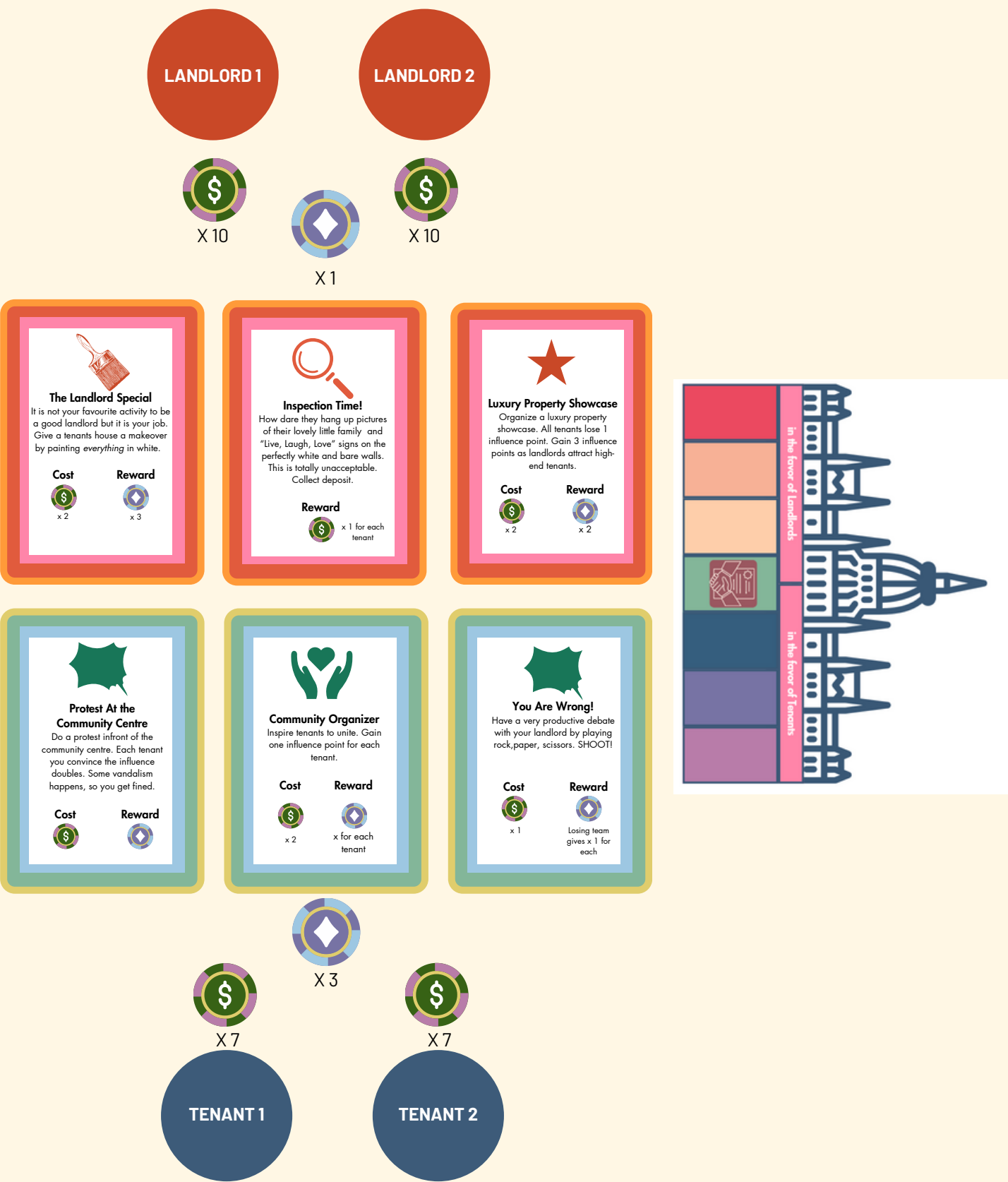
When everyone plays their turn, the **influence bidding begins**. In the first round, likewise, **tenants start first**. For the remainder, the losing team starts bidding first. The bidding ends **when no team is willing to bid further**. The team that bids exhausts the amount of influence they bid and **shifts the bill chips one square to their side**. The tenants receive a salary of **two money chips**, and landlords collect rent of **one money chip** from their tenants. Action cards get put back into the deck **to be shuffled**.

V. ENDING THE GAME

After playing 12 rounds(or more), the game will be over. **The team that was successful in keeping the bill chip in their area wins the game!**

AN EXAMPLE GAME

I. EXAMPLE SET-UP



AN EXAMPLE GAME

I. EXAMPLE ROUND

An example round based on the example set-up on the previous page:

1. The players set up the game
2. Each team draws a three cards and puts them on the surface next to each other.
3. Tenant 1 plays the "Community Organizer" action card by spending two money chips and acquires two influence chips for the team.
4. Landlord 1 plays the "Landlord Special" action card by spending two money chips and acquires three influence chips for the team.
5. Tenant 2 plays the "You Are Wrong!" action card by spending one money chip and plays rock, paper, scissors with Landlord 2. Landlord 2 loses and gives two influence points to tenants.
6. Landlord 2 plays the "Luxury Property Showcase" action card by spending two money chips and acquires two influence chips for the team.

AN EXAMPLE GAME

I. EXAMPLE ROUND

7. The bidding begins.
8. The tenants bid two influence chips.
9. The landlords bid three chips.
10. The tenants one more influence chip.
11. The landlords do not bid further.
12. Tenants win the round and the bill is moved to tenants area of the board.
13. The tenants get two money chips for salary
14. Tenant 1 pays their rent of one money chip to Landlord 1.
15. Tenant 2 pays their rent of one money chip to Landlord 2.
16. The cards get reshuffled for the next round.

GAME MATERIAL

I. GAME BOARD

The game board represented as the **Ministry of Housing** is divided into **two sections** - the left area belonging to tenants and the right to landlords, with a track in the middle for "The Bill" chip.

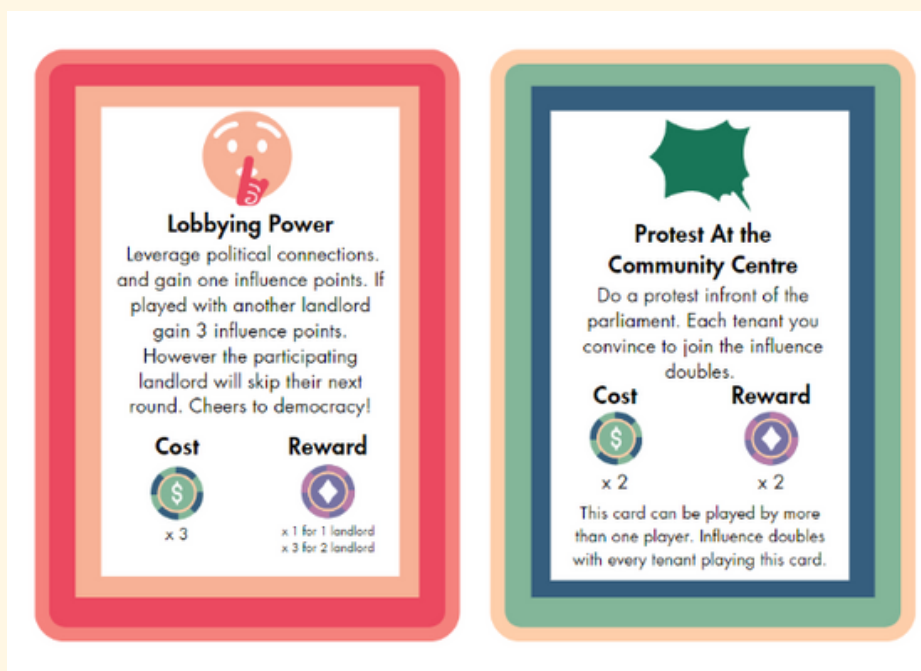
II. "THE BILL" CHIP

A chip representing the bill is placed in the **middle** of the Game board to track which team is in favor of the bill.



III. ACTION CARDS

A deck of cards that players draw from to gain influence and earn money by playing mini-games and strategically maintaining their resources. Landlords and tenants have their own separate action card decks, which get shuffled and drawn three at a time each round.



IV. INFLUENCE CHIPS

Influence chips are circular and small tokens representing influence points. Players can earn these tokens by playing action cards. Their purpose is to provide a visual representation of how much influence the team has on the government and the public. After each round, teams bid influence tokens. The team with the highest bid moves the billchip to their side of the game board.

IV. MONEY CHIPS

Likewise, money chips are circular and small tokens representing currency in the game. Tenants earn money chips after each round by getting their salary, and landlords earn money by collecting rent. Money chips are used to perform actions or purchase cards from the action card deck.

PLAYTESTING REPORT

At the start of the game, **players quickly understood the basic rules**, such as buying action cards, bidding influence chips, playing tug of war, etc., as expected. However, mid-first round, the players expressed that although it was clearly a team-based game, the game's rules failed to communicate the implication that **even though team members act individually, they should still strategize together** because their influence chips are shared. A simple clarification resolved this issue, and the feedback was noted to **further clarify this rule in the rulebook**.

Likewise, the players also expressed that **the language** used in the action cards **could have been more explicit**. One was the cards they could keep and play for other rounds. The players needed support understanding if they could play the keepable cards immediately after purchase or the next round since it was not indicated on the cards. Similarly, the players voiced that even though the mini-games such as "charades," "rock-paper-scissors," and "two truths, one lie" added extra fun to the game, the wording of the mini-game cards **required additional explanation** to these otherwise very well known games.

PLAYTESTING REPORT

In the process of writing the action cards, a crucial amount of effort went into **creating a narrative and setting the tone of the game**. Although a narrative is significant even in a board game, it is evident that in the case of the prototype of Lords & Leases, **the narrative hinders the requirements of the action cards**. A great example of this issue arose during playtesting. One of the players wanted to play the card "Secret Plans," which required the player to play a round of charades. The card's wording led the players to think that they had to play charades by silently acting out secret protest plans, while the intention was to make the players play the *actual* charades, picking any word and performing it out silently.

Naturally, writing and brainstorming on a project for a long time can result in **potential ambiguities going unnoticed**. Thus, the feedback on the phrasing of the rules and the action cards **diverged from expectations** but was **highly beneficial**. Conclusively, the further iterations should address this issue by clearly **separating the narrative, the requirements, and the consequences** of action cards with the correct wording.

PLAYTESTING REPORT

Additionally, playtesting the game during development, it was evident that there were **imbalances with the default chip quantities** given to the teams at the start of the game. Noticeably, **the landlords struggled to obtain influence chips while the tenants struggled to acquire money chips**. Although it could be argued that this imbalance made the game more **symbolically realistic, mechanically, the flow of the game gradually slowed down**, resulting in a decrease in intensity and excitement. The players **confirmed** this concern while moving forward with the group playtest. Players expressed that the given amount of chips at the start **should be modified**, stressing how the lack of influence chips landlords have at the beginning resulted in the team **skipping their turn** multiple times due to them not being able to purchase cards that require the landlords to spend influence points. Therefore, as the game advances with further development, the default chip quantities **should be adjusted and tested better precisely** to resolve the game's imbalance.

PLAYTESTING REPORT

After the playtesting was over, the players complimented that the overall mechanics were **very well-thought-out** throughout. Besides the necessary adjustments they mentioned before, the players were **satisfied with the mechanics** and expressed their **enjoyment** of playing the game. The players stressed out the added **immersion** and fun coming from the **mini-game type cards** and **salary-rent collection**. Additionally, even though the players voiced the ambiguity that emerged from the narrative-heavy action cards, they shared laughs and jokes reading the story of each card.

In conclusion, **the overall playthrough of the game is logical and playable**, such as playing action cards, bidding influence chips, playing tug of war, etc. Therefore, further iterations will benefit from keeping these rules relatively similar, although **the action cards and the rulebook need a lot of work in regard to clarity and ambiguity**.

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