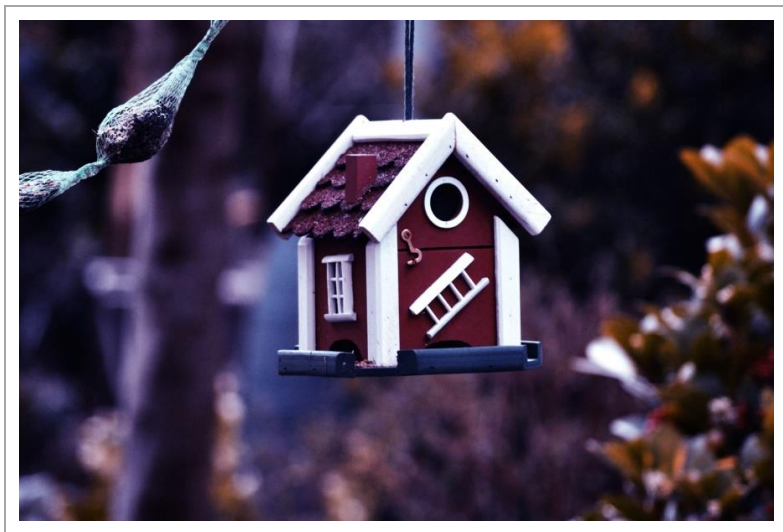


# A TENANT'S GUIDE TO HOUSING



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**SCARBOROUGH WOMEN'S CENTRE**

2017

# Types of Housing

## Subsidized

Rent geared to income housing. There is a waitlist managed by Housing Connections. There are Special Priority applicants in groups such as: survivors of abuse, terminally ill (less than 2 years to live), over-housed tenants in rent-geared-to-income housing, homeless, separated families, newcomers who are homeless, and youth (16-17 years old at time of applying). You must be eligible to obtain non-repayable housing allowances.

## Open Market

Market rent housing is not subsidized, the rents are set according to local rates.

## Rooming

A rooming house contains multiple dwelling units where a bathroom and/or kitchen is shared by more than three people who pay individual rent.

# Types of Housing

## Shared

Having a roommate can make housing affordable. Shared accommodations are frequently advertised online. Living with a roommate entails clarifying expectations and boundaries surrounding rent, shared spaces, and furniture. Be aware of security features of the building and see page 5 for safety planning tips.

Know your legal responsibilities! A lease is signed with both you and your roommate, but if your roommate leaves without notice or does not pay their rent, you may be responsible for the rent. Guests and visitors are not tenants and are not expected to pay rent. Be aware of what is or is not included in rent: utilities, parking, phone, internet, etc.

## Affordable

Affordable housing is placed at 80-100% of the market rate (set at or below average market rate) and is not geared to income. To qualify, annual gross income cannot exceed four times the annual rent of the unit you're applying for.

# Troubleshooting

## Repairs and Maintenance

Your landlord is responsible for the maintenance and repair of your rented home. This includes things that came with your place, such as appliances, and it includes common areas, such as parking lots, elevators, and hallways. The landlord must fix or replace anything that is in bad condition or does not work properly, unless a guest breaks it, in which case you must fix or pay for repair.

If you have a problem with cockroaches, bedbugs, mice, or other pests, your landlord must take steps to get rid of them and to stop them from getting in.

Remember to talk to your landlord and ask them to fix the problem. Keep notes and take photos in case you have to address the issue to the tenant board.

## Roommates

If you decide to live with a roommate, make sure that everyone signs the lease. Ensure that you and your roommates establish boundaries before moving in and figure out responsibilities (such as cleaning) and how to split the rent. Make sure you clarify expectations regarding visitors, especially if they stay overnight.

Note: if your friend or partner comes to live with you, they are not tenants and you are still responsible for rent. If your roommate leaves, you may become responsible for the lease and if you find another roommate, the landlord will have to approve them as a tenant before they are added to the lease.

# Troubleshooting

## Paying Rent

Paying rent means you have the right to live in a place and use the common areas of the building such as driveways and lobbies. Your rent may include parking, electricity, and other utilities, so make sure the lease clearly outlines what is included.

Landlords can only raise the rent once every 12 months by the legislated guideline amount (unless there are significant renovations/repairs which add to the price) and must give you at least 90 days written notice. For rent increases in 2017, the guideline indicates a maximum of 1.5% increase.

Landlords can ask for first and last, but no more than that. If you're unhappy with your landlord, do not withhold rent – this may give them a valid reason for a notice of termination. If you have not paid rent, landlords are not allowed to withhold your personal belongings, change the locks, or cut off utilities. However, they may appeal to the Board for an eviction notice, report you to a credit rating agency, or demand for payment.

# Safety

## Physical Safety

Before signing the lease, make sure to take physical safety into consideration. Be aware of:

- Security features: ask your landlord about features such as security alarms or guards
- Entrances: be aware of all entry points and make sure that locks work properly
- Neighbours: be aware of the neighborhood and how comfortable you are living there
- Accessibility: including access to transit and shopping
- Lighting: make sure there is sufficient lighting, especially if you enter/exit the unit at night
- Check bed bug registry: a public database of bed bug reports across Canada can be found at <http://bedbugregistry.com/>
- General upkeep: take note of possible problems such as water stains or cracks. The landlord is responsible for addressing these issues
- Test locks and peepholes: this will help you keep outsiders and solicitors from entering your unit
- Locations of fire exits: be aware of evacuation routes
- Fire alarms and carbon monoxide detectors: locate the alarms and detectors and make sure they have batteries/are operational

# Safety Planning

Having a safety plan in the case of emergencies may reduce the risks of danger to you or your children.

- Monitor physical safety of the building. For example, make sure parking spaces and entry areas are well lit. Inquire about building security and make sure door and window locks are functional.
- Identify fire escape routes, elevators, stairwells and windows in case of fires.
- Find people you can trust in various places such as friends, family, therapists, neighbours, counsellors, or supervisors. Keep their phone numbers/contact information for easy reference.
- If you are fleeing an abusive situation, contact legal aid and family law services.
- Keep photocopies of important documents and cards in a safe place in case of an emergency.
- Make a plan about where you could go if you have to leave your home in an emergency situation. Think about possible places such as a friend's house where you can hide extra clothing, keys, etc.

# Know your rights

If you're in rental housing in Ontario, you're covered by the Residential Tenancies Act (RTA). This is the law that governs relations, rights, and obligations between landlords and tenants. If your landlord does not follow the rules of the RTA, you may apply to the Landlord and Tenant Board to settle disputes.

## Discrimination and Human Rights

Before moving in, a landlord is allowed to ask you for information such as income, employment, and credit scores. But they are not allowed to ask questions that could be used to discriminate against you. For example, landlords are not allowed to ask about your marital status, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or citizenship. The landlord must make a serious attempt to accommodate disability, which includes possibly making physical changes to the building. If they refuse to accommodate you, this is considered as discrimination.

Discrimination can be direct or indirect, regardless, you can apply to the Landlord and Tenant Board or the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario.

The Ontario Human Rights Code bans discrimination in most rental situations, however, there are some exceptions. For instance, the landlord is allowed to refuse renting to someone for any reason if the landlord or their family will be sharing a bathroom or kitchen with the tenant.

# Know Your Rights

## Privacy and Harassment

Privacy is a right. Your landlord must have a valid reason to enter your unit and must give you 24 hours notice before entering your home. They may be able to enter without permission only in emergency situations or if your rental agreement indicates the landlord provides cleaning services. The landlord is not allowed to harass or invade your privacy, this means that they can't enter your place without a proper reason, take photos of you or your home without permission, divulge your personal information, or cut off essential services such as heat or electricity.

## Eviction

You may be evicted if you owe rent, caused damage or serious problems, illegal activity on property, or if the landlord or their family wants to move in or are tearing the building down to use it for something else. If you owe rent, you can cancel the notice of termination if you pay within 14 days. The landlord must first give you a written notice as per the rules set out in the RTA. You do not have to move out because of the notice, but get legal advice right away (from community legal clinics or through Board mediators). If your landlord appeals to the Landlord and Tenant Board for an eviction order, make sure to attend the hearing. Your landlord cannot evict or lock you out until an eviction order has been given by the board, in which case only the Sheriff is able to physically evict you.

# Resources

**Housing Help Association of Ontario** (416) 686-3390

**The Housing Help Centre** (416) 285-8070

**Family Service Toronto** (416) 595-9618

**Metro Tenants Legal Association** (416) 921-9494

**Shelter Intake Line** (416) 397-5637

## Who we are

Scarborough Women's Centre delivers programs and services to promote positive change for women in a safe, inclusive and welcoming environment. The Centre empowers women to become economically and emotionally independent for future success and to strengthen their local communities, free from violence.

Scarborough Women's Centre is a community-based non-profit organization. Since 1982, we have touched the lives of 170,000 women and their children. Our service users are diverse for race, ethnicity, immigration status, faith, dis/ability, and sexual orientation. They range in age from 15 to 80.

Our mission: All of our services are free. While referrals are welcome, participation is voluntary.

## Contact Us

For informational referral or inquiries into our services, feel free to contact us!

Phone: (416) 439-7111

Email: [ed@scarboroughwomenscentre.ca](mailto:ed@scarboroughwomenscentre.ca)

Web: [www.scarboroughwomenscentre.ca](http://www.scarboroughwomenscentre.ca)



SCARBOROUGH **Scarborough Women's Centre**  
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