

YOUR RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES AS A TENANT



As a tenant, you have the right to live in a safe and clean environment. Your home should be in good repair and should have adequate water, heat, light, and toilets.

Your home should be safe.

The **City of St. John's** has prepared this guide to help tenants to understand their rights and responsibilities.

The City of St. John's is committed to ensuring that there are acceptable standards of housing for all citizens. We urge tenants and lodgers to report any/all unsafe conditions.

If you have a concern about the standard of the housing where you are living, you may call and make a complaint to:

**City of St. John's
Building Inspections
Call: 311**



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BUYER BEWARE

What To Look For

Before you rent an apartment or room view it in daylight hours as problems are more easily seen during the day. If you are looking for a unit in winter check for drafts around windows and doors.

Take a family member or trusted friend to view the unit with you. The following check boxes provide a list of **what to look for** when viewing a unit:

Inside

- What floor is your unit on?
- Will you be sharing your unit?
- Is there an elevator?
- Are all stairs and landings in good, firm condition with secure railings and handrails?
- Are there working locks on the doors? (main door, apartment/ bed sitting room door)
- Are there enough windows to allow good light and air? In each bedroom there should be at least one window which is large enough to exit through in case of an emergency.
- Do the windows open/close properly, easily?
- Do the windows have fly screens that are in good condition?
- Are there unpleasant smells, cracks or water stains on walls/ceilings? (may mean leaks)
- Are the rooms damp (i.e. mould) or cold? When was the unit last painted?
- Is there an air exchanger or de-humidifier provided?
- Is there a working thermostat to control heat in your unit?
- Is there a fuse box or breakers? Is it located in your room? If not, can you get to it easily?

Outside

- Is the building well kept on the outside? (cleared walkways, enough parking, etc.)
- Is the entrance well lit?
- Is the entrance easily and safely accessed?
- Are the stairs/porch in good condition?
- Who is responsible for clearing snow from the walkways/driveways?
- Who is responsible for mowing the grass?
- Who is responsible for garbage removal?

Safety

- Are there working smoke detectors? (Push test the button to see if they are working).
- Is there a working fire extinguisher, and is it in within reach? Who is responsible for keeping the fire extinguisher in working condition?
- Is there any kind of safety/alarm system? Is the neighbourhood generally safe for seniors? (i.e. is vandalism common?)
- Is there an emergency exit? (i.e. another way out if the main door is blocked?)
- Is there a clear, well lit pathway to all emergency exits?
- Is there a proper and secure railing on fire escapes and stairwells?
- Electrical cords should not be running under carpets, over/under doors and windows or through walls.

BUYER BEWARE

What To Look For (Cont'd)

Kitchen

- Is the kitchen in good condition? (hot/cold running water, clean cupboards/drawers, no leaky faucets, enough water pressure, etc.)
- Are appliances provided? (fridge, stove) If so, are they clean and working?
- Do the doors and controls on appliances work properly?

Bathroom

- How many people will be sharing the bathroom?
- Is the bathroom clean?
- Is the plumbing in good working order (no leaky faucets, enough water pressure, properly flushing toilets, etc)
- Is there a shower?
- Is there a laundry room?
- Can you access it at all times?
- If not, is there a Laundromat nearby?

Other Questions

- What is included in the rent?:
 - Hot water?
 - Water Taxes?
 - Heat?
 - Cable?
 - Internet?

If not, remember to include these costs in your budget.

- Is smoking allowed in the residence?
- Are pets allowed?
- In the case of a bedsitting arrangement or an apartment building, who is responsible for cleaning common areas and who is to supply cleaning materials?

Important to Know

If you share a kitchen or bathroom or if your landlord provides meals or linens you are **not covered by Residential Tenancies Act**. In that case, you must go thru small claims court for any rental related financial matters.

Neither you nor your landlord can **change the locks** on entrance doors unless you both agree to this change.



READING THE FINE PRINT

Before You Sign A Lease Or Move In

- ☑ Make sure you understand your lease
- ☑ Be clear on what is included in the lease (electricity, hot water, cable, internet) and how the lease is (weekly, monthly, yearly)
- ☑ Find out how much rent will be, when it is due and how to make payments. Also find out how much the security/damage deposit is.
- ☑ **Always get receipts for any money you pay your landlord.**
- ☑ Make sure the landlord gives you the rules of the building if there are any.
- ☑ Do an inspection of your unit with your landlord. You and your landlord should sign your list of existing damages before you pay damage deposit and you and your landlord should have a copy of that list. The **Rental Premises Condition Report** can be used for this purpose. Found at:
- ☑ Make sure that you understand your responsibilities and those of your landlord as outlined at right.
- ☑ **If a landlord or tenant wish to end a lease, written notice is required. Find out how much notice is required and make sure it is stated in the lease.**



Tenant Responsibilities

- ⇒ Keep the unit in good condition
- ⇒ Get approval from landlord in writing for major changes to unit
- ⇒ Obtain insurance for personal belongings should you desire this insurance
- ⇒ Respect all rules concerning health and safety in the dwelling
- ⇒ Respect fellow tenants right to privacy, peace and quiet
- ⇒ Repair any damage caused by you or your guests

Landlord Responsibilities

- ⇒ Must give you 24 hours notice before entering your home except in case of emergency
- ⇒ Must provide you with a copy of the Residential Tenancies Act
<http://www.assembly.nl.ca/legislation/sr/statutes/r14-1.htm>
- ⇒ Must maintain the unit in good condition
- ⇒ Must follow all regulations put in place by government for upkeep, safety, health, etc.
- ⇒ Must return safety/damage deposit with interest when you move out, provided the final inspection shows that your unit is in the same or better condition than when you moved in (excluding wear from every day use) and that no outstanding money is owed to the landlord
- ⇒ Must let you know in writing three months in advance if your rent is going to increase or if you are going to be evicted. A landlord cannot raise your rent in the first year of a rental agreement
- ⇒ Must do regular maintenance (plumbing problems, hot water boiler leaking, painting every three to five years, having working fire extinguishers and alarms, etc.)

CONTACTS AND INFORMATION

Safety and Support

Mental Health Crisis Centre (no website)

Phone: 737-4668 Toll-free: 1-888-737-4668

Sexual Assault Crisis Line <http://nlsacpc.com/>

Phone: 726.1411 Toll-free: 1.800.726.2743

Royal Newfoundland Constabulary <http://www.rnc.gov.nl.ca/>

Phone: 729.8000

Fire Prevention <http://www.sjrfd.ca/FIRESAFETY/SAFETYTIPS/>

Phone: 576.3905

Rights, Advocacy and Legislation

Residential Tenancies Office http://www.gs.gov.nl.ca/landlord/residential_tenancies.html

Phone: 729.2610

Residential Tenancies Act (you can read the law itself here)

<http://www.assembly.nl.ca/legislation/sr/statutes/r14-1.htm>

Public Legal Information <http://publiclegalinfo.com/>

Phone: 722.2643 Toll-free: 1-888-660-7788

info@publiclegalinfo.com

Canadian Consumer Handbook <http://www.consumerhandbook.ca/en/>

Housing Options

Memorial University Off Campus Housing

<http://www.housing.mun.ca/och/welcome.php> (excellent links here)

Phone: 864.3765

Email: och@mun.ca

NL Housing Corporation <http://www.nlhc.nf.ca/>

Phone: 724-3031

City of St. John's Non-Profit Housing

<http://www.stjohns.ca/cityservices/housing/index.jsp>

Phone: 709.576.8196

Email: housing@stjohns.ca

Seniors Resource Centre (produces a list of housing options for seniors and others)

<http://www.seniorsresource.ca/>

Phone: 737-2333 Toll-free: 1-800-563-5599

Email: info@seniorsresource.ca

NOTES AND FEEDBACK

Feedback Welcome

Your feedback on this document is appreciated. If you have any changes or additions to suggest, please contact:

Affordable Housing Coordinator,
City of St. John's

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