

# TENANT *Toolkit*



## Purpose

The purpose of this toolkit is to provide information to tenants about their rights and responsibilities. It will also provide helpful tools and resources to ensure a successful tenancy. There are 3 different Tenant Toolkits each with a slightly different focus.

- **Looking for a place to live** is geared towards individuals engaging in the first steps of finding a place to live.
- **So you've found a place** was developed to help a person secure their rental unit and understand their rights and responsibilities
- **Helpful Hints** helps tenants understand their rights as well as troubleshoot some common problems. It will be split up into various brochures.

All of the guides end with a resource section that includes agencies and websites where you can get more information

None of these guides are intended as a replacement for any legal advice you may need to obtain.

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## So you've found a place...

Now what?

There are lots of things to keep track of when becoming a tenant. Depending on your experience this can be an overwhelming process.

Don't be surprised if you feel a mix of emotions when this happens, from excitement to anxiety and everything in between.

This guide will help you keep track of what you need, figure out where you may need help, and give you some resources that you can use.

You can use the table of contents as an easy check list to make sure you have everything you need for a successful tenancy.

*"Life takes you unexpected places, love brings you home." ~ Unknown*

### *First, Last & Key Deposits*

Before you move in, the landlord will ask you to pay your first and last month's rent. On top of paying your rent, some landlords may ask you to pay a couple of deposits.

In Ontario, landlords can only ask you for two types of deposits:

- Last month's rent deposit
- A key deposit

All deposit requests must be made before the move in date. Generally deposits are discussed as a part of the tenancy agreement. Your key deposit must be returned to you when you leave your unit and return all of your keys. Your last month's rent will be used as rent for the last month of your tenancy.

## The Tenancy Agreement

A tenancy agreement is a legal contract. It details the agreed upon terms between you and the landlord; it is also referred to as the Lease. The Tenancy Agreement can only be ended with a written notice, mutual agreement or by an order from the Landlord and Tenancy Board.

The Lease or Tenancy Agreement should be detailed and include the following information:

- Your full name
- The address of the rental unit
- The rental amount and date payments are to be made
- How you need to pay
- Who you need to pay
- How you or the landlord can end the tenancy agreement
- Your landlord or property manager's name and address
- Other relevant information regarding the tenancy

**Note: A Lease or Rental Agreement is a legally binding document. Before you sign a lease you should be sure that you want to rent the unit, and agree to all the terms. If there is anything on the lease that you are not comfortable with, talk about it with the landlord before you sign.**

## Unit Inspection...

Before you start moving into your unit, you should do a unit inspection to ensure that everything is in good working order. Ideally the unit inspection will be done with the landlord or their representative a day or two before the move in date. Things to look for during the unit inspection are:

- Damage to the walls
- Damage to any furniture (if the unit is furnished)
- Damage to any windows, window locks, screens or coverings
- Check all faucets to ensure you have hot and cold running water, and to ensure there are no leaks
- Note whether the heat or air conditioning is working properly
- Check for pests such as cockroaches, ants or bedbugs (if pests are noted, you should have the landlord exterminate **before** you move in!)
- Make sure the appliances are all in working order, and are clean (dirty appliances can be a fire hazard)
- Make sure the smoke alarms and the carbon monoxide detectors are present, working and up to date
- Note any damage to flooring (staining on carpets, etc.)

### Quick Tip!

**During the inspection, it is a good idea to take pictures so that you are not on the hook for any damage that may have already been there once your tenancy is over.**



## Moving Day Checklist

Moving is stressful. You can make the process easier by using this handy checklist. Prior to your move in day you will need to:

- Meet with the landlord to sign lease/rental agreement
- Arrange for use of the elevators (if needed)
- Arrange for utilities (if needed)
- Arrange for transportation of your belongings from your old unit or storage unit to your new home

On moving day, if you have not already done so, you will have to:

- Pay first and last
- Get keys from the landlord
- Inspect your unit
- Move your stuff in
- Unpack
- Relax!



## Getting Hooked-up!

You can generally do all of your account set ups on the internet, or over the telephone.

**Alectra Utilities**  
1-877-963-6900  
powerstream.ca

**Collus PowerStream**  
(705) 445-1800  
collus.com

**Innpower**  
(705) 431-4321  
innpower.ca

**Midland Power Utility Corporation**  
(705) 526-9361  
midlandpuc.on.ca

**Orillia Power**  
(705) 326-7315  
orilliapower.ca

**Wasaga Distribution Inc.**  
(705) 429-2517  
wasagadist.ca

**Enbridge Gas**  
1-877-ENBRIDGE  
enbridgegas.com

**Note: If you are required to pay your own water, you will have to check with your local municipal office to set up this service.**

## Utility Assistance...

The Ontario Energy Board ensures that individuals with a low income can access utilities in Ontario. This includes special rules for low income households. If you qualify, you may be able to have your security deposits waived, as well as receive credit for a portion of your utility bill through the Ontario Electricity Support Program (OESP).

This OESP provides assistance in the form of a credit on your monthly bill. The credit is calculated based on your household income and the number of household members. If your household uses electricity for heating (baseboard heaters), or machine that requires a large amount of electricity (i.e. oxygen machines), you may be eligible for a larger credit. You can call Barrie Housing Support Services to help you apply at 705-739-0485 after you have set up your electrical account, or you can apply online at [Ontarioelectricitysupport.ca](http://Ontarioelectricitysupport.ca).

## LEAP!

Down the road, should you find yourself in utility arrears, you may be able to access the Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LEAP). The Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (LEAP) was created to help individuals or families who are struggling to pay their electricity bills throughout the year. The program provides a one-time financial assistance grant of up to \$500 per year. This grant is available to low-income or special circumstance residents who meet program criteria, whose utility accounts are in arrears and are faced with the threat of disconnection.

May be available to low-income customers of natural gas or electricity distributors (and unit sub-metering providers) experiencing difficulty paying current arrears. A decision will be based on several factors including long-term viability of the account. A disconnection notice is **not** required to be eligible.

# Tenant Rights

As a tenant you have a number of rights including the right to:

- Be treated respectfully by the landlord and other tenants
- Have your privacy respected and protected
- Peacefully enjoy your unit
- Have repairs completed in a timely manner
- Have your rights under the Human Rights Code protected. Which means you should be treated respectfully and be free from harassment regardless of:
  - Race, colour or creed
  - sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression
  - age
  - religion
  - marital status
  - citizenship or place of origin
  - disability
  - income source
- Receive a rent receipt when you pay rent
- Have a unit that is habitable, safe, and in good repair with all the vital services in good working order (water, heat, hydro)

## **Be Aware!!**

The Residential Tenancies Act does not cover individuals who share the kitchen or a bathroom with the landlord or their family. However, your rights under the Human Rights Code are ALWAYS applicable.



## **Furniture...**

If your place is unfurnished, you are responsible for providing your own furniture. Be wary, you do not want to be transporting bedbugs or other pests to your new place, so be cautious when purchasing or accepting used furniture.

Sources for cheap furniture may include friends or family, Kijiji.com or second hand stores and thrift shops.

If you chose to get second hand furniture do a thorough inspection. Check all cracks, seams and crevices for bedbugs and other pests using a flashlight if possible.

For more information on bed bugs, you can visit:

<http://www.simcoemuskohealth.org/Topics/Environment/pesticide/sbugsrodents/pests/bedbugs.aspx>



## Resources

The next booklet in the Tenant Toolbox series is called “*Handy Hints*”. It can help if you run into trouble or are in need some help. You can also call your local housing support agency for help if you have any questions or concerns.

Below you will find some contact information for the Regional Housing Support Services. All resource centre locations are by appointment only. Please call 705-739-0485 to book an appointment.

### **Barrie and Area Empower Simcoe**

39 Fraser Court Barrie, Ontario  
L4N 5J5

### **Georgian Triangle South Georgian Bay Housing Resource Centre**

115 Hurontario Street, Suite 105  
Collingwood, Ontario  
L9Y 2L9

### **Orillia and Area Orillia Housing Resource Centre**

35 West Street North  
Orillia, Ontario  
L3B 5B9

### **North Simcoe Midland Housing Resource Centre Guesthouse Shelter & Community Hub**

522 Elizabeth Street,  
Midland, Ontario  
L4R 2A1

### **South Simcoe CONTACT Community Services**

Community Service Centre South Simcoe TownSquare  
39 Victoria Street East  
Alliston, Ontario  
L9R 1T3

## Contact Us!

### *Regional Housing Support Services*

*Phone: 705-739-0485*