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The Residential Tenancies Branch

FACT SHEET

Before You Rent – a Tenant’s Guide

Cette information existe également en français.
Composez le 204-945-2476.

Whether you are moving into an apartment for the first time, or you’re looking for a new place to live, there are questions you need to ask yourself before you decide on a place.

- What can I afford to pay for rent each month?
- What area do I want to live in?
- What type of housing am I looking for (for example, high-rise, town house, house)?
- What services are important to me (for example, parking, laundry, storage, and elevator)?
- Does the landlord allow pets?
- Do I need public transportation close by?

Starting your search:

There’s a lot to think about before you decide to lease an apartment or house. Once you know what area you would like to live in and the amount you can afford for rent, you should ask some questions and keep your eyes open when you start looking at places.

- What’s the condition of the inside and outside of the building? Is it clean and in good repair?
- Is there enough storage space in the unit or is there extra space available in the building? Is there a cost for the extra space?
- Does the unit come with appliances like a fridge and stove?
- What kinds of services are available (for example laundry facilities, parking, cable, security)?
- Does the unit have air conditioning?
- Is the unit fully furnished?
- Does anything need to be fixed before you move in?
- Is there a caretaker living in the building? If not, how would you contact the landlord?

Ask the landlord to show you the actual unit you would be renting.

Finding the right place:

Once you have decided on a place to rent, there are some questions you should ask before you sign a tenancy agreement or give a deposit in order to avoid any misunderstandings.

- Is the tenancy agreement month-to-month or fixed-term (for example, one year)?
- How much is the rent and when is it due?
- What’s included in the rent (for example, storage, water, cable, parking)?
- Are there any costs in addition to the rent such as parking, heat, or cable?
- When is the next rent increase?
- Will the next rent increase be for more than the government guideline?
- If the next increase is for more than the guideline, ask why.
- Is the building exempt from rent regulation (for more information on this, contact the Branch or visit our website)?

(See over)

- What kind of heat is there? If you are responsible, call the utility company and get an estimate on the monthly bill.
- How much notice is required if you want to move out?
- What's the landlord's policy about pets? If they allow them, are you required to pay a pet damage deposit?
- What's the smoking policy? Are there any other house rules that you should know about?

Signing the lease:

When you decide that you want to rent a unit, you may have to complete an application form and give the landlord a security deposit. If you have a pet, you may have to give a pet damage deposit as well. Do not sign the application or pay a deposit unless you are sure that you want the unit. You could lose your deposit if you decide not to move in and the landlord could file a claim against you for loss of rent.

Property Inspection:

Before you move into your new unit, the Residential Tenancies Branch suggests that you and your landlord do an inspection of the property together and fill out a Rental Unit Condition Report. Either you or the landlord can ask to have a condition report done. Make sure you keep your copy.

Some things you should look for during the inspection include:

- are all taps and plumbing, such as the shower and toilets, working properly
- are all lights and electrical in good order
- do the appliances, such as the oven, dishwasher and refrigerator work
- do the windows open and shut properly in each room
- are there holes or markings on the walls, floor and ceiling of each room
- are there working smoke detectors

Make sure that you agree with the Condition Report before you sign it. Either you or the landlord can use the report as evidence to support or respond to:

- a claim against a deposit
- a claim for compensation for damage or cleaning
- an application for an Order of Possession

Contacting the landlord after you move in:

Your landlord must tell you how you can get in touch with him/her after you move in. If the landlord doesn't do this, you should ask:

- what is the best way to contact the landlord
- is there someone else you can contact in case of emergency

NOTE: There are scams that have occurred online involving people trying to sublet or rent out "fictitious" rental units or units that they have no authority to rent out.

To avoid online rental scams when looking for a unit:

- Ask to see the unit before you agree to rent it. If this is not possible because you are moving in from out of town, try to get a friend or someone you trust to view the unit.
- Contact the actual landlord or property manager directly to arrange to sign a tenancy agreement (lease) and give a deposit.
- Pay the deposit and rent **only** to the landlord or property manager. Do not send it to the individual tenant. Only the landlord or property manager has the authority to accept you as a tenant and to accept rent from you.

This fact sheet is only a brief explanation. For more information on tenancy agreements and other renting information, contact the Branch, or visit our website at www.manitoba.ca/rtb.

This information is available in multiple formats upon request.