



Overview of Tenant Rights in BC

Students renting accommodation in British Columbia are protected by the Residential Tenancy Act (RTA). CEL Vancouver is committed to ensuring students understand their rights and responsibilities before signing a lease or moving into rental housing. This page provides essential information, resources, and government links to help students make informed decisions and avoid rental scams or unsafe housing situations.

As a tenant in BC, you have legal rights that protect your safety, privacy, and fair treatment. Under the Residential Tenancy Act, tenants have the right to:

- Live in a safe and properly maintained home
- Privacy and quiet enjoyment of the rental property
- Reasonable notice before landlord entry
- Proper written tenancy agreements
- Fair handling of deposits and fees
- Protection from unlawful rent increases or evictions
- Access to dispute resolution through the Residential Tenancy Branch (RTB)

These rights apply whether you rent a private apartment, a shared home, or a room.

1. Residential Tenancy Branch (RTB)

The RTB is the official government body responsible for rental housing laws in BC.

Students can access:

- Information on tenant and landlord rights
- Official tenancy forms
- Rent increase limits
- Dispute resolution services
- Eviction rules
- Condition inspection checklists

Residential Tenancy Branch: <https://www.gov.bc.ca/landlordtenant>

Contact RTB directly for legally binding advice or disputes.

2. Essential Tenant Responsibilities

Tenants must also follow rules and obligations, including:

- Paying rent on time
- Keeping the premises clean and in good condition
- Respecting noise and property rules
- Not damaging property
- Informing the landlord of required repairs
- Following all terms of the written tenancy agreement
- Providing proper notice when moving out

Failure to follow these responsibilities may result in warnings, charges, or eviction.

3. Tenancy Agreements (Leases)

Most rental arrangements in BC require a written tenancy agreement. Students should ensure the agreement includes:

- Rent amount and due date
- Length of tenancy (month-to-month or fixed-term)
- Security deposit and pet deposit details
- Rules for utilities and shared spaces
- Move-in date
- Responsibilities of both parties

Students should read the agreement carefully before signing and keep a copy for their records.

4. Security & Pet Deposits

Landlords may require:

- Security Deposit: Maximum of half one month's rent
- Pet Damage Deposit: Maximum of half one month's rent (if applicable)

Deposits must be returned with interest unless damage or unpaid rent justifies deductions.

5. Condition Inspection Reports

Before moving in and moving out, landlords and tenants must complete and sign a Condition Inspection Report.

This protects both parties by documenting:

- The condition of the home
- Existing damages
- Cleanliness
- Included furnishings

Failure to complete this inspection may affect deposit refunds.

Official form: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/housing-tenancy/residential-tenancies/forms>

6. Rent Increases & Eviction Rules

Rent Increases

- Landlords must give 3 months' written notice.
- Increases are allowed once every 12 months.
- They must follow the government-set maximum increase rate.

Evictions

Evictions can only occur for legal reasons such as:

- Non-payment of rent
- Excessive property damage
- Illegal activity
- Landlord's use of property

Tenants must receive proper written notice and can dispute an eviction through the RTB.

7. Avoiding Rental Scams

Students should take precautions:

- Never send money before viewing a property
- Verify the landlord's identity
- Be cautious of listings significantly below market price
- Avoid cash-only arrangements
- Ensure all agreements are in writing
- Do not share personal information until the landlord is verified

If unsure, students may ask Student Services to review a rental listing for safety.

Fraud reporting resources:

- Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre: 1-888-495-8501

8. Handling Repairs & Maintenance

Tenants should promptly notify landlords of repairs needed. Landlords must maintain:

- Plumbing
- Heating systems
- Electrical systems
- Structural elements
- Safety equipment (smoke detectors, locks, etc.)

If a landlord refuses necessary repairs, tenants can file a complaint with the RTB.

9. Ending a Tenancy

Tenants ending a tenancy must:

- Provide proper written notice (usually 1 full month)
- Leave the unit in clean condition
- Complete a move-out condition inspection
- Return all keys

Deposits are returned within 15 days if no damages or outstanding rent exist.

10. Support from CEL Vancouver

Students needing help understanding tenancy rights or reviewing rental agreements may contact Student Services for guidance (non-legal advice).

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College staff can assist with:

- Understanding BC tenancy laws
- Identifying red flags in rental listings
- Navigating the rental process
- Accessing dispute resolution resources

11. Government Links for Further Support

- Residential Tenancy Branch:
<https://www.gov.bc.ca/landlordtenant>
- Tenancy Forms & Notices:
<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/housing-tenancy/residential-tenancies/forms>
- Rent Increase Information:
<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/housing-tenancy/residential-tenancies/rent-increases>
- Dispute Resolution:
<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/housing-tenancy/residential-tenancies/solving-problems/dispute-resolution>