

Property Code Quick Reference

This list is compiled from common issues experienced by student renters and references Kingston's Property Standards bylaw, Fire Code and the Residential Tenancies Act (RTA)

Windows and Doors

- Need to be kept in good repair. Glass needs to be intact, frames must not be rotted, weather-stripping must be in place and wooden doors must be protected by paint or stain to prevent deterioration.
- Must be "reasonably draft free", must open and close under normally applied pressure without jamming or binding, must open if intended to do so, and lock properly.
- One entrance to every dwelling unit must be lockable from both outside and inside the unit (think dead bolt.)
- Windows need to have screens to keep out insects and pests.
- If you live in a building with more than one unit, each unit needs to have the unit number posted on or beside the door to ease identification by visitors, maintenance persons and emergency personnel.
- Every bedroom must have a window BUT that window does not need to open if they are adjacent a fire escape; Ontario Fire Code requires that they meet minimum fire-protection rating standards.
- Bedroom doors are not required to have locks, in fact a landlord is not required to allow locks on interior doors.
- It is not required that a landlord change the locks between tenancies.

Walls, ceilings and floors

- Every wall, ceiling and floor shall be maintained so as to be free of holes, cracks, loose coverings or other defects.
- Floors in every bathroom and kitchen must be impervious to water to permit cleaning. This means that wooden floors in bathrooms or kitchens must be sealed against water and must have any cracks between boards filled. Walls next to showers or baths need to be water resistant.
- Basement floors and walls must not allow water to enter or pass through.
- It's a tenant's job to keep ceilings, walls and floors in a clean, sanitary and safe condition. If you make a hole accidentally it is your job to fix it or get the landlord to fix it and pay the costs of repair.
- All floors need to be "acceptably" level.
- There can't be gaps between ceiling and walls or floors and walls where garbage can accumulate. Think baseboards and moldings or good taping and plastering.
- Floors covered with linoleum (or similar) or carpet that become worn or torn, shall be repaired, replaced or removed.

Roofs

- Must be weatherproof, structurally sound and free of loose material. A tenant who mis-uses a roof as a balcony can expect to be charged for damages.

Minimum Heat

- When heat is included in your rent the landlord must, between the 15th day of September in each year and the 1st day of June of the following year, be provided with adequate and suitable heat by or at the expense of the landlord; and for the purposes of this by-law, "adequate and suitable heat" means that the minimum temperature of the air in the accommodation which is available to the tenant is 21.1°C (70°F)
- Every dwelling unit shall be provide with a source of heat capable of maintaining 21.1°C (70°F)
- Portable heating units cannot be your primary source of heat.
- Landlords, or anyone working on their behalf may not disconnect or cause to be disconnected the heat to a dwelling unit occupied by a tenant, except when necessary to repair or replace heating unit. Repairs that leave you without heat should be explained fully: how long will it take, what kind of noise and disruption can you expect and what access, if any, will service people need to your unit.
- If you have electric heat that is currently included in your rent, the landlord can transfer the bill to you IF they follow the requirements for decreasing your rent set out in the RTA.
- It's a myth that your heat can't be "cut off" for non-payment during the heating season. If you don't pay your utility bills your service will be disrupted and it will cost extra to re-start your account.

Insects and Vermin

- Buildings shall be kept free of rodents, vermin and insects at all times. This responsibility is shared by landlords and tenants. Landlords need to find and plug access points and tenants need to remove food sources by storing garbage properly and keeping food-goods in durable, pest-resistant containers.
- Any opening used for illumination or ventilation must be screened with durable material (think corrosion resistant) that will effectively exclude rodents, insects and vermin. Floor drains in basements must also be screened.
- Tenants need to tell landlords at the first sign of insects, rodents or pests. Don't let the problem get out of control.

Mould

- Controlling moisture and keeping your home dry is the key to preventing and stopping mould growth.
- Neither the Kingston bylaws nor the RTA specifically refer to mould. Bylaws concerning walls and floors help keep water out and lower the risk of things getting wet and increasing the opportunity for mould.
- Bathrooms need a window that opens, or a fan; tenants need to use the fan or window to ventilate the moisture adequately. Ventilation is key.

- Keeping your unit too cold can encourage condensation which leave dampness for mould growth. Leave some room between large furniture (beds, sofas and bookshelves) and exterior walls to allow for warm air to circulate.
- Use the exhaust hood over your stove or open the kitchen window when boiling large amounts of water.
- Clothes dryers must be vented to the outdoors. Too much wet laundry hung indoors can increase the dampness in your home; you may have to use a dryer more often.
- Mould can grow places that you can't see but Property Standards Inspectors cannot open up walls or ceilings to look for mould. These inspections are visual non-invasive reviews only.

Vital Services

- Heat (in season), water and electricity are considered vital services and your landlord can't leave you without these things for extended periods of time. The exception would be when severe weather or, say, a fire in an adjacent building prevents the landlord from providing you with vital services.
- Tenants who pay their own utilities may not leave the unit without vital services. You must have utilities hooked up in your unit for the entire length of your tenancy.

Home Safety

- Every part of your home should be free of rot and able to support its own weight plus any additional load to which it may be subjected through normal use.
- Exterior stairs and porches need to be free of defects and protected from the elements by paint or another suitable preservative.
- Stairs of more than three risers or height of more than 600mm need to have a rigid handrail.
- Parking areas need to be surfaced with asphalt, crushed stones, paving stones or concrete. Dirt is not sufficient.
- There must be at least one smoke alarm on every level of your unit.
- Each unit must have a Carbon Monoxide detector

Stuff you may not have thought of

- Any furniture that is manufactured for interior can't be used outside of a dwelling. Furniture outside of a dwelling that becomes dilapidated needs to be disposed of. Watch for "tickets" affixed to your front door.
- Garbage and recycling containers can't be put out before 6PM the night before your pick-up and must be retrieved before 6PM on the day of pick-up.
- Every owner must post contact information in a common area in case of an emergency on a 24 hour basis where an authorized person responsible for the property can be reached.
- Occupancy is based on square footage of your unit not number of "bedrooms".

Contact Student Community Relations for tips on next steps

613-533-6745

scr@queensu.ca