

Tenant Handbook



Welcome to your new home!



The **Perth & Stratford Housing Corporation (PSHC)** is a part of the City of Stratford Housing Division. The PSHC is the largest provider of rent-geared-to-income (RGI) housing locally and owns and manages 662 adult and family units in the communities of Atwood, Listowel, Milverton, Mitchell, St. Marys, and Stratford, providing homes to approximately 3,200 people.

We strive to provide clean, safe, well-maintained and affordable housing, and connect residents to services and supports. We work with local partners to foster opportunities that can improve the well-being and quality of life in our communities.

This is your guide to living in your PSHC home. It has details about your rights and responsibilities as a tenant. It also has information about how to make your home a great place to live.

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Important: This Tenant Handbook is intended to be a quick source of information for you. The information in this guide may change over time or become out of date. The information in this guide should not be taken as legal advice. If there is any conflict between what is written in this guide and any law of Canada (federal, provincial, or otherwise), or any PSHC policy, procedure, or guideline, then the law, policy, procedure, or guideline prevails. Nothing in this handbook should be seen as a promise that the PSHC will do something or will not do something, an offer, or an agreement.
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If this handbook is lost, please return to:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Contact Us



Main Office:

City Hall Annex Building - 82 Erie Street - Stratford, ON - N5A 2M4

Office Hours:

8:30 am - 4:30 pm (Monday to Friday) - Closed (Saturday & Sunday)

Phone:

519-271-3773 or toll free 1-800-669-2948

Important Extensions:

Ext. 241 Maintenance

Ext. 240 or 244 Resident Services

Ext. 245 Rent Receipts

Ext. 242 Annual Reviews or Interim Reviews

Ext. 291 Supervisor of Housing

Ext. 265 Manager of Housing

For **after hours maintenance emergencies** call **1-866-906-0152**

Monday to Friday 4:30 pm - 8:30 am, Saturday, Sunday, and Statutory Holidays

If you smell or see smoke and/or there is danger to your physical safety, please call 911 immediately.

Public Housing Review Officers (PHROs) provide resident services to everyone who lives in PSHC buildings. They can answer questions about your home and your tenancy.

Your PHRO is:

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Building Monitors provide general access to apartment buildings for contractors and emergency personnel and report maintenance concerns to staff. They do not oversee the cleaning or landscaping of the property and are not responsible for resolving tenant disputes and/or complaints.

Your Building Monitor is (if applicable):

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Apt. No: _____

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Your Home

Before Moving In



Insurance

As a tenant, you are responsible, under your lease, for getting insurance for your unit. This type of insurance is usually called tenants' or renters' insurance and covers liability and personal property in case of an emergency such as a fire or flood. Depending on the policy, you may also get coverage for expenses such as hotel bills, meals and claims made for accidental injury and/or damage to other tenant's property.

It is important to get this insurance because PSHC insurance will not pay to replace your belongings in emergency circumstances.

If you are in receipt of Ontario Works or ODSP, these programs may cover the cost of insurance. Contact your caseworker directly for more information.

Please note that you will need to provide proof that your insurance has been renewed each year.



Utilities

Your lease will state what, if any, utilities are covered by the PSHC. Utilities that are not included in the lease are your responsibility to pay and you must set them up before your move-in date. Utilities may include hydro, water, heat and/or hot water tank rental.



Consent to Share Information

If you would like the PSHC to be able to share your information with others, you need to sign a consent form that gives us permission to do so. This includes speaking with Ontario Works, ODSP, other community agencies that may be supporting you, family members, and/or friends. If no consent is given, any information we collect will be kept strictly confidential and we will not share it.



Zero Tolerance Policy

As a new tenant, you are asked to sign a Zero Tolerance Policy form which is your commitment to playing your part in maintaining a safe space for you and your fellow tenants.

The PSHC will not tolerate any harassment, threats of violence and/or acts of violence against other tenants, staff, contractors, or any other members of our community.



Receiving Keys

Before you receive the keys to your unit, you need to:

- Provide proof of insurance;
- Provide verification of utilities; and
- Pay your first month's rent by certified means (e.g. cash, debit, money order, or certified bank draft).

Moving In



Move-In Record Form

Staff inspect all units before a tenant moves in and record any repairs and/or deficiencies, however it is possible that something may have been overlooked.

PSHC staff will provide you with a **Move-In Record Form**. Please complete this form if you notice anything you would like to report. This could include marks on the counter, scratches on the floor, loose railings, etc.

The form needs to be returned directly to the our office (82 Erie Street, Stratford) within 7 days of moving in.

If you don't submit a Move-In Record Form, we consider the unit to be in good condition and the cost of any repairs and/or damages when you move out will be your responsibility.



Keys & Locks

You will be given keys to your unit door and, if applicable, your mailbox and building when you move in. **You may not change your own lock** because staff need access to your unit in case of emergencies, and for maintenance or inspection purposes.

If you misplace your keys, your key breaks off in the lock, or you need your lock changed for other reasons, please contact the maintenance team and they will arrange a lock change. You may be charged for the new lock and keys as well as for staff time.

We recommend that you leave a spare key with a trusted friend or family member in case you lose your key. **Your Building Monitor is not required to let you into your unit.**

You must return all of your keys when you move out of your unit.



Phone, Cable, & Internet

Phone, cable and internet are not included in your rent. You can choose any companies that provide services in your area.

Settling In



Decorating

This is your home so enjoy making your unit comfortable. Before personalizing your home with paint, wallpaper, or wall stickers, for example, please keep in mind the following:

- Any changes (on the inside and outside of your unit) need to be approved by the PSHC in writing.
- Your unit needs to be returned to its original condition before you move out; if this is not done, you will be charged for the cost of reversing the alterations.
- Installing carpets is not permitted and we recommend using area rugs.
- You need to get permission from the PSHC in writing before building any items such as fences, decks, or sheds.



Heating & Electricity

Whether or not you are responsible for paying utilities, please keep the following things

in mind:

- Maintain heat at a comfortable but reasonable level.
- Be efficient with conserving energy at all times and practice turning off lights, computers, televisions, radios, appliances, etc. when not in use.
- If your heating or electricity bills become noticeably higher than your neighbours, we may request an explanation.



Air Conditioners

Air conditioners must be installed and removed by the maintenance team. They must be in good working order (e.g. quiet, no dripping water, not appear unsightly such as using plywood panels). There is a charge for this maintenance request.

If we are paying the heating costs of your unit, air conditioners must be removed from the

windows or covered during the winter months to prevent heat escaping from your unit. If the air conditioner has not been removed, you may incur a monthly surcharge.

Only one air conditioner is permitted per apartment unit.



Satellite Dishes & Antennas

Satellite dishes are not permitted and should not be attached to the building, balconies or fences.

In the interest of safety, non-interference with other residents' reception and building damage, CB/scanner antennas and cable antennas are also not permitted.



Balconies & Patios

Balconies and patios are part of your outdoor living space. For your enjoyment and safety:

- Do not use balconies or patios as storage areas or for hanging laundry.
- Always lock your balcony or patio doors and do not let your children play on them unsupervised.
- Only electric barbeques are allowed in apartment complexes, regardless of floor.
- Keep your patio or balcony clear of snow during the winter season.
- Garbage and other items that need to be disposed of should not be stored on your patio; you will incur a charge if the PSHC is required to remove these items.
- Do not throw items over the side of balconies.
- Be considerate of tenants below your balcony when you are watering plants.



Garbage & Recycling

You are responsible for disposing of your garbage and recycling appropriately to ensure a healthy and safe living environment.

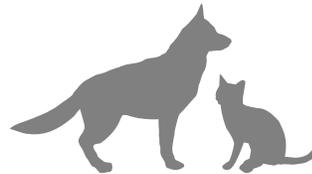
If you live in an apartment building, make sure garbage is securely wrapped to reduce

the possibility of spillage and place it in the appropriate containers. If you are in a building with garbage chutes, avoid jamming them with overly large bags and do not leave garbage on the garbage chute room floor.

If you live in a family unit, familiarize yourself with curbside pick up times and costs in your municipality. We recommend putting your garbage and recycling out the morning of pick-up day to avoid the possibility of broken bags and strewn garbage. This also avoids attracting animals such as skunks and raccoons.

Please familiarize yourself with bulk item removal rules in your municipality. Bulk, or large, items, include things like beds and couches. Do not place these items in dumpsters or curbside.

If staff or contractors need to dispose of your garbage, recycling or large items, you will be charged a service fee.



Pet Care

We know pets are a part of your family. The PSHC has a policy that allows for 2 pets per unit.

As a pet owner, you are responsible for:

- Making sure dogs have proper tags, vaccinations, and rabies shots.
- Making sure cats have vaccinations and are spayed or neutered.
- Leashing your dogs and/or cats at all times outside your unit.
- Keeping your pets out of common areas.
- Cleaning up immediately after your pets and practicing "stoop & scoop".
- Disposing of dog waste and cat litter properly by making sure it is double bagged and placed in the garbage; **never** flush it down toilets or put in garbage chutes.
- Being considerate of others regarding noise.
- Crating, caging, or removing your pets from the unit when maintenance or inspections are scheduled.
- Covering the cost of any damage to PSHC

property caused by your pets, including pest control services.

- Understanding that violent behaviour by your pet is unacceptable and could lead to legal action.

Remember that this also applies to your guests' and visitors' pets.

Please see our Pet Policy (PSHC-006A) on our website for more information.



Pest Control

It is extremely important to act immediately when you see any evidence of pests (e.g. fleas, bed bugs, ants, cockroaches, etc.) as they can spread quickly from unit to unit. Please report pests to the maintenance team who will schedule a licensed pest control company to treat your unit. If you live in an apartment, infected furniture and other items should not be moved into hallways; they can be treated properly in your unit.

To help discourage pests:

- Be sure that all food is stored properly and waste is promptly disposed of.
- Do not feed birds, squirrels, stray animals, or wildlife as this could attract mice, rats or other pests.
- Do not bring questionable used furniture or other items into the building.



Annual Unit Inspections

Staff perform annual unit inspections to ensure they are kept tidy, free from clutter and garbage, and to address any safety or maintenance issues.

There is also an annual smoke detector inspection.

We will give you twenty-four (24) hours notice before staff perform these inspections.



Access to Your Unit

Except in emergencies, staff will only enter your unit with your permission or after giving you twenty-four (24) hours written notice.

Maintenance & Repairs



Regular Cleaning & Maintenance

You are responsible for keeping your home tidy, clean, and free from clutter and garbage. This includes the following activities:

- Cleaning your unit (including countertops, cupboards, floors, walls and appliances).
- Keeping your stove-top clear of any items, as this is a fire hazard.
- Changing your lightbulbs as needed.
- Replacing furnace filters 4 times a year.
- Replacing smoke alarm batteries at least once a year.
- Keeping furniture, curtains, and other items at least 30 centimetres away from the heater registers.
- Using only power bars with a surge protector; electrical cords are for temporary use only. Multi-plugs and wall plugs should not be used.
- Ensuring there is a clear path to all exits in case there is a fire and you need to escape through that exit.
- Reducing clutter in your unit by using closets and cabinets. Too much clutter is a fire safety risk and a violation of the Ontario Fire Code.
- Ensure there is a clearance of 12 inches around the electrical panel, water heater, and furnace; there is a fire risk from the flame on these appliances.



Outdoor Maintenance

If you live in an apartment building, please make sure you are not storing items on the lawn areas so regular outdoor maintenance and landscaping can be completed easily by our hired contractors.

If you live in a family unit, you are responsible for outdoor maintenance such as trimming weeds and cutting grass unless we advise you otherwise.



Snow & Ice Removal

If you live in an apartment building, you are responsible for clearing snow from your balcony or patio area and for moving your vehicle when necessary for snow removal in parking lots.

If you live in a family unit, you are responsible for clearing snow from your own driveway, sidewalk and public sidewalks in front of your unit. Outside furnace vents and hot water tanks and vents must always be clear from snow and ice as well.

If the maintenance team or contractors have to do any outdoor maintenance work in order to comply with municipal by-laws, you will be charged back.

For safety reasons, please use designated exits when it is icy and report any slip and falls to the PSHC immediately.



Wiring & Plumbing

For safety reasons do not:

- Install any additional heating units;
- Complete any electrical work on your own;
- Overload the electrical circuits or use fuses in excess of fifteen (15) amperes in the fuse panel; or
- Use electrical, plumbing or gas equipment for any purpose other than those for which they were constructed.

Please report electrical or plumbing issues to the maintenance team. Any work will be completed by a professional contractor.



Maintenance Requests

It is important to report any maintenance issues to the PSHC immediately.

If you do not give permission for the maintenance team to enter your unit when you are not there, please make sure you are home when staff arrives so you can let them in. And please treat the maintenance team and contractors with respect.

For maintenance or repair requests during regular office hours call 519-271-3773 ext. 241 or email publichousingmaintenance@stratford.ca.

Due to the high volume of calls, staff will not return calls left on the maintenance line. We handle orders based on when the request is made and how urgent it is.



After-Hours Maintenance Emergencies

Maintenance emergencies include:

- Water leaks or flooding;
- No heat;
- Blocked toilet;
- Electrical failures or short circuits; and
- Damage caused by wind or storms and fire damage.

For after hours maintenance emergencies call 1-866-906-0152 (Mon. to Fri. 4:30 pm - 8:30 am, Sat., Sun., and statutory holidays).

If someone is sent to your unit to correct a problem after-hours, please make sure you are home to answer the door.

If you smell or see smoke and/or there is danger to your physical safety, please call 911 immediately.



Chargebacks for Repairs

As a tenant, you must pay for the repair of any damage (beyond normal wear and tear) caused by you, other people living in your unit, your guests, or anyone you allow onto the residential complex. This includes damage in your unit and in hallways, elevators, stairways, driveways or parking areas. It does not matter whether the damage was done on purpose or by not being careful enough - you are responsible.

If a contractor is sent to your unit and you are not home or do not open the door, you will be charged for the service call if there are any resulting trip charges.

If you do not agree with a bill for a repair, you may request a review of the cost in writing.



Common Areas

No Smoking



The PSHC is transitioning all buildings to smoke free. This means that **no** forms of smoking are allowed in and on all of our properties including:

- Within nine (9) metres of any apartment building, single-family home, duplex, or townhouse dwelling; and
- Inside any entrance, lobby, hallway, stairwell, lounge, public washroom, laundry room, garbage room or other common areas.

If you signed a lease **on or after August 1, 2018**, this also means that **you cannot smoke inside your rental unit**, including your balcony or patio.

If your tenancy began **before August 1, 2018**, you **may keep smoking in your unit as long as you continue to live in the same unit**. If you transfer to another unit, you will sign a new lease and the Smoke-Free Policy will apply.

Please note that you will be charged for stain blocking nicotine stains on your walls and any extra cleaning fees when you move out.

Remember that these rules also apply to your visitors and guests.

For more information, our Smoke-Free Policy (PSHC-002A) can be found on our website.

Parking



If you have a vehicle, you need to provide your license plate number as well as the vehicle's make, model, and colour.

Please keep the following in mind:

- Your vehicle must be properly licensed, insured and roadworthy.
- For the safety of all tenants and neighbours, vehicle maintenance and repairs are not permitted in parking lots or driveways.
- Any abandoned or unlicensed vehicles will be towed at the owner's expense.
- Trailers and boats are not permitted in PSHC parking lots.
- Refrain from parking in accessible parking spaces and observe all 'no parking' areas such as fire routes and wheelchair access.
- Be prepared to move your vehicle when necessary for snow removal in parking lots. We will post dates and times for this.

Laundry Rooms



All PSHC apartment buildings have pay for use laundry machines. These are for tenant use only - your friends and family should not be using these machines. If you are not able to stay while you are doing your laundry, please be considerate of others and keep track of when the machines are finished.

Keep in mind that some laundry rooms are locked at night. If you are starting laundry later in the evening you may not be able to pick it up until the next day.

Important: the PSHC is not responsible for lost or stolen items in the common areas (e.g. laundry rooms) of our buildings and properties. Please take care of your possessions and if someone has stolen from you, report it to the police.

Please make sure that all washers and dryers are in good working order. **Lint should be cleaned out of the lint tray after each load for fire safety reasons.** If you see that a machine is not properly connected or vented, call maintenance.

Lounges



Lounges are for the enjoyment of all tenants living in the building. Smoking and alcohol consumption are not allowed in these areas.

Pets are also not allowed at any time, even if they are leashed. Service animals are exempt from this rule.

Your guests should only be using the lounge if you are with them.

If the lounge has not been reserved for a specific function, you may use this room provided you do not disturb or interfere with other tenants. It is your responsibility to clean up after you are finished and ensure that all furniture is returned to its proper place.

Hallways & Walkways



For safety reasons, hallways, stairways, entrances and sidewalks should not be obstructed. If you live in an apartment building, please do not place mats, bikes, strollers, or scooters outside your door in the hallway.

Elevators



Never use an elevator in a situation where there may be a fire.

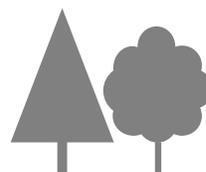


Elevators are an essential part of apartment living. Unfortunately they are easy to break, expensive to fix and they can be dangerous if tampered with.

Here are a few ways you can help to keep elevators in working order:

- Do not hold doors open for long periods.
- Do not force the doors open.
- If the elevator stalls between floors press the emergency button and wait for help. Stay calm and do not try to leave the elevator.
- If the elevator is damaged or some defect is noted please report it to the maintenance team immediately.

Outdoor Spaces



Please be mindful of your local municipality's by-laws related to outdoor spaces (e.g. smoking, drinking, fires, noise restrictions). Be considerate, stay within the

designated space, and clean up after you are finished. Doing so helps to maintain safety and allows everyone to enjoy the outdoors in their community.

Your Tenancy



Tenant Rights and Responsibilities

As a tenant, you have the right to:

Security of Tenancy

You may live in your unit until:

- You give proper written notice to the landlord (PSHC); or
- The landlord ends your tenancy for breaking rules of the *Residential Tenancies Act, 2006*.

Notice before Entry

- A landlord (PSHC) must provide 24 hours written notice before entering your unit, unless there is an emergency or the tenant has provided permission.
- A PSHC staff or contractor who enters your unit must have a reason for entering that complies with the *Residential Tenancies Act, 2006* or your lease.

As a tenant, you and anyone living with you are responsible for:

- Paying your rent on time, every month.
- Keeping your unit clean and in good condition.
- Paying to repair damages that you or your visitors or your guests cause. (This does not include repairs for regular wear and tear).
- Being responsible for your actions and the actions of the other members of your household, your visitors/guests and pets.
- Respecting your neighbours by being considerate (e.g. not making too much noise, controlling and cleaning up after your pets, etc.).
- Respecting all spaces in PSHC properties (e.g. rental units, personal property, common spaces, and offices) by keeping these areas clean and free from garbage.
- Following PSHC policies and all applicable legislation (including not subletting your unit).

Your Rent

Rent is due on the first day of the month, every month.



Rent Calculations

RGI tenants in the PSHC pay rent based on the combined gross incomes of all family members. Rent is calculated based on 30% of your household's income to a maximum of the established market rent.

If you are in receipt of social assistance - Ontario Works (OW) or Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) - your rent is calculated in accordance with a scale established in the *Housing Services Act, 2011, Ontario Regulation 298/01*. This amount may be changed periodically.

In addition to the combined income, other charges for services such as utilities, garbage, and air conditioning may also be included in the calculation of rent.



Payment Options

When you move in, we ask that your first rent payment be made through certified means (e.g. cash, debit, money order, or certified bank draft). However, moving forward you have a number of options to pay your rent. This is something you should decide before you move in. However, if there are changes to your circumstances and you would like to choose a different payment method at a later date, please contact the PSHC.

We accept the following methods of rent payment:

1. Pre-authorized Payments

Pre-authorized payments allow the rent to be deducted directly from a bank account on the first day of each month. This method ensures the rent is paid on time in the event of bad weather, poor health, hospitalization, etc. To set this up, you need to fill out a form which can be picked up at our office.

2. Direct Payment through Social Assistance

If you are in receipt of OW or ODSP, your caseworker can set up a direct payment for you. This means that your rent is sent directly to the PSHC and is deducted from your monthly benefit cheque.

3. Cash or Debit

If you are paying your rent by cash or with a debit card, you will need to come to our office no later than the first of the month. Please do not send cash in the mail.

4. Cheque, Money Order, or Bank Draft

These methods of payment can be provided in person, dropped off, or mailed in before the first of the month. We do accept post-dated cheques.



Non-Payment of Rent

If you have difficulty paying your rent on time, please call your Public Housing Review Officer (PHRO) before the first of the month. It is our policy to work with tenants who fall behind in their rent payments to help them meet their responsibilities and, when possible, to keep their housing.

If rent isn't received on the first day of the month, we will take the following steps:

1. Issue an **N4 - Notice to Terminate a Tenancy for Non-Payment of Rent**. This form includes a date by which you are expected to pay the rent that you owe.
2. Set up a repayment agreement - if you cannot pay the full amount owing, please contact your PHRO.
3. Issue an **L1 - Application to Terminate Tenancy** if a repayment agreement is not arranged. There is an LTB filing fee that will be charged back to you. This application includes a hearing date with the Landlord and Tenant Board (LTB). At this point, you can still void the eviction process by paying the money that you owe.
4. Attend an LTB Hearing. At this hearing, we will try and mediate an agreement with you so you can keep your tenancy. Eviction is always a last resort.

Your Lease

A lease is a legal document which outlines important information and covers your rights and responsibilities as a tenant. The lease should be read carefully and kept in a convenient location for reference. Staff will review the lease with you before it is signed.

If you do not follow the terms of your lease, you could face eviction.



Reporting Changes in Your Income

The rules of rent-geared-to-income (RGI) assistance are prescribed in the *Housing Services Act, 2011*. If your income, assets or your household composition changes, please notify us within 30 days.

If you do not notify us of these changes, you could be charged for back rent and/or lose your RGI subsidy. Your rent will then be raised to market rent. You could also be convicted of misrepresentation which could bar you from applying for RGI assistance for 2 years.

If you have questions about reporting income, asset, or household composition changes, please contact our office.



Annual Income Review

We will send you an income review package once a year. This is required by the *Housing Services Act, 2011* and helps to determine whether the amount of rent you are paying is appropriate or if it needs to be reduced or increased. The package includes forms that you must fill out to report the income of everyone in your household. You must complete and return these forms within 30 days. If you do not, you could lose your RGI subsidy.



Adding or Removing Someone in Your Household

If someone moves in or moves out of your unit, you must let the PSHC know within 30 days by filling out a Family Composition Form and providing any supporting documentation; the amount of rent you pay is determined by the combined income

of everyone in your household.

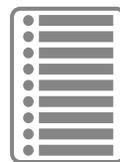
Anyone who joins your household must also be eligible for RGI assistance as set out in the *Housing Services Act, 2011*. In order to determine eligibility, they must submit an application and any supporting documents to the Housing Access Centre (HAC).

If eligible, your rent will be recalculated and your household may have to sign a new lease.

Even if they are eligible for RGI assistance, the PSHC reserves the right to refuse an addition to your household if there is a history of damage, arrears, or disturbance to others, or the household size does not meet the by-law property standards of your municipality.

If that person is ineligible but continues to live with you, you could lose your RGI subsidy and be charged market rent.

If someone moves out of your unit, a letter should be submitted in writing to our office stating the date of the change. If necessary, the rent will be re-calculated. For those remaining in the unit, a new lease may need to be signed.



Downsizing (Overhoused) Procedures

The size of a unit for which a household is eligible is determined by local occupancy standards. These standards are laid out in the Service Manager Directives.

If you are living in a unit that is too large for your household based on these occupancy standards, the PSHC will let you know in writing and add you to our Internal Transfer List.



Transferring to Another PSHC Unit

If you would like to transfer to another PSHC unit, you need to complete a *Transfer Request Form* and you must meet the following criteria:

- You have lived in a PSHC unit for at least twenty-four (24) months;
- You continue to be eligible for rent-geared-to-income assistance;

- You have not been given an eviction notice within the previous twelve (12) months;
- You do not owe arrears or any other money to the PSHC (e.g. subsidy overpayment, maintenance chargebacks, LTB filing fees);
- You have no history of damage to the unit, disturbing neighbours or harassing staff; and
- Your current unit is in a reasonable state of repair and cleanliness.

Please be aware that there is a waiting list for internal transfers.

If you would like to transfer to another community housing provider, you need to reapply through the Housing Access Centre (HAC) and be placed on the Centralized Waiting List.

For more information about internal transfers, please contact our office.

Visitors & Guests

Visitors may come to the rental unit as often as you invite them. Frequent visitors may be asked by the PSHC to prove they have a home address outside the unit they are visiting.

You may have guests stay in your home for no more than 60 consecutive days or 90 days in a 12-month period. This applies to anyone who stays in your home.

In extenuating circumstances guests may stay in your home longer pending approval by the PSHC. To request an extended stay for your guest, please provide the following information in writing:

- The full name of your guest
- Your relationship to the guest
- Your guest's home address
- The reason for the request

Important: Please remember that the negative behaviours and actions of your visitors and guests may have significant consequences for your tenancy.

Fraud



Suspected rent or income fraud will be referred to an Eligibility Review Officer (ERO) and could result in police involvement.

Police charges of fraud that lead to a conviction fall under the *Criminal Code of Canada* and may result in a fine, a period of probation, incarceration, and a criminal record. The two most common instances of rent fraud are:

- Failure to report changes in earnings; and
- Failure to report income for all persons residing in an RGI unit.

Eviction



Eviction is always a last resort. Your unit is your home and we want to help you keep it by working together.

However, tenants can be evicted for the following issues/reasons, under the *Residential Tenancies Act, 2006*.

- You do not pay your rent.
- You knowingly misrepresent the income for any person residing in your unit.
- You threaten the safety of other tenants and neighbours.
- You break the law in or on PSHC properties.
- You cause serious damages to your unit or to the building either willfully or through negligence.
- You act in a way that interferes with the reasonable enjoyment other tenants, neighbours, or the landlord.
- You violate any other terms of your lease.

Moving Out



Giving Proper Notice

When you are planning to move out you must give the PSHC notice in writing 60 days before you plan to move. The

notice is effective from the beginning of the following month:

- For example if you give notice on October 13th it means you are responsible for 60 days starting November 1st with a move out date of December 31st.

You are legally responsible for 60 days notice, however if there are extenuating circumstances we will try to accommodate your request.

An exception to this is a move to a nursing home or long-term care facility. In this case, notice would be accepted on the last day of the month (e.g. if you let us know on July 7th, we will accept your notice of July 31st.)



Preparing your Unit for Move-Out

After submitting your notice, we will send you an acknowledgement letter with move out requirements. Please follow these steps to avoid any charge backs after you move out.

Step1 - Undo Alterations

Undo any alterations you made to the unit and make sure it is returned to its original condition (e.g. paint walls back to original colour, remove wallpaper, etc.).

Step 2 - Remove Belongings

Remove all personal belongings including but not limited to:

- Paintings & pictures
- Area rugs
- Furniture
- Curtain rods, curtains, and/or blinds (if not supplied by us at move-in)

Step 3 - Clean

Thoroughly clean the entire unit.

- Clean all appliances inside and out; make sure to pull appliances out and clean behind them. Leave the fridge running and keep the door closed.
- Wash walls (including those in closets); make sure they are free of dirt, grease, markings, stains, etc.

- Wash floors and windows.
- Clean bathroom fixtures, cabinets, and tiles.
- Vacuum out heat registers.
- Clean light fixtures and make sure light bulbs are working.
- Clean out basements (where applicable).

Step 4 - Remove Garbage, Recycling, Debris

Remove garbage and debris from the property; do not leave items, big or small, by the garbage bin or road.

Step 5 - Return Keys

Hand in all your keys at our offices.

Step 6 - Provide Forwarding Address

Provide the PSHC with a forwarding address so we can reach you if necessary.

Important: Please remember that you are responsible for the cost of any repairs needed (beyond normal wear and tear) in your unit on move out. If additional maintenance work is required after you move out (e.g. extra coats of paint and/ or block-painting for nicotine stains) you will be responsible for the payment of this extra work.



Arrears at Move-Out

It is important to make sure you do not owe the PSHC any money (i.e. arrears) at the time of move out. This includes items such as unpaid rent, LTB filing fees, or maintenance charges. Arrears should be paid immediately or you can arrange a repayment agreement.

If you have arrears, your name will be added to the province-wide arrears database and you will not be on the Centralized Waiting List for RGI housing until they are paid or you have arranged for a repayment agreement.

Former tenant accounts for unpaid arrears are sent to Small Claims Court and/or a Collections Agency.



Your Safety

Fire Safety

Some common causes of fires include:

- Careless smoking;
- Playing with matches or lighters;
- Unattended cooking pots or deep fryers on stoves;
- Improper use of electrical appliances such as space heaters;
- Overuse of extension cord wiring;
- Barbecuing too close to open windows on balconies and backyards; and
- Burning candles and incense.

When a fire starts in your home, your primary responsibility is to get you and your family to safety. Always remember in a fire situation, do not panic.



Fire Safety Plans

Advanced planning is the best way to reduce the risk of fire and assure the safety of all tenants. Please take note of where all exits are and plan an escape route with everyone living with you. If you have any accessibility or mobility issues, please notify your PHRO.

If a fire starts in your apartment unit:

1. Call 911 and leave the unit, closing the door.
2. Sound the building alarm by activating the nearest pull station thereby alerting others.

3. Go to the designated gathering spot and wait for further instructions.

If the alarm is sounded while you are in your apartment unit:

4. Check the unit door for temperature. If cool, open slightly and check for fire or smoke.
5. If all is clear, follow instructions 1-3 above.
6. If heat, fire or smoke is detected, close the door and remain in the unit.
7. Place towels or blankets at the base of the door and wait for firefighters.
8. If a balcony is attached, go out in the open air and wait for the firefighters.

If you live in a family unit, create and review a fire escape plan with all members of your family including possible exits and a meeting place outdoors. If a fire starts, leave your home, call 911, and wait for firefighters to arrive.



Smoke Alarms

Every unit has at least one hardwired and battery operated smoke detector located on the ceiling. This is a requirement of the *Ontario Fire Code*.

Smoke alarms save lives, prevent injuries, and minimize property damage by enabling residents to detect fires early in their homes. The risk of dying from fires in homes without smoke alarms is twice as high as in homes that have working smoke alarms.

Properly installed and maintained smoke alarms

in the home are considered one of the best and least expensive means of providing an early warning of a potentially deadly fire.

As a tenant you are responsible for:

- Testing your smoke alarms once a month to make sure they operate properly.
- Replacing the batteries in your smoke alarms at least once a year.
- Notifying the PSHC if the "power on" indicator goes out (on electrically wired smoke alarms only) and arrange for appropriate repairs.
- Notifying us if the smoke alarm is damaged and make arrangements for its repair or replacement.
- Notifying us of any electrical problems that may affect the operability of electrically wired smoke alarms.
- Contacting your local fire department if you have serious concerns about the operability of your smoke alarm or any other fire safety matters in your building.
- Providing verification if you are hearing impaired so proper strobe-lighting equipment can be installed.

False Alarms (Apartment buildings)

False alarms are a serious nuisance and a safety hazard. The Fire Department responds to every fire alarm that goes off. While responding to a false alarm they may not be able to respond to a real fire situation in time.

If you witness anyone falsely setting off fire alarms in your building, please report what you see to the police and the PSHC.

Important: it is vital that you do not tamper with the smoke alarms in your unit even if you experience "nuisance" alarms while cooking or showering. If you intentionally disable a smoke alarm or falsely set off a fire alarm in your building, you are guilty, under the *Ontario Fire Code*, of a provincial offence and may be subject to a fine. It is also cause for an immediate eviction as it puts the safety of you, your neighbours, and other tenants at risk.



Fire Extinguishers

Fire Extinguishers are an important safety device and should be accessible at all times. Any tenant or guest who removes a fire extinguisher, other than for the reason of a fire emergency, is guilty of a provincial offense under the *Ontario Fire Code*, and may be subject to a fine.

If you live in a family unit, we recommend that you have at least one fire extinguisher in your home.



Outdoor Recreational Fires

Please read and follow your municipality's by-law on open fire burning before starting a recreational backyard fire.

The by-law will tell you:

- When you are allowed to have a fire;
- What type of materials you are allowed to burn;
- How far away a fire must be from buildings or other burnable structures;
- The type of container the fire should be in; and
- The safety measures you must have in place before having a fire.

Building Safety



Lobby Entrances & Fire Exits

For security reasons, **please do not prop open any doors or buzz in anyone who is not your personal guest or visitor.**

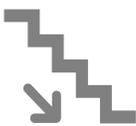
If you misplace your building key or swipe card, contact the maintenance team for a replacement.



Door Closures (Apartment Buildings)

Door closures are installed on every apartment door to meet fire regulations. They act as a barrier to limit the spread of fire and to restrict the movement of smoke. Please do not prop open your unit door or tamper with your door closure for any reason.

You are responsible for making sure the door closure works properly and latches correctly at all times. If there are any problems with your door closure, please contact the maintenance team.



Basements (Family units)

Basements are only suitable for personal recreation and storage areas. Due to fire regulations, basements cannot be used as bedrooms; the windows are not big enough for someone to exit the unit in case of an emergency.

Keep in mind that many fires start in basements. You are required to keep a one (1) metre area around your hot water heater and the furnace must be kept free of all materials to prevent a fire. Remember that there is a live flame under your hot water heater and your furnace.

Propane tanks and car tires should never be stored in a basement.



Vandalism

The PSHC does not tolerate vandalism of any kind in or on its properties including rental units, common areas, or outside of the building. Anyone

who defaces or destroys property, or interferes with elevators or safety equipment on site is jeopardizing their lease and may be liable for prosecution.

Any incidents of vandalism should be reported immediately to the PSHC and the police.

Complaint Process

We care about your concerns and complaints. Our goal is to provide good service for our tenants. However, we cannot address concerns if you don't tell us. If you do have a complaint about another tenant, neighbours, PSHC staff or contractors, please provide detailed information in writing using our *Complaint Form*.

The PSHC **will**:

- Take all complaints filed at our office seriously;
- Review complaints with impartiality and respect to all parties involved;
- Investigate all genuine complaints in a timely and confidential manner; and
- Make every reasonable effort to help resolve complaints.

The PSHC **will not**:

- Get involved in rumours;
- Get involved in minor disputes;
- Act on a complaint if the complaint is discriminatory; or
- Get involved in issues where the PSHC, as the landlord, has no authority to deal with the complaint.

Contact our office to get a copy of our *Complaint Form* or visit our website.

When to call the police:

- Any type of violence either threatened or real;
- Suspected or known drug trafficking; and
- Suspected or known sexual or physical abuse.

Community Supports

211 Ontario



Connects people to community, social, health, and governmental services. You can visit their website to search for information or contact them by email or phone.

Contact Information

Phone: 2-1-1

Website: www.211ontario.ca

Huron Perth Community Legal Clinic



Provides free legal services to residents of Huron and Perth Counties living on a low income. The clinic assists with matters related to Ontario Works (OW), ODSP, Canada Pension Plan, employment and work, landlord and tenant relations, and power of attorney. The clinic does not provide advice or representation in family, criminal, or refugee law matters.

Contact Information

305 Romeo Street South

Stratford, Ontario N5A 4T8

Phone: 519-271-4556

Toll Free: 1-866-867-1027

Website: www.huronperthlegalclinic.ca

Landlord and Tenant Board (LTB)



Call for information about the *Residential Tenancies Act, 2006* and the LTB's processes. Customer service officers cannot provide legal advice.

Contact Information

Phone: 1-888-332-3234

Website: www.sjto.gov.on.ca/ltb/

Family Services Perth Huron



Provides one-on-one counseling, support, advocacy and educational services. The PSHC has an agreement with Family Services so that all tenants are able to access services in a confidential manner at no cost.

Contact Information

142 Waterloo Street South

Stratford, Ontario N5A 4B4

Phone: 519-273-1020

Toll Free: 1-800-268-0903

Website: www.familyservicesperth-huron.ca

Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI)



Provides financial assistance to eligible households for moving costs, last month's rent deposit, rent arrears, and utility arrears. Funding is administered through the City of Stratford Social Services Department.

Contact Information

82 Erie Street
Stratford, Ontario N5A 2M4
Phone: 519-271-3773 ext. 200
Website: www.stratford.ca

Optimism Place Women's Shelter & Support Services



Emergency shelter, housing support, counselling and support to women and their children who are experiencing domestic violence.

Contact Information

270 Freeland Drive
Stratford, Ontario N4Z 1G8
Phone: 519-271-5310
24/7 Crisis Line: 519-271-5550
Website: www.optimismplace.com

Huron Perth Helpline & Crisis Response



A 24 hour crisis phone service, with crisis assessments, brief crisis therapy and crisis education available to all residents of Huron and Perth Counties.

Contact Information

Phone: 1-888-829-7484

Local Police



For **emergencies**, please call 9-1-1.
For **non-emergencies**, please call your local police department.

Contact Information

Stratford Police Services

17 George Street West
Stratford, Ontario N5A 7V4
Phone: 519-271-4147

OPP - Perth County Detachment

380 Huron Road
Sebringville, Ontario N0K 1X0
Phone: 519-393-6123

Glossary of Terms

Eviction

When a household receives a legal order from the Landlord and Tenant Board (LTB) under the authority of the *Residential Tenancies Act, 2006* (RTA) terminating their tenancy.

Household

All the people who live in your unit and are listed as tenants or occupants on your lease.

Housing Services Act, 2011 (HSA)

The legislation that governs rent-geared-to-income (RGI) housing in Ontario. It replaced the *Social Housing Reform Act, 2000*.

Landlord

In this handbook, the landlord is the Perth & Stratford Housing Corporation (PSHC).

Lease

A contract between the landlord and one or more tenants. It tells you what unit you are renting from the landlord, the original rent for the unit, and sets out the landlord's and the tenant's rights and responsibilities. If you are a tenant, you should have met with staff and signed the lease. You should also have been given a copy of the lease when you started your tenancy.

Market Rent Tenant

A tenant in the PSHC who is no longer eligible for an RGI subsidy and who pays the market rent established for that unit.

Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI) Assistance

A form of subsidized housing where a tenant household pays rent based on their level of income. The calculation is 30% of a household's income to a maximum of the established market rent for the unit.

Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 (RTA)

The law that sets out the rights and responsibilities of landlords and tenants who rent residential properties.

Tenant

A person (or a group of people) who has signed a lease for a unit and continues to live in the unit. You may have people living in your unit who are part of your household but who are not tenants. For example, children under 16 years old are not tenants as they are not allowed by law to sign the lease.

Tenancy

An ongoing relationship between a landlord and a tenant (or tenants if more than one person has signed the lease). A tenancy is governed by the lease, the *Residential Tenancies Act, 2006* and, if your tenancy is subsidized, the *Housing Services Act, 2011*.

Unit

In this handbook, a unit is the home you are renting from the PSHC (whether that is an apartment, a townhouse, a house, etc.).

Short Forms (Acronyms)

HSA - *Housing Services Act, 2011*

LTB - Landlord and Tenant Board

ODSP - Ontario Disability Support Program

OW - Ontario Works

PSHC - Perth & Stratford Housing Corporation

PHRO - Public Housing Review Officer

RGI - Rent-Geared-to-Income

RTA - *Residential Tenancies Act, 2006*

Perth & Stratford Housing Corporation

82 Erie Street ◦ Stratford, Ontario ◦ N5A 2M4
Phone: 519-271-3773 ◦ Toll Free: 1-800-669-2948
Fax: 519-273-7191 ◦ Website: www.stratford.ca

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