



HOUSING PROGRAMS BRANCH

TENANT HANDBOOK



November 2013

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Welcome

Welcome to Hastings County Housing Services. We hope your life here will be a happy one. This booklet will give you lots of information on what to expect living here, what your rights are and what we expect from you. More detailed information is written in your tenancy agreement. The tenancy agreement is a legal document. You should make sure you are familiar with what it says.

Hastings County Housing Services has a comprehensive set of policies that govern how we run our buildings. If you would like to have information on a particular policy that you do not find in this handbook they can be found on the Hastings County website @ www.hastingscounty.com, or you can speak to your Property Supervisor at 613-968-3465.

Who is Hastings County Housing Services?

Hastings County Housing Services was downloaded from the province to Hastings County on January 1, 2001. Our mandate is to provide safe, modest, affordable housing to low income households in Hastings County. Hastings County Housing Services directly owns and manages 1433 social housing units and provides subsidies to 300 rent supplement units and 15 different non-profit housing providers.

Housing Services runs its operations on a rent geared-to-income basis. This means that approximately 30% of the gross household income determines the amount of rent that will be paid by the household. Social housing in Hastings County is funded in part by the federal and provincial governments with the majority being funded by the municipal government through property taxes. These funds help in the cost of operations such as maintenance, administration, insurance, utilities and debentures. Reserves are also set aside each year to cover the cost of future major repairs and replacements, such as roofs, windows, furnaces etc.

Housing Services is governed by the *Housing Services Act, 2011* which sets out rules and regulations on the operations of social housing. Housing Services also works closely with the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association (ONPHA) and Housing Services Corporation (HSC) to build a strong social housing sector and influence government housing policies.

Important Phone Numbers

Main Office	613-968-3465 Toll Free 1-800-267-2804
Quinte West Sub-Office	613-392-1387 Toll Free 1-866-819-9023
After Hours Maintenance Issues	613-968-3465
Fire, Police, Ambulance	911

Office Hours

The office is open from 8:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Your New Home

Moving In

Tenancy Agreement

Prior to moving in you will be required to sign a tenancy agreement. Your Property Supervisor will review the terms of the tenancy agreement with you and answer any of your questions.

Pre-move in inspection

When you pick up your keys, your Property Supervisor will do an inspection of your new home with you. Any problems with the unit will be written down on the inspection report and you will receive a copy of the report to keep for your own records. An inspection will also take place when you move out of the unit. This way we can keep track of the condition of the unit.

Booking the elevator

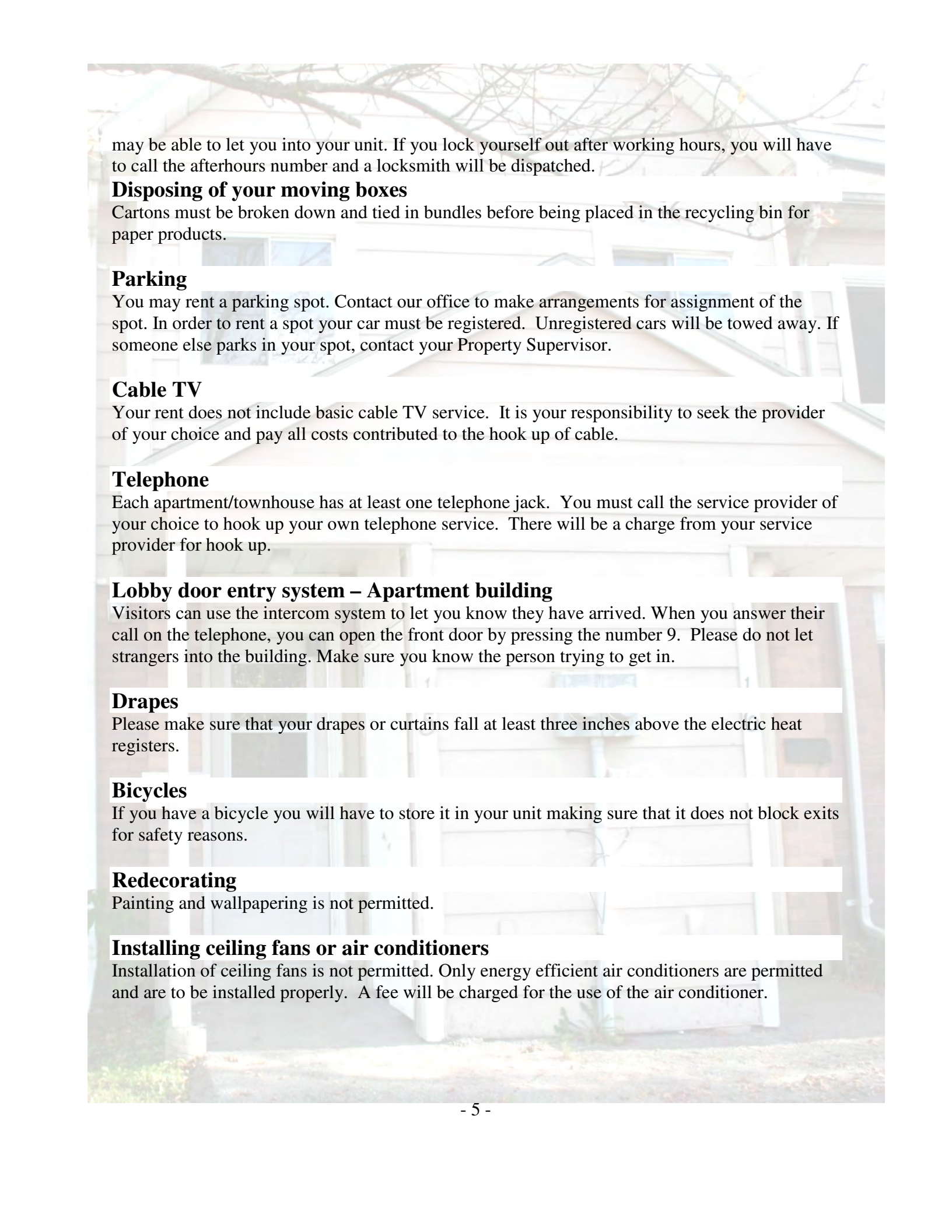
When you have decided on a move-in date, contact the Superintendent in your building to make sure that we can book elevator time for you.

Locks and keys

Before you move in, a new lock will be put on your door. You will receive a key for your unit, the front door of the building and your mailbox. If you lose any of these keys you will be charged a fee for replacement.

If you want to change your lock, we can do this for you. A fee will be charged to cover our staff time and the cost of the new lock.

Leaving a spare key with a trusted neighbour or friend is the best way to avoid being locked out of your home. If you lose your key during working hours the Custodian or Property Supervisor



may be able to let you into your unit. If you lock yourself out after working hours, you will have to call the afterhours number and a locksmith will be dispatched.

Disposing of your moving boxes

Cartons must be broken down and tied in bundles before being placed in the recycling bin for paper products.

Parking

You may rent a parking spot. Contact our office to make arrangements for assignment of the spot. In order to rent a spot your car must be registered. Unregistered cars will be towed away. If someone else parks in your spot, contact your Property Supervisor.

Cable TV

Your rent does not include basic cable TV service. It is your responsibility to seek the provider of your choice and pay all costs contributed to the hook up of cable.

Telephone

Each apartment/townhouse has at least one telephone jack. You must call the service provider of your choice to hook up your own telephone service. There will be a charge from your service provider for hook up.

Lobby door entry system – Apartment building

Visitors can use the intercom system to let you know they have arrived. When you answer their call on the telephone, you can open the front door by pressing the number 9. Please do not let strangers into the building. Make sure you know the person trying to get in.

Drapes

Please make sure that your drapes or curtains fall at least three inches above the electric heat registers.

Bicycles

If you have a bicycle you will have to store it in your unit making sure that it does not block exits for safety reasons.

Redecorating

Painting and wallpapering is not permitted.

Installing ceiling fans or air conditioners

Installation of ceiling fans is not permitted. Only energy efficient air conditioners are permitted and are to be installed properly. A fee will be charged for the use of the air conditioner.



Insurance

Tenant Insurance is mandatory and the cost of the insurance is your responsibility. Your Property Supervisor will provide you with SOHO Insurance information for purchase. If you choose to purchase insurance through another provider you will have to provide proof of purchase. You will also have to provide proof of insurance yearly to continue your tenancy. Housing Services is not responsible for your personal property. Our insurance covers our property only. Housing Services is only responsible for damage to your personal property if it is proven to be caused by negligence on our part.

Basements

Basements are not extra living space. Basements do not have proper fire exits or ventilation, and using the basement as a bedroom is against a City by-law.

Yards, balconies and porches

You should not use balconies or porches as storage areas. Please clear the snow off your balcony as water can leak in under the door. Barbecues are not permitted on balconies as they can be fire and health hazards. Lattice is also not permitted around balconies. Please don't shake rugs or mats from your balcony.

It is the responsibility of the tenant to maintain the front and back yards of your unit. You need to keep the area free of clutter for grass cutting. If you choose to have a garden it is your responsibility to maintain it. It is your responsibility to clear snow and ice from your steps and walkways.

Outdoor taps

Turn off the tap inside and drain the water from the pipe before the winter. If you are not sure how to do this, please contact your Property Supervisor.

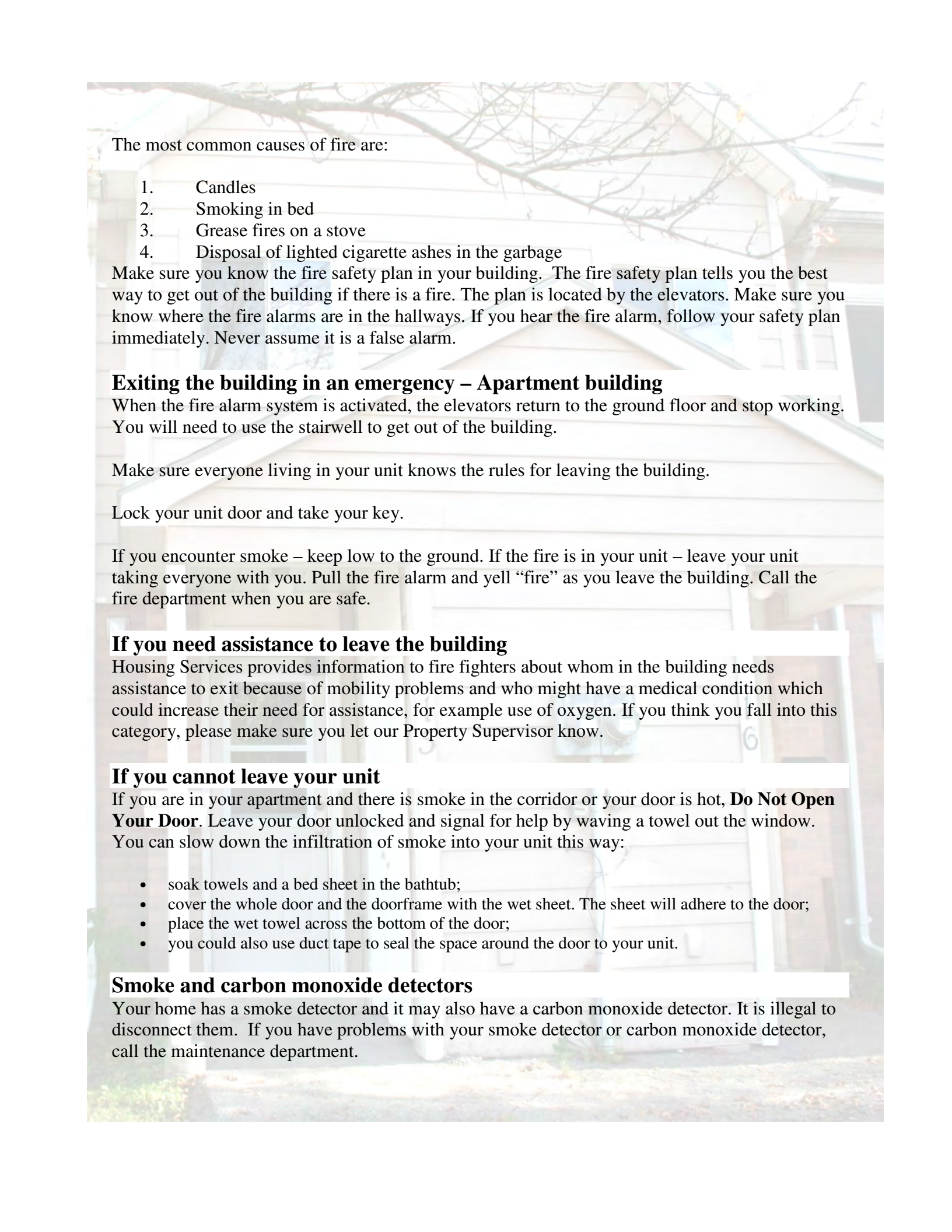
Pets

You are allowed to have a pet as long as it does not disturb other tenants. Pets must be registered with Housing Services. If you have a dog it must be on a leash when you take it out of your unit. Do not allow your dog to run free outside, and remember to "stoop-and-scoop" after your pet.

You can be evicted for allowing your pet to cause damage, or to disturb the peace. There are also Municipal by-laws controlling the number and types of pets you can keep. We also recommend you have your pet spayed or neutered.

Fire Safety

Storage of flammable materials or liquids such as gasoline, paint thinner or solvents is not permitted in your home. Recycle your old newspapers; they become a fire hazard if you let them accumulate.



The most common causes of fire are:

1. Candles
2. Smoking in bed
3. Grease fires on a stove
4. Disposal of lighted cigarette ashes in the garbage

Make sure you know the fire safety plan in your building. The fire safety plan tells you the best way to get out of the building if there is a fire. The plan is located by the elevators. Make sure you know where the fire alarms are in the hallways. If you hear the fire alarm, follow your safety plan immediately. Never assume it is a false alarm.

Exiting the building in an emergency – Apartment building

When the fire alarm system is activated, the elevators return to the ground floor and stop working. You will need to use the stairwell to get out of the building.

Make sure everyone living in your unit knows the rules for leaving the building.

Lock your unit door and take your key.

If you encounter smoke – keep low to the ground. If the fire is in your unit – leave your unit taking everyone with you. Pull the fire alarm and yell “fire” as you leave the building. Call the fire department when you are safe.

If you need assistance to leave the building

Housing Services provides information to fire fighters about whom in the building needs assistance to exit because of mobility problems and who might have a medical condition which could increase their need for assistance, for example use of oxygen. If you think you fall into this category, please make sure you let our Property Supervisor know.


If you cannot leave your unit

If you are in your apartment and there is smoke in the corridor or your door is hot, **Do Not Open Your Door**. Leave your door unlocked and signal for help by waving a towel out the window. You can slow down the infiltration of smoke into your unit this way:

- soak towels and a bed sheet in the bathtub;
- cover the whole door and the doorframe with the wet sheet. The sheet will adhere to the door;
- place the wet towel across the bottom of the door;
- you could also use duct tape to seal the space around the door to your unit.

Smoke and carbon monoxide detectors

Your home has a smoke detector and it may also have a carbon monoxide detector. It is illegal to disconnect them. If you have problems with your smoke detector or carbon monoxide detector, call the maintenance department.



Our staff will check the detectors yearly to make sure they work properly.

Fire alarm testing

Testing of the fire alarm system and the emergency lights throughout the building happens once a month and takes about an hour. During that time there will be intermittent ringing of the alarm system.

In case of fire, call 911 immediately.

Repairs

For all maintenance requests, other than emergencies, please fill out our maintenance request form (available on line, at the office or at the custodian's office) and leave it with the Custodian or bring it into the office. We take our responsibility for doing repairs and maintenance very seriously. Delays may occur if we have to call in a contractor, or if we don't have the supplies we need in stock.

Please report water stains that appear on the walls and ceiling.

There is no charge for repair due to normal wear and tear. However, you will be charged for any malicious damage that is not considered normal wear and tear.

Emergency maintenance

After working hours and on weekends call 968-3465. Leave your name, phone number, address and a brief reason for your call and your call will be returned immediately.

Call this number only in a serious emergency, such as flood, power failure to the whole apartment, elevator breakdown, someone trapped in an elevator, no heat, or when someone's safety is at immediate risk.

Notice of entry

We shall give you at least 24 hours notice of the fact that we are coming to do repairs or an inspection of your home, unless it is an emergency situation. All repairs will be done between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.

Annual inspections

We inspect all our units each year. From the inspection reports we work out our maintenance plans for the next year and prepare our annual maintenance budget. We shall send out notices of the inspection schedule before we come into your unit.

Security

These hints will help you keep your home secure:

1. Lock your doors and windows when you are out. A good lock for a sliding door or window is a broom handle or other piece of wood fitted into the bottom rail.
2. Attach a lamp to a timer to go on when you are out in the evenings.
3. Tell the post office and newspaper carrier if you are going to be away, or arrange for a neighbour or friend to pick up your mail and any flyers.
4. Keep your personal identification documents all in one place, so they are easy to retrieve if you have to leave in a hurry.
5. If you are nervous about security, talk to your Property Supervisor.

Vandalism

If you see anyone damaging Housing Services' property, you should phone the police right away and tell the Custodian or the Property Supervisor. Often vandals cause damage to elevators, stairwells and hallways that are expensive to repair. Please remember that children must not play in hallways, laundry rooms, elevators or in parking lots. If your children keep bikes in the unit, please make sure they do not ride them in the hallways. Scratches are costly to repair and skid marks cannot be removed. You are legally responsible for any damage caused by your children.

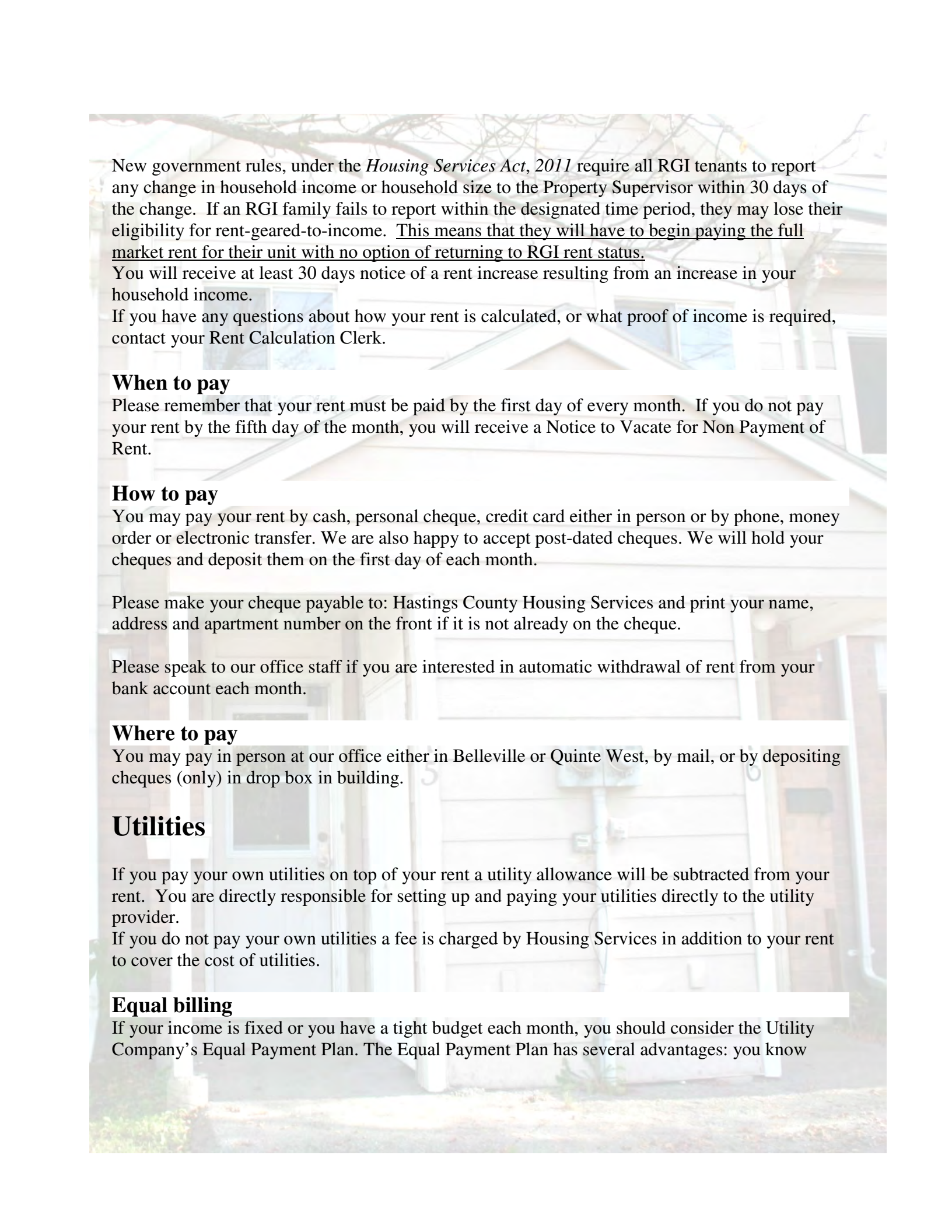
About Paying Your Rent

Rent-gearred-to-income

Rent-gearred-to-income (RGI) is subsidized rent. A tenant paying rent-gearred-to-income will pay rent equal to about 30% of the combined income of everyone living in the home (excluding students attending school), plus some utilities and additional charges such as parking, or air conditioning. The government sets the rules for how RGI is calculated.

RGI rent increases and decreases

If you are paying rent-gearred-to-income, your rent will change when your income changes. This may be more frequently than once a year. We do a review of your income and household size each year. We shall ask you to provide updated proof of income and a list of who is living with you at that time. However, you must let us know within 30 days of a change if there is any change in your income or household members as a result of birth, death, marriage (including common-law), separation or divorce, or when your children move out. These changes can affect your rent as well as the size of unit your household is eligible for.



New government rules, under the *Housing Services Act, 2011* require all RGI tenants to report any change in household income or household size to the Property Supervisor within 30 days of the change. If an RGI family fails to report within the designated time period, they may lose their eligibility for rent-geared-to-income. This means that they will have to begin paying the full market rent for their unit with no option of returning to RGI rent status.

You will receive at least 30 days notice of a rent increase resulting from an increase in your household income.

If you have any questions about how your rent is calculated, or what proof of income is required, contact your Rent Calculation Clerk.

When to pay

Please remember that your rent must be paid by the first day of every month. If you do not pay your rent by the fifth day of the month, you will receive a Notice to Vacate for Non Payment of Rent.

How to pay

You may pay your rent by cash, personal cheque, credit card either in person or by phone, money order or electronic transfer. We are also happy to accept post-dated cheques. We will hold your cheques and deposit them on the first day of each month.

Please make your cheque payable to: Hastings County Housing Services and print your name, address and apartment number on the front if it is not already on the cheque.

Please speak to our office staff if you are interested in automatic withdrawal of rent from your bank account each month.

Where to pay

You may pay in person at our office either in Belleville or Quinte West, by mail, or by depositing cheques (only) in drop box in building.

Utilities

If you pay your own utilities on top of your rent a utility allowance will be subtracted from your rent. You are directly responsible for setting up and paying your utilities directly to the utility provider.

If you do not pay your own utilities a fee is charged by Housing Services in addition to your rent to cover the cost of utilities.

Equal billing

If your income is fixed or you have a tight budget each month, you should consider the Utility Company's Equal Payment Plan. The Equal Payment Plan has several advantages: you know

what your bill will be each month so there are no surprises; you can budget for this amount each month; if you do not use more power than you did last year, you will have a lower payment in the twelfth month.

Reducing Utility Bills

Energy saving tips

- lower your thermostat to 16° C at night and when you are not at home
- keep seals around refrigerator, microwave and freezer doors clean and in good repair
- switch to energy compact fluorescent bulbs
- turn off all lights when they are not needed
- ask your maintenance staff about energy efficient shower heads
- take showers instead of baths
- use an electric kettle or coffee maker instead of a stove-top burner
- ensure the heating units in your apartment are clean and that there is nothing in front of them
- wash your clothes in warm or cold water and rinse in cold; wait until you have a full load or use the small loads setting (if available) on the washing machine
- keep windows closed in the winter, both the inside and outside storm windows.
- report any broken windows
- if the refrigerator in your unit is a manual defrost appliance, defrost your refrigerator on a regular basis and keep it at a medium or low setting.
- report dripping taps or toilets that are constantly running

Subletting and assigning your unit

Your tenancy agreement does not permit you to sublet or assign your unit to anyone else, even for a short period of time.

Abandonment of property

If you move out and leave some of your property behind, we have the right to dispose of that property, without consulting you about it. Your account will be charged for the disposal.

Eviction

Under the *Residential Tenancies Act*, you can be evicted if you:

- do not pay your rent
- frequently pay the rent late
- cause serious damage to your unit or the building
- make noise or act in a way that seriously bothers any other tenant or the landlord
- have more people living in the unit than health, safety or housing standards allow
- threaten the safety of another tenant
- break the law anywhere in the building or on Housing Services' property

Landlord and Tenant Board

The Ontario Landlord and Tenant Board (formerly the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal) makes decisions about landlord and tenant disputes. We cannot terminate your tenancy without getting an order from the Landlord and Tenant Board. You are entitled to attend a hearing with the Board before a decision to evict you is made. You can get information from the Board about your rights by calling 1-888-332-3234.

The Human Rights Code

The Human Rights Code says that landlords, people working for landlords, and fellow tenants cannot harass the residents or staff of a building. This is the law. Harassment can be based on race, ancestry, place of origin, ethnic origin, colour, citizenship, religious beliefs, political beliefs, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, family status, physical and mental disability, or the receipt of social assistance.

Harassment means repeated actions or words that embarrass or humiliate a person. This includes insults, name-calling, racial graffiti, sexual remarks, etc. Grabbing, pushing or hitting are forms of assault, and only need to happen once for legal action to be taken.

Housing Services Act, 2011

The *Housing Services Act, 2011* (HSA) has many rules for tenants paying geared-to-income rent (RGI).

There are rules on applying for and being eligible for RGI housing and rules for calculating the RGI rent. Hastings County as the Service Manager has also decided on some additional rules. All of Housing Services policies can be found on the Hastings County website at www.hastingscounty.com. If you do not have access to the internet you can contact your Property Supervisor for information regarding Housing Services policies.

Guest policy

One requirement under the *Housing Services Act, 2011* is that all social housing providers have a policy on guests of an RGI unit. Housing Services requires tenants to notify their Property Supervisor when a guest is staying in their unit. A guest is permitted to stay in a unit for up to two weeks. The length of the stay could be extended with the permission of your Property Supervisor in extenuating circumstances. Failure to abide by the terms of the Guest Policy may result in a loss of eligibility for RGI rent.

Occupancy Standards

There are rules about the size of unit you qualify for if you receive a rent subsidy. Some households may be required to move to a smaller unit if the household gets smaller.

Review of decision

The *Housing Services Act, 2011* requires housing providers to inform tenants that they have a right to a review of any RGI rent decision or unit transfer decision that affects them. Persons other than the original decision makers must conduct this review. You must request a review in writing within 30 days of the original decision.

Privacy, confidentiality and freedom of information

The *Housing Services Act, 2011* and also federal privacy legislation impose many controls on the collection, use, storage and disposition of any personal information on applicants or tenants of social housing. For example, only necessary information can be collected; and no personal information can be shared with anyone, without permission, unless it is necessary for law enforcement proceedings, or on compelling health (to facilitate health or safety) or compassionate grounds (to contact next of kin or a friend who is injured, ill or deceased).

Our Policy on Harassment

If you are harassed by staff or by other tenants, you should do something about it. First, if possible, you should tell the offender to stop. If you cannot confront the person who is harassing you, report the harassment to your Property Supervisor in writing, if you can, and keep a copy for yourself. Write down every incident, including the place, date and time the harassment took place, and details of the harassment. When we receive a harassment complaint in writing we will review the complaint.

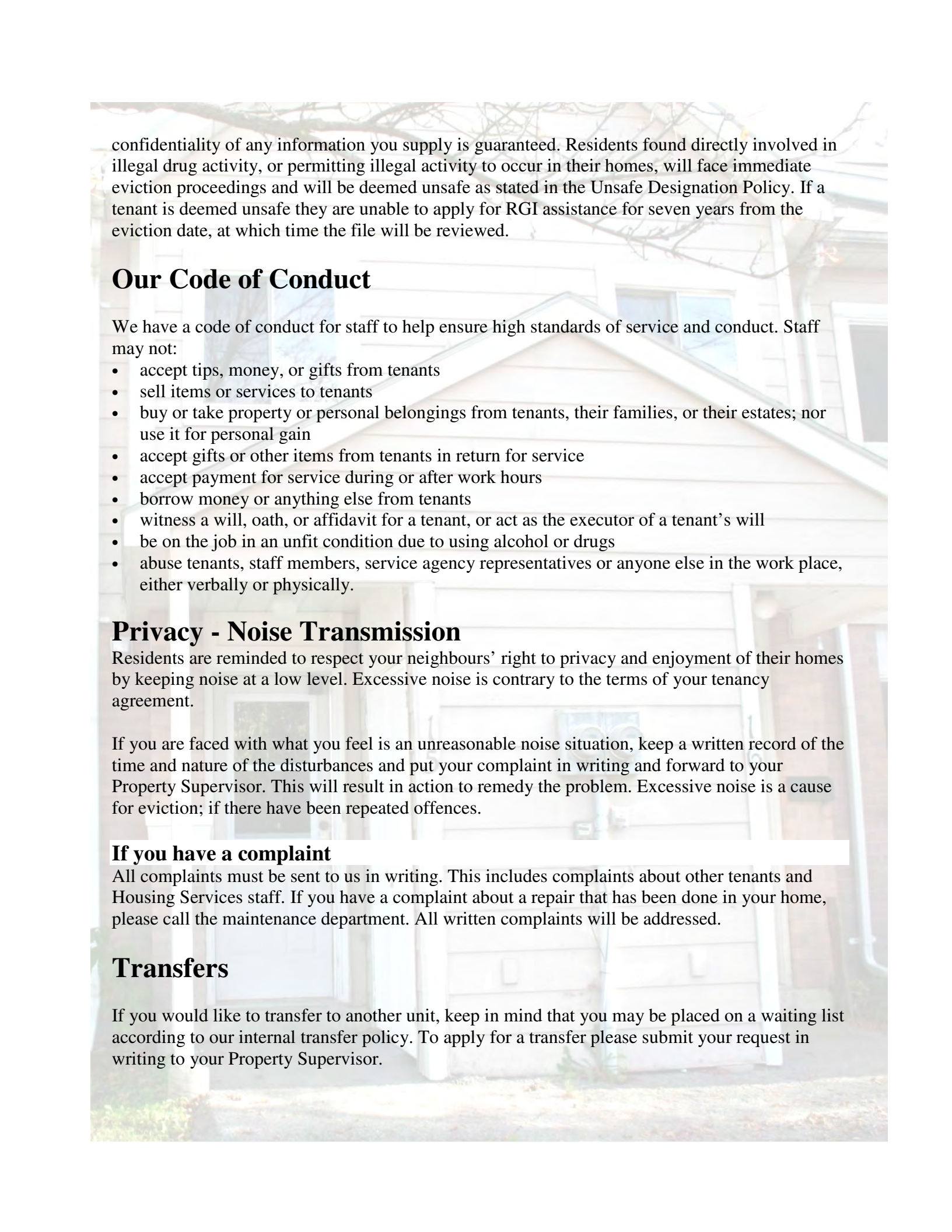
Domestic Violence

Domestic violence and abuse are criminal offences. If you witness abuse, if you think a neighbour is being abused, or if you are being abused yourself, call the police. If you are being abused in your home and you are paying rent geared to income, you will be given priority for a transfer if you submit appropriate documentation to support the abuse from a health care professional, shelter caseworker or social worker.

Our Drug Free Housing Strategy

Housing Services is committed to creating and maintaining a high quality of life within our buildings. This means taking a stand against drug use and drug trafficking. We work closely with the police to keep drug use and trafficking out of our buildings.

Neither the police nor we can control illegal drug activity without your help. You can assist in the campaign against the illegal drug trade by reporting any information concerning drugs by calling Crime Stoppers. When calling this service you do not need to identify yourself and the



confidentiality of any information you supply is guaranteed. Residents found directly involved in illegal drug activity, or permitting illegal activity to occur in their homes, will face immediate eviction proceedings and will be deemed unsafe as stated in the Unsafe Designation Policy. If a tenant is deemed unsafe they are unable to apply for RGI assistance for seven years from the eviction date, at which time the file will be reviewed.

Our Code of Conduct

We have a code of conduct for staff to help ensure high standards of service and conduct. Staff may not:

- accept tips, money, or gifts from tenants
- sell items or services to tenants
- buy or take property or personal belongings from tenants, their families, or their estates; nor use it for personal gain
- accept gifts or other items from tenants in return for service
- accept payment for service during or after work hours
- borrow money or anything else from tenants
- witness a will, oath, or affidavit for a tenant, or act as the executor of a tenant's will
- be on the job in an unfit condition due to using alcohol or drugs
- abuse tenants, staff members, service agency representatives or anyone else in the work place, either verbally or physically.

Privacy - Noise Transmission

Residents are reminded to respect your neighbours' right to privacy and enjoyment of their homes by keeping noise at a low level. Excessive noise is contrary to the terms of your tenancy agreement.

If you are faced with what you feel is an unreasonable noise situation, keep a written record of the time and nature of the disturbances and put your complaint in writing and forward to your Property Supervisor. This will result in action to remedy the problem. Excessive noise is a cause for eviction; if there have been repeated offences.

If you have a complaint

All complaints must be sent to us in writing. This includes complaints about other tenants and Housing Services staff. If you have a complaint about a repair that has been done in your home, please call the maintenance department. All written complaints will be addressed.

Transfers

If you would like to transfer to another unit, keep in mind that you may be placed on a waiting list according to our internal transfer policy. To apply for a transfer please submit your request in writing to your Property Supervisor.

Some people have priority for transfer:

- tenants living in a unit too large under RGI rules,
- tenants who must move because they need a wheel-chair accessible, or other type of unit in order to continue to live independently, and
- if a tenant's life is in danger where they are living now (due to violence or abuse, for example).

When you transfer you must:

- pay a transfer fee of \$250.00 when you sign the tenancy agreement for your new unit (Tenants who are required to move by Housing Services do not have to pay the transfer fee)
- take the new unit as is
- not have been given an eviction notice within the last six months;
- not owe arrears or any other money to Housing Services
- be in good standing if there is a repayment agreement in place for former tenants arrears with any housing provider;
- have paid your rent on time for the last six months;
- have done any malicious or negligent damage to the unit for 12 months;
- have had no record(s) of complaint(s) of disturbing neighbours or harassing staff;
- have a satisfactory inspection of the unit you live in.

Consideration may be given in extenuating circumstances.

Housekeeping

It is Housing Services' responsibility to maintain the buildings and keep them safe and secure. It is your responsibility to keep the inside of your home clean and safe.

Appliances

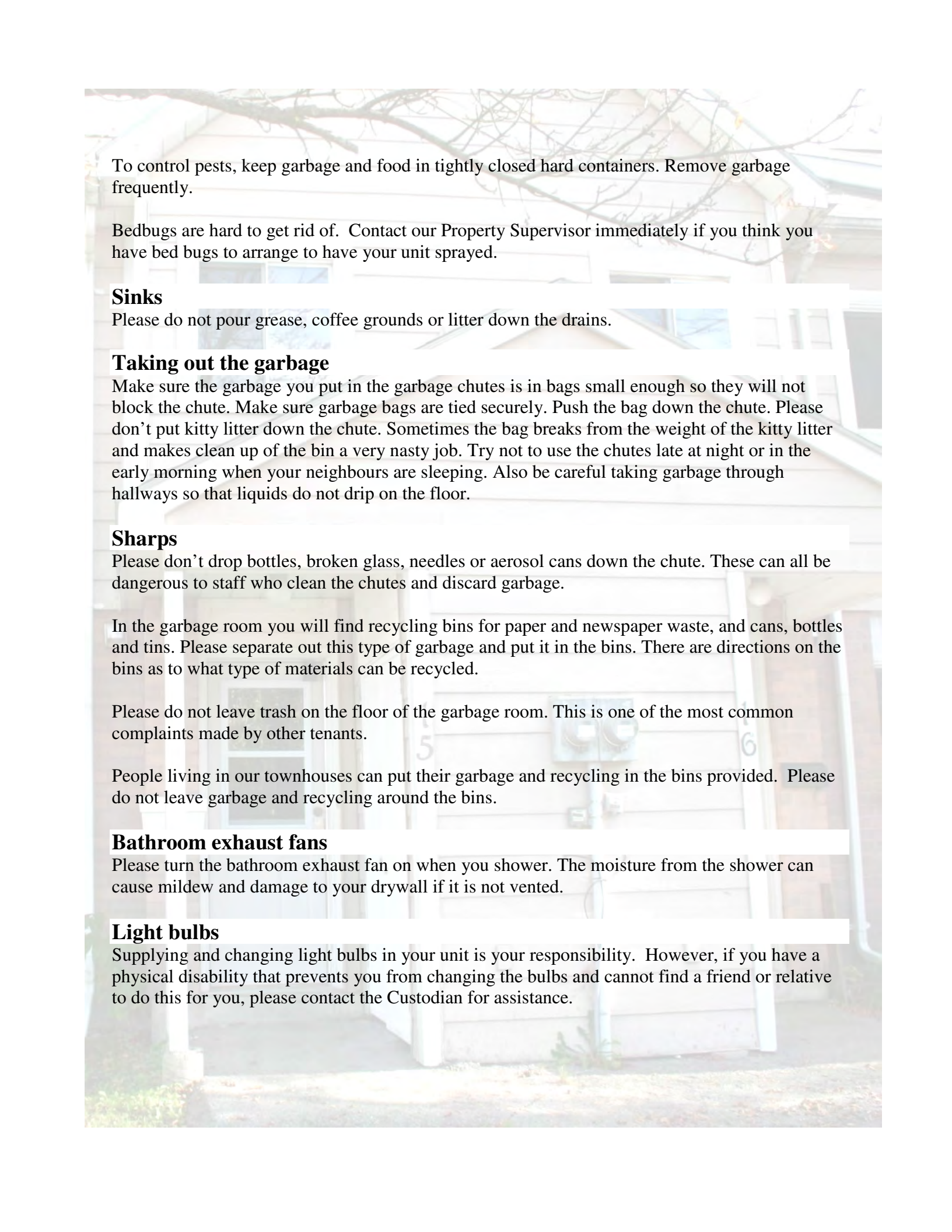
Regular cleaning and defrosting will keep your refrigerator in good shape and save energy. When cleaning the smooth surfaces of your appliances, use a mild soapy solution. A paste made of baking soda and water is good for cleaning off grease and dirt. Do not use rough cleansers because these will damage the surface of the appliance. Use a commercial oven cleaner for your oven.

Bathrooms

Please do not use rough cleansers on bathtubs, sinks and toilets. They scratch the surface and make them harder to keep clean. A good liquid or paste cleanser will prevent mildew from forming on tiles and porcelain.

Pests

If you see cockroaches or other pests, such as mice, fleas or bed bugs, please call your Property Supervisor immediately. Keeping your home clean will help keep pests away.



To control pests, keep garbage and food in tightly closed hard containers. Remove garbage frequently.

Bedbugs are hard to get rid of. Contact our Property Supervisor immediately if you think you have bed bugs to arrange to have your unit sprayed.

Sinks

Please do not pour grease, coffee grounds or litter down the drains.

Taking out the garbage

Make sure the garbage you put in the garbage chutes is in bags small enough so they will not block the chute. Make sure garbage bags are tied securely. Push the bag down the chute. Please don't put kitty litter down the chute. Sometimes the bag breaks from the weight of the kitty litter and makes clean up of the bin a very nasty job. Try not to use the chutes late at night or in the early morning when your neighbours are sleeping. Also be careful taking garbage through hallways so that liquids do not drip on the floor.

Sharps

Please don't drop bottles, broken glass, needles or aerosol cans down the chute. These can all be dangerous to staff who clean the chutes and discard garbage.

In the garbage room you will find recycling bins for paper and newspaper waste, and cans, bottles and tins. Please separate out this type of garbage and put it in the bins. There are directions on the bins as to what type of materials can be recycled.

Please do not leave trash on the floor of the garbage room. This is one of the most common complaints made by other tenants.

People living in our townhouses can put their garbage and recycling in the bins provided. Please do not leave garbage and recycling around the bins.

Bathroom exhaust fans

Please turn the bathroom exhaust fan on when you shower. The moisture from the shower can cause mildew and damage to your drywall if it is not vented.

Light bulbs

Supplying and changing light bulbs in your unit is your responsibility. However, if you have a physical disability that prevents you from changing the bulbs and cannot find a friend or relative to do this for you, please contact the Custodian for assistance.

The background of the entire page is a photograph of a residential building. It features a white door with a small window, a white utility box on the wall, and a white downspout. The building has light-colored siding and a brown roof. There are some bare tree branches in the upper part of the image.

Common Rooms

Common rooms are there for the enjoyment of all tenants. Alcohol is not permitted in the common areas of the building including the common room.

When You Decide to Move Out

Notice in Writing

When you decide to move out, you must notify Housing Services in writing as soon as you know your move out date.

Exit Inspection

When Housing Services receive your notice to vacate in writing, an inspection of your unit will be conducted. Any malicious damage will be recorded and charged to your account. Any articles or garbage that is left behind to be disposed of will also be charged to your account. If damages/disposal of articles is in excess of \$1000.00, you will not be re-housed with Hastings County Housing Services.

Summary

Housing Services hopes that this handbook will provide you with the necessary tools to help you take pride in your residence and help make your house a home. If you have any questions regarding this handbook and its content please do not hesitate to contact your Property Supervisor.

***“A house is a home when it shelters the body
and comforts the soul.”***

Phillip Moffitt