

Student guide to housing




Great neighbourhoods start with you.



How to reach us

PHONE

 519.747.8752

ACCESSIBLE FORMATS

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SOURCE

This resource was developed by the Waterloo Town and Gown Committee's Student Accommodations Working Group in collaboration with the student associations at Wilfrid Laurier University, University of Waterloo, and Conestoga College.

Housing in Waterloo

This guide outlines information and resources to assist you with your housing journey.

There are different types of housing offered in the city such as:

- **Residence buildings:** These are builds owned and maintained by the post-secondary institutions and are located close to, or on, campus. They vary in type of units (e.g., number of beds, kitchen access) and are only available to students attending the school.
- **Mid-to-high rise apartments:** This is the most common housing offering with units ranging from 1 to 5 bedrooms, with landlords medium to large housing companies.
- **Low rise older stock apartments:** They can contain both student and non-student tenants in the building and are generally owned by small to medium sized investors.
- **Townhouse properties:** They range in size from 2 to 5 bedrooms per unit and can be either condominium titled, or the complex is owned by one company. These properties must be licensed with the City through its Rental Housing Licensing By-law.
- **Detached homes:** They range in size and number of bedrooms. The landlords for these properties are usually independent of large businesses. These properties must also be licensed with the City through its Rental Housing Licensing By-law.



The City of Waterloo prides itself on being a vibrant and welcoming community. Bursting with festivals, green spaces, and diverse culinary options, there is something for everyone! To learn more about what this community holds, visit [Explore Waterloo](#).

Housing challenges

Like many communities across Canada, Waterloo is experiencing challenges with housing supply. If you are moving to Waterloo, it is important that you:

1. **Look early:** look for accommodation as early as possible (many leases are signed 6 to 12 months before the move-in date); and
2. **Budget accordingly:** be aware of Waterloo rent costs.

Waterloo general market average rent per unit is:

- \$1,771 for a one-bedroom unit
- \$1,917 for a two-bedroom unit
- \$1,991 for a three or more bedroom unit

Plan for costs of housing

Landlords and tenants negotiate how much the rent will be for the rental unit and which services will be included in the rent (for example, parking, cable, heat, electricity) prior to signing the lease. Typically, the services included in the rent are standard for the building. The use of the Ontario Standard Residential Lease Agreement must also be used for leases in the province. When signing a new lease in Ontario, most landlords will request the first and last month's rent upfront as well as a key deposit, and a damage deposit

It is important to know that often, there are services that are not covered in your rent. Do not forget to budget for these items when planning for a new place as appropriate:

- Parking
- Storage
- Internet
- Utilities
- Moving expenses and cleaning supplies
- Furniture
- Food, kitchenware and household supplies
- Other expenses as needed



Looking for more information about moving to Waterloo? Refer to the [New students in Waterloo guide](#).

What you need to know as a student living in Waterloo

With the current housing challenges, the best way for you to have a positive housing experience is to be informed.

Learn about the Residential Tenancies Act

What is it?

- The [Residential Tenancies Act \(RTA\)](#) is the legislation (i.e. law) that governs matters related to renting in Ontario. It dictates the landlord-tenant relationship and outlines specific rights and responsibilities for each. It is also the document that is most often referenced when settling landlord-tenant conflicts.

Who is covered by it?

- Most rental units are covered by the rules in the Act



- The Act does not apply if the tenant must share a kitchen or bathroom with the landlord or in cases of college or university residences

Under the RTA, tenants (i.e., you the student), have responsibilities including, but not limited to:

- Paying rent on time.
- Keeping rented space clean and free from damage.
- Notifying the landlord if any damages (e.g., a broken window) or other issues (e.g., malfunctioning water heater) occur.
- Repairing or paying for the repair of any damage to the rental property caused by the tenant, the tenant's guest or another person who lives in the rental unit, whether in the unit or in common areas.
 - Note: The tenant is not responsible for repairing damage caused by normal "wear and tear". For example, if the carpet has become worn after years of normal use, the tenant would not have to replace the carpet.

A tenant should not withhold any part of the rent, even if the tenant feels that maintenance is poor or a necessary repair has not been done. A tenant could be evicted if they withhold rent without getting approval from the Landlord Tenant Board.

Want to know more about ways to be a good tenant? Check out the [Being a good tenant guide](#).

Under the RTA, landlords (i.e., the ones who own the property), have responsibilities including but not limited to (LTB, 2019):

- Keeping the rental property in a good state of repair.
- Ensuring that the property meets all health, safety, housing, and maintenance standards, as dictated in provincial and/or municipal by laws (even if the tenant knows about the problem when they sign the lease).
- Not discontinuing or interfering with vital services to a tenant's rental unit including heat (from September 1 to June 15), electricity, fuel (such as natural gas or oil), or hot/cold water.
- Providing tenants with 24 hours written notice to enter the unit and they can only enter between the hours of 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. There are some exceptions to this rule, please see [A Guide to the Residential Tenancies Act](#) for more information on exceptions.
- Only requesting the amount of last month's rent as a rent deposit upon signing the lease.
- Only charging the amount of a key for a key deposit.

Learn about City of Waterloo Residential Rental Licences

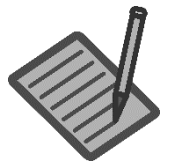
- If you are renting a low-rise housing unit (e.g., a house, basement apartment, townhouse or standard apartment in a building 3 stories or less), the City of Waterloo requires all landlords of these types of properties to be licensed under its [Rental Housing Licensing Bylaw](#).
- To receive this licence, landlords must have and maintain property maintenance plans, electrical safety and HVAC inspection certificates, and insurance.
- Renting out these units without a licence is illegal and can lead to up to \$100,000 in fines.



To determine if your low-rise dwelling is licensed, refer to the City's [eservices portal](#).

Learn about Standard Leases

- Your landlord should always provide you with an [Ontario standard lease](#).
- A standardized lease makes it easy for tenants to understand their rights and responsibilities and minimizes the opportunity for predatory landlord practices.



For more information and a visual template of the standardized lease, refer to the [Guide to Ontario's standard lease](#)

Access City, Regional, and Provincial-based resources

[Waterloo Region Community Legal Services](#)

- The organization provides multilingual legal services, including housing law services, to community members in the Region of Waterloo related to informing tenants of their rights, providing advice and referrals, support in mediating with landlords, and representation before the Landlord and Tenant Board for eligible clients.

[Region of Waterloo Renter's Toolkit](#)

- The Region of Waterloo has created a toolkit for renters that provides answers to common questions about finding and keeping a home, as well as providing multi-media resources that you can print and take with you.

[Community Legal Education Ontario](#)

- The organization provides clear, accurate, and practical legal rights education and information on their website to help people understand and exercise their legal rights.

[Ontario.ca](#)

- This website contains details about provincial programs to help you have a safe and affordable place to call home.

[Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services](#)

- This non-profit housing provider has a mandate to provide safe and affordable housing to urban and rural First Nation, Inuit and Métis people living off-Reserve in Ontario.

[Places4Students.com](#)

- All three schools partner with Places4Students.com, an online listing service specifically for postsecondary students with landlords that welcome students.
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Access school-based resources



Wilfrid Laurier University

[Department of Residence](#)

- Page contains information on all of Laurier's residence options.

[Off-Campus Housing](#)

- Off-campus housing provides support and resources for students looking to live off campus. They provide resources for students to help find off campus housing through email consultation, or 1:1 meeting with the Student Experience Coordinators

[Students Rights Advisory Committee: For undergraduate students only](#)

- Housed within the Laurier Students' Union, the Student Rights Advisory Committee (SRAC) is a student-led committee that helps to advise students about landlord-tenant difficulties and academic appeals. They will also review leases prior to you signing them if you would like!

[Studentcare Legal Care Program: For undergraduate students only](#)

- Through a partner law firm, eligible Wilfrid Laurier University Students' Union members have access to a legal consultation service to consult a duly certified lawyer regarding any legal question, especially housing disputes.

[Studentcare Legal Care Program: For graduate students only](#)

- Through a partner law firm, eligible Wilfrid Laurier University Graduate Students' Association members have access to a legal consultation service to consult a duly certified lawyer regarding any legal question, especially housing disputes.



Conestoga College

[Guide to Student Living](#)

- Conestoga Students' Inc publishes this comprehensive guide that contains information related to resources for tenant supports, temporary and emergency housing, safety, airports and shopping centers, religious and cultural supports, bylaws, waste management, as well as important contact information for various services (e.g., community hotlines, utilities, transportation, city contacts).

[Homestay program](#)

- Conestoga has partnered with the Canada Homestay Network, which matches international students with local host families to live with while studying at Conestoga. It includes: a private bedroom, meals, laundry facilities, Internet connectivity, and, the opportunity to live with a Canadian family.

[Know your rights: Legal Protection Program](#)

- Conestoga Students' Inc members have access to Studentcare's Legal Care Program. Through a partner law firm, eligible members have access to a legal consultation service to consult a duly certified lawyer regarding any legal question, including housing disputes.



University of Waterloo

[Campus Housing](#)

- Page contains information on their residence options.

[Off-campus Initiatives](#)

- Throughout the year, Off-campus housing initiatives are provided for all Waterloo students. Specific support involves knowing their rights, connecting with: legal, maintenance, and safety resources; and understanding where the university can assist.

[Summer Accommodations](#)

- Throughout the summer, Catering and Event Services offers summer accommodations on campus in Waterloo student residences. Individuals looking for residence for varying reasons (attending a conference or event in Waterloo region, relocating to the University, etc.) can do so with the University of Waterloo.

[Off-campus community WUSA: For undergraduate students only](#)

- WUSA (Waterloo Undergraduate Student Association) provides an Off-Campus Community service as a resource, connecting first year and upper-year students with dons, living off-campus. Off-Campus Community provides a multitude of events and programming initiatives to ensure students are supported in off-campus housing throughout the year.

[Studentcare Legal Protection Program: For undergraduate students only](#)

- WUSA has partnered with Studentcare to provide its students legal advice on any subject and representation on issues relating to academic rights, co-op and employment, or housing and tenancy. This Plan is designed specifically for students.

[Housing Playbook – Waterloo Undergraduate Student Association](#)

- WUSA has created a Housing Playbook that provides undergraduate students with tools that can help them as they navigate local housing concerns when renting apartments, rooms, and homes.

[Graduate Student Association](#)

- The GSA provide graduate students at UWaterloo with academic support, a social community, mental and physical health supports, legal aid, as well as advocacy and representation. Explore their website to learn more about the range of services they offer.

[Housing Resource – Graduate Student Association](#)

- The GSA has created this resource for incoming and continuing graduate students at the University of Waterloo. The webpage includes information that will support students, from finding a new home to informing students of the GSA's efforts regarding the issue of housing affordability in Canada.