Renting in BC

What international students need to know
Who is who?

The renter is called “the tenant”

The owner or manager is called “the landlord”
The place you rent is called the “rental unit”
What is a rental unit?

An apartment or house where you pay rent to a landlord, but the landlord does **NOT** share the home.
Examples:

- A private apartment in an apartment building
- A private apartment in a house that has its own bathroom and kitchen that you don’t share with the owner
- A whole house, where the owner does not live.
It is **NOT** a rental if:

- The person who pays to stay there lives with the owner and shares the kitchen or the bathroom.
- The person who pays, lives in housing owned, operated and provided by a school.
If it’s not a rental what is it?

If someone pays to share a living space with the owner of the home the law says they are a boarder, or a home-stay guest, **not a tenant.**
How the rental system works

In British Columbia, when you rent a place to live, the *Residential Tenancy Branch* oversees how that works.

The RTB is neutral.
What everyone needs to know and do before a tenancy starts...
Fees and Payments

• The RTB suggests paying one month rent at a time

• If you pay in cash always get a receipt

• Landlords can charge a non-refundable fee for replacement or extra keys, access cards, or garage door openers
The Tenancy Agreement
(also known as a lease)

• All rental units need a written contract - called a tenancy agreement

• Once it is signed it is a legal contract and both parties must do what it says

• The landlord must give a copy to the tenant within 21 days of entering into the tenancy
Security & Pet Damage Deposits

- Neither can be more than half of one month’s rent
- Normally deposits are paid before the tenant moves in
- If paid in cash a receipt must be given
Tenant rights:

• Privacy

• Security

• Quiet enjoyment
Tenant Responsibilities:

• The tenant must pay **ALL** of the rent the day it is due

• The tenant must act reasonably and take care of the property

• The tenant must allow the landlord to inspect the rental unit once a month (but the landlord must let the tenant know **in writing** 24 hours before they enter)
Roommates

- Landlords can limit the number of people living in a rental unit.
- If more than one person lives in a rental unit and all the names are on the agreement they are considered co-tenants and are equally responsible.
More About Roommates

• If many people live in an apartment, and each person has signed their own agreement for a room (and share common areas), the situation is called a “tenancy in common”

  ❖ In this situation it’s important to know that the landlord is permitted to enter common areas without a proper notice
Moving In

• The landlord and tenant should do an inspection of the rental unit together
• There is a form that needs to be filled out called a *condition inspection form*
• The landlord must give a copy of that form to the tenant once it has been completed *(keep it – it’s important)*
Maintenance - the Landlord’s Role

- The landlord must keep the rental unit in a condition of repair that complies with health, housing and safety standards
- The landlord must do emergency repairs without delay
Maintenance – the Tenant’s Role

• The tenant must keep the rental unit clean and sanitary and repair any damages caused by them, or their guests.

• The tenant must inform the landlord, in writing, of needed repairs and contact the landlord without delay for emergency repairs.
Moving Out – The Tenant’s Role

• The tenant must give one month’s **written** notice on the day before the rent is due

• The tenant is required to leave the unit clean and in the same condition it was when they moved in

• The tenant must provide the landlord with their forwarding address **in writing**
Moving Out – Landlord’s Role

• The landlord must schedule a time to inspect the unit
  – you (or someone you trust) must attend

• The landlord must complete an inspection report and both of you must sign it:
  – use the same form from move in
  – ONLY SIGN WHAT YOU AGREE IS CORRECT
Return of the Security Deposit

15 days after you move out, and have provided your forwarding address, the landlord must return your deposit(s) or must apply for dispute resolution with the Residential Tenancy Branch.
IMPORTANT

• If the landlord wants to hold back some of the deposit money they must ask your permission and ask you to sign a document agreeing

• If you do not agree, DO NOT SIGN
IMPORTANT NOTE:

Notices should be given in writing.
Solving Problems
(Dispute Resolution)

Try talking first:

• Meet with your landlord and talk about the problem
• Discuss solutions that work for both or you
• If you come to an understanding write it down and both sign the paper
ADDITIONAL HELP

Immigration Services Society of BC
Phone: 604-684-2561
www.issbc.org

TRAC – Tenant Resource & Advisory Centre
www.tenants.bc.ca

Service BC
www.servicebc.bc.ca
Dispute Resolution at the RTB

Both the tenant and the landlord have the right to apply for dispute resolution through the Residential Tenancy Branch (RTB)
RTB Contact Information

www.gov.bc.ca/landlordtenant

Public Information Lines:
1-800-665-8779 (Toll free)
Victoria: 250-387-1602
Vancouver: 604-660-1020
Email: HSRTO@gov.bc.ca
Thank you...any questions?