

### **Important Facts for Landlords and Tenants alike:**

1. Stating a discriminatory preference in a housing post is not acceptable. When posting ads in any of the residential housing categories of the CSU site, please be aware of section 3604(c) of the Fair Housing Act: It is unlawful "To make, print, or publish, or cause to be made, printed, or published any notice, statement, or advertisement, with respect to the sale or rental of a dwelling that indicates any preference, limitation, or discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, handicap, familial status, or national origin, or an intention to make any such preference, limitation, or discrimination". Local statutes often extend anti-discrimination law to additional protected classes (e.g. sexual orientation). In short, stating "female asian international student preferred" is NOT OK. You MAY state that you prefer tenants who are quiet, clean, responsible, or who have good references. Offending postings will be removed.
2. Important warning for tenants in room & board or "home stay" arrangements: if you are sharing a living space (kitchen or bathroom) with the owner of the property where you live, you are NOT legally covered by the Residential Tenancy Act. In case of a dispute with your landlord/host, your only legal recourse would be to Small Claims court.
3. For all tenants, everywhere: anything that you want your landlord to know, send in writing. This is the single most important thing you can do to protect your rights as a tenant. Documentation is very important if you find yourself in a dispute. Be wary of landlords that want to conduct all their business verbally or informally, even if they seem very friendly. You should have a signed, written agreement before you consider paying any money to any landlord.

### **Looking for a place? Nine questions to ask when looking at apartments/suites/houses:**

1. How much is the damage/rent deposit? Does the landlord have the forms for the initial damage inspection? This question shows the landlord that you are serious about keeping the place clean and that you know your own rights as well as the landlord's responsibilities. Also, the initial inspection of the dwelling is now mandatory under the Residential Tenancy Act.
2. Does the rent includes utilities, and what are average utility costs? If the landlord doesn't know the average costs, BC Hydro can tell you. You just need to send them the street address. This can help you calculate the true cost of a living space. If utilities are included in the rent, you can assess whether the portion for utilities is fair.
3. Are there adequate phone and electrical outlets? This can be an issue in older buildings. Phone jacks are the tenants responsibility unless the landlord explicitly agrees to pay for installation. Some large houses will have only one working phone jack, and only one electrical outlet per room.
4. Is the tenancy agreement "month-to-month" or an annual lease? Assuming that you have signed a lease, this can change your options when either you or your landlord choose to end your tenancy.
5. How is the water pressure? Is there a separate water heater for the suite? It's good to have high water pressure and your own water heater for your suite not only for hot baths, but also so you know you are paying a fair share of utilities.
6. Is there access to the electrical breakers? It's good to have access to the electrical box for your apartment in case you blow a fuse or the power fails. Especially in winter if you have electric heat.

7. How many other suites are in the house? Have some idea of how many neighbours you might have and whether you will be compatible with them. If you know you are a loud (or quiet) tenant, it is best to share a living space with similarly-inclined people. Sometimes it is important to double-check that you will be the only one renting the suite you are viewing.
8. Is access to the yard or garden included with the rental? It's good to ask in advance if you are allowed to use the yard of a house or apartment building, especially if you like to garden. Attitudes towards gardening tenants can vary quite a lot from one landlord to the next. Some welcome tenants who like to garden, some wish you'd just stay inside and stop bugging them.
9. How long has the landlord owned the building? A good landlord will know the history of the building, the history of maintenance and upkeep, anticipated future maintenance, as well as knowing the neighbours and neighbourhood. It may be worth asking if the landlord plans to sell the building during the term of your tenancy.