

Ontario Landlord Starter Pack

What the law requires, and what prevents 3 a.m. phone calls · August 2026

The practical side of owning a rental in Ontario: what the law actually requires of you, the maintenance rhythm that prevents most emergencies, and how to keep good tenants. Current to August 2026.

What the law requires of you

Use the Ontario Standard Lease.

Most private residential tenancies must use the province's standard form (**Form 229E**). Additional terms go in Section 15, but anything that contradicts the RTA is void even with a signature. Do not import clauses from another province's template — a surprising number of leases circulating in Ontario are built on forms that have no legal effect here.

Collect the right deposit, and only the right deposit.

You may collect a **last month's rent deposit**, capped at one month. Damage, security, pet and cleaning deposits are all prohibited under sections 105 and 106. You owe the tenant **annual interest** on the deposit at the guideline rate, and the deposit can only ever be applied to the final month's rent.

Rent increases: once every 12 months, 90 days' notice, Form N1.

The 2026 guideline is **2.1%**; 2027 is set at **1.9%**. Units first occupied after **15 Nov 2018** are exempt from the guideline, but still need the same 12-month gap and 90 days' notice. Keep your occupancy records — if the exemption is ever disputed, the burden of proof is on you.

Repairs are yours, and you cannot contract out of them.

Section 20 requires you to keep the unit in a good state of repair and fit for habitation, including problems that predate the tenancy. A clause making the tenant responsible for repairs is unenforceable. The tenant owes you ordinary cleanliness and repair of damage they cause beyond normal wear.

Entry needs 24 hours' written notice.

State the reason and a time between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. Emergencies and genuine consent at the time are the exceptions. Routine inspections are fine — showing up unannounced is not.

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The maintenance calendar that prevents emergencies

WHEN	WHAT	WHY IT MATTERS
Every month	Test smoke and CO alarms	Legally required to be working. The cheapest liability you will ever manage.
Every 3 months	Change the furnace filter	A clogged filter is the most common cause of a mid-winter furnace failure.
Spring	Clear gutters and downspouts; check grading slopes away from the foundation	Almost every basement water complaint traces back to one of these two.
Spring	Service the A/C before the first hot week	Everyone calls in the first heat wave. Nobody is available.
Fall	Shut off and drain exterior taps	A burst hose bib is a five-figure claim and it is entirely preventable.
Fall	Service the furnace; check weatherstripping	Prevents the 2 a.m. no-heat call in January.
Annually	Flush the water heater; check for leaks at the base	Tanks give warning signs. Failures do not.
Annually	Re-caulk tubs and showers; check under every sink	Slow leaks cause the expensive damage, not fast ones.
Every 2 years	Walk-through inspection with 24h notice	Catches small problems and shows the tenant you are engaged.

Keeping a good tenant is cheaper than finding one

One vacant month on a \$2,600 unit costs you \$2,600, plus advertising, plus your time, plus the risk of a worse tenant. Chasing an extra \$75 a month is a bad trade if it takes six weeks to fill. Three things keep good tenants: **respond fast to repairs, give notice before you enter, and raise rent by the guideline every year** rather than skipping increases and then facing a large gap at turnover.

Thinking about the numbers? We can tell you what your unit should actually rent for in today's market, list it on MLS — the only route onto Realtor.ca — and handle the screening. Mo Realty Team · 416-886-6306 · morealtyteam.com/landlords