

HOTT

Tenant Hand Guide

Helpful information for you to know

Welcome to HOTT! Here's some information that will hopefully make living at HOTT a pleasant experience for you. If you have comments, feel free to let us know.

- **Rules**

Some rules are the law and others are HOTT's internal rules.

The Law:

HOTT receives the majority of its funding from government bodies and is accountable to them. They give us the rules for rent calculation and tenant eligibility. As well, HOTT comes under the provincial Residential Tenancies Act, provincial Human Rights Code, Ontario Fire Code, and City buildings rules and regulations.

HOTT's Own Rules:

These are described throughout this guide.

- **Internal Transfers**

At HOTT, existing tenants may put their name on HOTT's Internal Transfer Waiting List. This is just for HOTT tenants. If you leave HOTT, your name is removed from this internal waiting list.

Tenants must be in good standing with HOTT in order to transfer. Some

examples are: your rent is up to date; you are not in the process of being evicted; there are no damages in your unit; and you are respecting the rights of other tenants and occupants of the building, as well as of the HOTT staff.

Apartments:

When a vacancy comes up for an apartment, HOTT looks to its Internal Transfer Waiting List. Then HOTT fills the vacancy according to some categories set out by our funders. After these requirements are met, we look to our regular external waiting list.

Shared Units:

Transfers within a house, from one room to another, are done by seniority at that particular house.

If an existing tenant wants to transfer from one shared house to another shared house, they must participate in the regular shared housing interview process. They may transfer if they are selected by the tenants at the house with the vacancy.

*Internal transfers to a self-contained unit may vary from at least 4-7 years

- **Rents**

Rent is due on the first business day of the month. If you think you will have difficulty paying rent for a particular month, please call the HOTT office BEFORE the first of the month and see if you can set up a payment plan.

Most tenants at HOTT have their rent geared to their gross household income (RGI). Gross income is your income before ANY deductions.

RGI tenants are required to keep HOTT informed about the increases and decreases in their monthly gross household income. When the gross income goes up, the rent goes up, when the gross household income goes down, the rent goes down.

Failing to report a decrease or an increase in gross household income will cause you to lose your subsidy.

HOTT may just do a straight eviction under the Residential Tenancies Act for the illegal act of misrepresentation of income while living in subsidized housing.

HOTT will require back rent to be paid based on when the information should have been received by HOTT. The repayment plan is negotiated with HOTT and the outcome depends on the circumstances.

- **Maintenance**

As the Landlord, HOTT is responsible for all maintenance of the properties: repairs, grass cutting, and snow removal etc. To assist us, we ask that you call us at the HOTT office 416 369-0366 ext. 21 and let us know when HOTT property

needs to be repaired. Remember, if you don't let us know, we may not know that something needs to be repaired. Please only use the maintenance emergencies pager for emergencies.

Occasionally, we may have to charge a tenant for a repair if the tenant or one of their guests is the one responsible for the problem – even if it is an accident e.g. your child throws a toy down the toilet and plugs it. For these situations, we can usually work out a payment plan.

- **24 Hour Notices**

Anytime that HOTT enters your home, by law, HOTT must give you 24 hours written notice, in advance. In the event of an emergency, 24 hour notice is not required. In exceptional circumstances, HOTT may need access into your home due to an emergency in another part of the building. In these cases, a 24 hour notice is not required.

HOTT staff may enter the common areas of a shared house without 24 hours notice. As well, if HOTT knocks on a tenant's door, and the tenant gives permission for HOTT to enter, this is also acceptable. In addition if a tenant has given notice to vacate then HOTT may show their unit at any reasonable time.

- **Cleaning**

Apartments:

HOTT is responsible for keeping the common areas of the apartment buildings clean. It is the tenant's responsibility to make sure that their apartment is in a reasonable state of cleanliness.

Shared Houses:

In the shared houses, we have a hybrid model. Tenants are expected to do the usual cleaning up after themselves as well as sharing the routine house chores for keeping all common areas clean and tidy.

In order to maintain a minimum standard of cleanliness, HOTT's cleaning staff visits each shared house on a regular basis, in order to make sure the common areas are clean.

- **Laundry**

Please be courteous of other people's laundry. Don't leave yours in too long. If you feel that you have to take someone else's out, please be respectful of it.

If there are laundry guidelines posted at your property, please take note of them.

For the dryers, please check the lint trap before you put your first load of laundry in to dry. As well, check the trap after you take out every load of dried clothing.

A lint trap/screen that is free of lint helps the dryer dry your clothes faster. More importantly, a lint trap that is free from lint prevents fires from starting inside the dryer!

- **Guests**

Everyone is allowed to have guests. However, you are responsible for your guests. You need to ensure that your guests do not interfere with other tenants.

Apartments:

Once your guest has stayed with you for 1 month in an apartment, HOTT no longer considers them a guest.

At this point the income of your "guest" must be reported as part of your gross household income, if you are in an RGI unit, in order for HOTT to do the RGI calculation.

Shared:

In the shared houses, if your guest stays regularly you are no longer eligible for your housing since you have to be a single occupant to be eligible for a room in a shared house.

Tenants in shared housing may, as a whole, have one overnight guest once per week. It is recommended that tenants check in with their housemates ahead of time so that more than one overnight guest isn't staying in the house at the same time, as this would exceed fire regulations.

Market Tenants:

Tenants paying market rent do not have the above restrictions upon their guests. However, there are City bylaws, which apply to everyone regarding how many people may live in a particular amount of space.

- **Illegal Activity**

HOTT evicts for illegal activity. This includes: illegal drug activity, domestic and other assaults, tampering with fire safety mechanisms etc.

- **Alcohol Consumption**

Each tenant is responsible for managing how he or she drinks alcohol. HOTT becomes involved when the behaviour of a tenant who has been drinking interferes with other tenants.

- **Smoking**

We have different rules for different housing arrangements.

Apartments:

In the apartments, tenants are able to smoke in their own home. However, no smoking is allowed in any common area: hallways, stairwells, laundry room, elevator, lobby etc.

Shared:

In the shared houses, houses are informally designated as smoking or non-smoking houses. Typically, non-smokers live together in one house and smokers in another. Occasionally, smokers will live in a non-smoking house. The “rules” are negotiated. For example, smoking outside might be acceptable. It varies from house to house.

- **Conflict Resolution Process**

1. Talk to Each Other:

When tenants are in conflict with one another, the first thing that HOTT recommends is that you talk to each other! There are times when the

other person may not even know that they are irritating you.

2. HOTT helps you talk:

If you find that talking with each other has not been successful, tenants are encouraged to call the HOTT office for assistance. HOTT will then try to help the different sides resolve their concerns.

3. Verbal Warning:

If the above process is unsuccessful, HOTT may issue a verbal warning to an offending tenant.

4. Warning Letter:

If the matter is more serious, HOTT will write an offending tenant a warning letter.

5. Legal Eviction Notice:

If HOTT feels that the offence is serious enough, or feels that a warning letter will have no effect on the offending tenant’s behaviour, HOTT may proceed directly to an eviction notice under the Residential Tenancies Act.

Except for illegal activity, the Residential Tenancies Act will give the offending tenant a certain number of days to correct their behaviour. However, if the offending tenant continues to be problematic, the Landlord will pursue the eviction to its logical conclusion – the eviction of the tenant by the Sheriff’s office.

Note: Eviction notices are usually only effective when tenants are willing to appear as witnesses at the Board. An Adjudicator takes an eviction notice more seriously when

the tenants who are bothered by the offending tenant come to support their complaints in person.

• Tenant Grievances

HOTT has a Tenant Grievance Procedure Policy to address issues when a tenant feels that they have been treated unfairly by HOTT or HOTT's staff.

Simplified steps are as follows;

- 1) Tenant speaks directly to the staff person with whom they are annoyed in order to try and resolve the problem.
- 2) If the problem cannot be resolved verbally the tenant and staff person complete a form to address the issue.
- 3) The tenant can speak to the Executive Director of HOTT regarding the complaint.
- 4) If the tenant is still unhappy at this stage they can request a meeting with the Adhoc Grievance Committee of the HOTT Board of Directors.
- 5) The Adhoc Grievance Committee will review the situation and advise the tenant in a timely manner.



Tips on Being a Good Shared Housing Housemate

• Cooking

Timing:

If you find that you are cooking after 11:00 p.m., please be considerate of others. Some people are awakened by the aroma. Try to cook your main food during the day. If you find that you occasionally still cook in the evening, please ensure that the kitchen door is closed.



Length of Time:

Many people like to cook their meal around 6:00 p.m. Please

remember that there are others wanting to use the kitchen either at the same time as you, or shortly after you. Leave counter space for others to do their meal preparation

Clean Up:

Remember to wash your dishes right away rather than leaving them in the sink; wipe the stovetop, dials, and burners; counters and floors – especially if you have been cooking with oil.

• House Chores

Each house works this differently. Some houses have a schedule. Some don't.

The main thing is that the house is clean and tidy, and that everyone works at cleaning the house equally.

• Garbage

Kitchen:

We encourage everyone to be responsible and bag the kitchen garbage when required. In the summer, be sure to bag the garbage at least 2x per week. This prevents the birth of unwanted flies!

Bathroom Garbage:

Please put a bag in the garbage container when needed so that there is something to bag up on garbage day.

Outside Garbage Bins:

Don't forget to look in the outside garbage bins and take out that garbage as well. If it gets missed, it piles up and then no one wants to take it out because there is so much of it!

• Bathroom Courtesies

If you use the toilet, flush it. If you put the toilet seat up, put it down after you're done. If you've ever fallen into the toilet because of someone leaving the seat up, you'll know what we're talking about! Lastly, clean up any hairs that you leave in the sink or bathtub from shaving or combing your hair.

• Security

Always lock the door behind you - even if you're only leaving the house for half an hour.

If you have guests coming to visit, please wait downstairs for them – especially if they are arriving in the early morning or late at night. It's an

inconvenience for others to have to let your guest in.

Flowers



If you're interested in the flower beds, that's great. Water them whenever they look thirsty. As far as weeding goes, if you're not sure if it is a weed or a flower, ask HOTT, or wait and see what it grows into!

• Housing Worker

At HOTT, there is a specific staff person called the Housing Worker whose job, in part, is to provide support to individual tenants if they decide they need it. As well, the Housing Worker's job is to help tenants get along with each other. If you have a need, call that person. That's what the Housing Worker is here for!

As well, the Housing Worker can be a helpful resource person for individual issues.

• House Meeting

House meetings are usually held every 1-2 months. They are facilitated by the Housing Worker, and may be attended by other staff. Meetings are a time to work out problems that come up when more than one person lives together.

We also discuss items like: joint purchases, house chores, guests, pets etc.

We decide future meeting times at the end of each meeting in order to work around each person's schedule.

If you cannot make a house meeting, it is important that you let the Housing Worker know. If enough people are unable to make it, the Housing Worker will reschedule the house meeting to a more convenient time.

• Decision Making Process

Typically, decisions at the shared houses are made by consensus: everyone has to agree, or at least the person who disagrees says it's OK to go ahead with a decision that they would prefer was different.

On rare occasions, we do use majority rule. However, we never use majority rule if the majority's opinion were to make the other people feel unsafe. It is important that all people feel emotionally safe!

• Philosophy of the Common Areas

Anything in the common area is for every tenant to use. Most items in the common areas belong to HOTT.

Sometimes, individual tenants want to put personal items in the common areas. Just check with your housemates. If everyone is in agreement, then go ahead.

This is important to do since the common areas are for the use of all tenants.

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