

The Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation was founded in 1987. It is a charitable non-governmental organization that promotes human rights in housing.

Call CERA! Our services are free.

**In Toronto: 416-944-0087
Outside Toronto: 1-800-263-1139**

CERA

Centre for Equality Rights in
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NEW TO CANADA AND FACING DISCRIMINATION ?



Centre for
Equality
Rights in
Accommodation

**416-944-0087
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Ontario's Human Rights Code and Housing

When settling in a new country, recent immigrants and refugees often face discrimination, language and employment barriers, and social exclusion.

Barriers to accessing housing can be a major problem. Without safe, affordable housing, newcomers are denied employment opportunities, access to schooling, security, stability, and the opportunity to develop social networks and participate in their new country.

This brochure provides important information on your legal rights when trying to find an apartment. Knowing your rights is an important first step to getting the housing you need.

DISCRIMINATION. WHAT DOES THE LAW SAY?

The Human Rights Code states that **all people** in Ontario have equal opportunity to access housing and to enjoy the benefits that come along with that housing.

This means that everyone in Ontario has the right to rent and live in an apartment or house without discrimination

It is against the law for a landlord to harass you, treat you unfairly or refuse to rent to you because:

- You are a recent immigrant or refugee
- You practice a particular religion
- You belong to a racialized community
- You are a woman
- You are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered
- You are single or divorced
- You are pregnant or have children
- You have a mental or physical disability
- You are receiving welfare or other government assistance

Discrimination does not have to be intentional. Someone can discriminate against you without even knowing it.

RACISM

"You people are so difficult and demanding!"

It is illegal for a landlord to treat you differently than your neighbour or another person applying for an apartment because of your race, ancestry or ethnic origin.

A landlord should not deny you an apartment because of your religious beliefs or traditional religious attire/practices.

Landlords must respect practices and traditions related to your culture.

What Are Your Rights?

Centre For Equality Rights in Accommodation

CERA Can Help

REFERENCES, CREDIT CHECKS AND EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

“We can’t accept your application if you don’t have credit rating.”

A landlord should not refuse to rent to you because you have no previous Canadian landlord references or credit history. An absence of credit and landlord references is not the same as bad credit and bad landlord references.

If you have a poor rental history, landlords can ask you to have a co-signor or someone to “guarantee” your rent. However, they should not require this just because you are a permanent resident, refugee or a recent immigrant.

Landlords should not require you to have a long, full-time employment history.

INCOME

“I don’t rent to anyone making less than \$30,000 a year”

A landlord should not refuse to rent to you simply because he/she does not feel that your income is high enough or because your income comes from government assistance.

FAMILY SIZE OR STRUCTURE

“If you have a child, you need a two bedroom apartment.”

Landlords should not refuse to rent to you because you have children, because the apartment is “too small”, or because of your family composition unless they would be breaking a local health and safety or over-crowding By-Law.

DEPOSIT REQUIREMENTS

“I need six months rent in advance.”

In Ontario, it is normal for a landlord to ask you to pay the last month’s rent in advance, as a deposit. The landlord must give you a written receipt. However, a landlord should **NOT** ask for more than that.

SOCIAL INSURANCE NUMBER (SIN)

Name _____ SIN _____

The government of Canada states that you **should not** give your SIN in an application for a rental apartment. Landlords do **NOT** need your SIN to check your credit history. They can check your credit with your name, current address and birth date.

LOOKING FOR AN APARTMENT?

Most newcomers rent an apartment as their first permanent home.

- Think about where and how you want to live.
- Think about how much you can afford to pay before you start looking for a place to live.
- Ask your local settlement organization or community center to assist you.
- Ask other people who live around the area of the apartment about the location.
- Do a check of the neighbourhood yourself.
- Make sure the apartment is near a school, shopping centers, a community center and other facilities that are important to you.
- Take a friend or a relative when looking for an apartment.
- Fill out the application form completely. Keep a copy if possible.
- Write everything down (date, time, what was said, who was there, the apartment address, telephone number, landlord’s name, rent, and other facts).

IF YOU EXPERIENCE DISCRIMINATION IN HOUSING:

Act now before the apartment is rented!

Call CERA, we can help.

We can try to negotiate with your future or current landlord to make sure the discrimination stops.

We can also assist you in filing a human rights application (complaint).

All our services are free.

In Toronto: 416-944-0087, Extension 22
Outside of Toronto (Toll Free):
1-800-263-1139, Extension 22

Your call and anything you tell CERA is CONFIDENTIAL.

