To all HCHC residents:

Hello and welcome! This Resident’s Guide was written to provide you with important information about your new home in your HCHC Community.

We have compiled this guide as a reference to frequently asked questions and concerns. HCHC is committed to providing safe, secure and affordable housing to residents within Halton Region.

HCHC provides housing to families, seniors, couples, singles and people with special needs. We currently manage 2,204 units on 35 properties within Burlington, Acton, Georgetown, Milton and Oakville. These include townhouses and apartments, as well as single and semi-detached dwellings.

If you need information, assistance or have a concern about your home, please refer to this Resident’s Guide. Should you require further information, contact your Tenant Services Coordinator, Tenant Services Advisor or the appropriate staff and they will be happy to assist you.

Important Contacts

General inquiries & maintenance emergencies:
- Call 311
- 905-825-6000
- 1-866-442-5866 Toll Free

Fire, police or medical emergencies:
- Call 911

Halton Community Housing Corporation
Housing Services Division
Social & Community Services
690 Dorval Drive 7th Floor
Oakville ON L6K 3X9

Halton Community Housing Corporation
Resident’s Guide

Halton Community Housing Corporation (HCHC) was created in September 2001. HCHC is an amalgamation of Halton Non-Profit Housing Corporation that was created by the Region of Halton in 1988 and Halton Housing Corporation (formerly Authority) that was transferred from the Province to the Region on January 1, 2001.

Statement of Principles:
Halton Community Housing Corporation is a landlord with a community responsibility.
- We provide healthy communities
- We provide rental accommodation that is affordable, accessible and appropriate
- We are financially responsible
- We strive to provide excellent customer service
You and Your Home

Welcome to your new home!

Your unit was inspected before you moved in. However, if you need any repairs after you move in or at any time during your stay with us, please submit a HCHC Maintenance Request found on halton.ca or by calling 311 or 905-825-6000.

Keys

The keys that you were given when you moved in give you access to your unit, your mailbox, and the building or garage, depending on the community in which you live. All locks are changed each time a vacancy occurs in order to ensure your security.

If you lose or forget your keys call 311.

If you lose or forget your keys after business hours, you may be charged to have staff open your door. You may also be charged if a locksmith is required or new keys have to be issued.

Insurance

It is the responsibility of our residents to purchase tenant or renters insurance for your personal property and to cover yourself in the event of liability issues.

HCHC insures the buildings themselves, but does not cover your personal property. You will be held responsible for damages that are found to be your fault.

Parking

Resident parking may be available at each site. If you need a parking space, contact your Tenant Services Coordinator. We ask that you park in your assigned parking space because visitor parking is limited. If additional parking is required please contact your Tenant Services Advisor for availability. Only road-worthy, plated vehicles are permitted to park on the property.

Accessibility

Buildings are wheelchair accessible. There are also a number of modified units in both family and seniors communities that are designed for wheelchair access.

Pets

Pets can be important members of any household. If you have a pet, you are responsible for picking up after it, as well as its behaviour and its effect on the building and other tenants. Dogs must be kept on a leash at all times while out of the home. Please be mindful of local by-laws as fines can be applied if you fail to pick up after your pet. Please see HCHC’s Pet Policy for further information.
Decorating

If you wish to decorate or make alterations to your unit, please keep in mind that you cannot make any permanent changes. Do not replace floors or remove doors. You must receive written permission from your Tenant Services Advisor if you wish to install ceiling fans, air conditioners, lay broadloom or any other permanent renovations.

When you move out, you may have to change the unit back to the way it was when you moved in, or pay to have it brought back to move-in condition. For example, you may be charged if staff or contractors have to remove fixtures or shelving. Check with your Tenant Services Coordinator if you have any questions.

Appliances

Refrigerators and Stoves

If an appliance does not work, see if it needs to be plugged in. Also check the circuit breaker and fuses that serve the appliance’s circuit and make sure that it hasn’t tripped or blown. If the appliance is owned by HCHC and the problem persists, please call 311 or 905-825-6000 and advise.

Electric Baseboard Heaters

It’s important to keep all materials that can burn away from heating sources.

- Do not hang clothes to dry on or near your heater or heating vents.
- Avoid placing furniture and blankets close to heaters.
- We recommend using appliances with the Underwriters Laboratories Inc. (ULC/UL) symbol. This symbol shows that the product has been safety tested.
- Keep curtains away from heaters.

Laundry

Townhouse residents will find hook-ups for resident-owned washers and dryers in the basements, and on the main floor for wheelchair accessible units. Apartment residents, however, must not install washers and dryers in their units because they could cause flooding and other plumbing problems.

There are pay-as-you-use operated laundry machines in most communities. Please leave the washer and dryer clean after your laundry is finished and don’t leave your laundry unattended once the cycle is complete.

If you have equipment difficulties, please contact your Tenant Services Coordinator.

Garbage

Apartment buildings

- Put all garbage in small, securely tied plastic bags before you drop it down the garbage chute. Bags must be small enough to fit into the chute.
• Do not put glass, items under pressure, (such as aerosol cans) or pizza boxes down the chute. Take them directly to their designated area.
• Put double bags on kitty litter and diapers and bring them down to the main floor garbage room. Do not put down garbage chute.
• Do not leave garbage bags in hallways, garbage chute rooms, or on the balconies.
• Make sure you push the bag down the chute and make sure the chute door is securely closed.
• Consult with your building staff if you need to get rid of oversized items. You may be charged if you deposit these items into the garbage chute, in the outside bins or at the curb.

Townhouses

• Put all garbage in securely tied plastic bags or appropriate containers and put them out no earlier than 5 p.m. the night before pick-up.
• After pick-up, remove garbage containers and blue boxes promptly and clean up any leftover refuse.
• Do not use your front yard as a storage area. Store garbage bins in rear yards only.
• Large items in certain municipalities may be picked up on designated days. Visit halton.ca for more information.

Hazardous waste

It is your responsibility to arrange for the disposal of hazardous waste such as needles, paint, paint thinner and batteries. Remember that items such as needles must be disposed of properly. Please contact your doctor or pharmacist for safe disposal instructions. For more information, visit halton.ca or call 311.

Recycling

We encourage you to participate in the recycling program. Most townhouse sites use the Blue Box program. Visit halton.ca for details. If you live in an apartment building, check with your Tenant Services Coordinator to find out where the blue boxes are located.

Pest control

Unfortunately, cockroaches and other pests can be a problem. Staff and tenants need to work together to help control pests. Make sure that food is stored in airtight containers and garbage is sealed and put out on regular garbage days. Please contact your Tenant Services Coordinator to report pest infestation as soon as it is noticed so that pest control services can be contacted in a timely manner.

Do not feed birds, squirrels, or stray animals. This could attract mice, rats, raccoons, skunks or other pests.

Unit exteriors

Do not attach items such as satellite dishes, antennae, clotheslines, and basketball nets to the exterior of your unit. If you have any questions, please contact your Tenant Services Coordinator.
If you have a balcony:
- Do not use it for storage as it creates an unsafe environment. Materials may blow off the balcony and children may also climb on objects and find themselves in a dangerous situation.
- Do not put carpet on the balcony. It will speed up the deterioration of the concrete.
- Do not hang planters or anything else over the railings; they must be hung on the inside.
- Do not feed the birds or squirrels.
- Please note that you are not allowed to operate a barbeque or store propane tanks.

Lawns and walkways

Townhouse residents are responsible for raking, watering, and weeding their yard and garden, as well as keeping the area neat and orderly. Townhouse residents who have enclosed backyards are responsible for cutting the grass.

During the winter months, townhouse residents are responsible for removing the snow and ice from their walkway and driveway. HCHC will clear snow and ice from all common walkways and roadways. Salting will be done as required in common areas.

We strongly recommend proper upkeep and renters insurance to reduce your liability, because you could be held responsible if someone is hurt by a fall on your driveway or walkway.

Common areas

Recreation rooms

Most of our communities have a recreation room that is available to all residents for community-related events. If you wish to book this room for a private function, please contact your Tenant Services Advisor, in writing, a minimum of six weeks prior to the event. Clean-up after an event is the responsibility of the tenant.

Elevators

Elevators are essential to apartment living. To keep them in good, working order:
- Don’t hold doors open for long periods of time.
- If the elevator is damaged or not working, please call the office immediately. If this happens after office hours, call 311, 905-825-6000 or toll free at 1-866-442-5866.
- If the elevator stalls between floors, there is a telephone or intercom in each elevator. Lift the phone off the cradle, or press the intercom button. Stay calm; do not try to exit the elevator before it returns to the floor level. (Note: Some elevator phones are behind a closed door and not surface mounted. Once the handset is picked up or the alarm button has been pushed, wait for someone on the other end of the line to communicate with you.)
- If the elevator door is not closing, check for debris on the tracks.
- If you discover someone stuck in an elevator, wherever possible try to maintain verbal contact and provide assurance that help is on the way. If you sense medical attention is required, call 911.
- If fire alarms are sounding DO NOT use the elevator.
Moving out

If you want to move out of your unit, you must give **at least 60 days written notice**, and it must take effect at the end of the month. Please send notice to the attention of your Tenant Services Advisor. Your final day will be the last day of the second month. For example, if you want to move out on April 30, you must provide your written notice no later than February 28.

Upon receipt of your notice to vacate, HCHC will send you an acknowledgement letter describing your responsibilities and arrange a pre-move-out inspection.

Remember you are responsible to contact all utility companies, where applicable, to notify them of your move-out date so they can prepare the final bill.

Inspections

Annual unit inspections

HCHC staff will inspect your unit once a year. This inspection helps us check on the operating condition of appliances, heating, plumbing, safety devices and the general condition of your unit.

Always report maintenance problems as soon as possible. Do not wait for your annual unit inspections for repair work to be noted. Your assistance in early detection of maintenance problems is appreciated. The furnace and fire safety equipment – in suite alarm testing will also be annually inspected as well as any other inspection as mandated through new legislation or by the Service Manager.

Move-in inspection

For new tenants, a Move-in Inspection Report is included with your resident’s handbook. You are required to complete the Move-in Inspection Report **within 10 days** of moving in. Failure to return the Move-in Inspection Report will indicate that the unit is in good condition and no repairs are required. Please return your form to Halton Community Housing Corporation, 690 Dorval Drive, 7th Floor, Oakville, Ontario, L6K 3X9.

Please inspect everything as soon as you move in such as doors, ceilings, walls, windows, and screens. Check the light fixtures, plugs, plumbing fixtures, and your fridge and stove, where supplied.

Maintenance and repairs

Maintenance Emergencies
Please call 311, 905-825-6000 or toll free at 1-866-442-5866.

Examples of a maintenance emergency
- There is no heat, electricity, or water in your unit
- There is a water leak or flood in your unit
- Your toilet is plugged and you only have one washroom
- A fire occurs
Entry to your home by staff

Emergencies

In the event of any emergency, if lives are threatened, or when substantial damage could be done to the building or unit, staff are not required to provide any notice before entering.

Non-emergencies

If you need repairs to your unit, and it is not an emergency, please contact HCHC Maintenance Services at: HCHCMaintenanceServices@Halton.ca or by calling 311 or 905-825-6000. You may also submit a written request for maintenance or repair. Please include information about pets in the unit. When access to your unit is required, 24 hour written notice will be provided unless you are home and willing to accommodate staff.

We will respond to your written maintenance request as soon as possible. Where outside contractors are required, the response time will depend on contractor availability. Repairs will be coordinated as quickly as possible.

Basic Maintenance

No Heat? Check here first before you call.

- Ensure that the furnace power switch (similar to a light switch located near the furnace) is in the ON position.
- Check that the furnace filter is clean. Before opening the furnace access panel to check, turn off the furnace power switch. Then close the furnace access panel and turn the power switch back on. Ensure that the access panel is closed fully.
- Check the fuse or circuit breaker (located in the main electrical panel of your home).
- If the furnace has a standing or continuously burning pilot light, check that it’s lit.
- If your heating system thermostat has settings for both heating and cooling, check that it is in the heat position.
- Turn up the thermostat a few degrees and see if your heating system comes on.
- Ensure that your warm air registers and cold air returns are free of any items that could restrict air circulations.
- If your heating system fails to operate, turn your system off and contact us.
- Ensure there is a 0.9 meters (3 ft.) clearance around furnaces and water heaters.

Water shut off step-by-step instructions:

1. Individual shut-off valves are found on some sinks and most toilets. They are generally located at the supply tubes feeding the fixture. Turn the valve clockwise to stop water flow, then open a faucet or flush the toilet to release water standing in the lines.

2. The main shut-off valve, located near the water meter, can be closed to shut off all water. Open faucets at the highest and lowest points in your home to drain water lines.
Tips and Techniques

When turning off the water at the sink, tub and toilet shut-offs, or at the main shut-off, be careful not to turn the handles too hard. You can break the valve stem inside the shut-off valve, forcing you to replace the shut-off before you can do your other repair.

Before turning off the water, plan ahead. If the water will be off for a few hours, you might want to fill a sink, tub or a few buckets so you will have water available.

Outdoor tap – winter shut-off

The isolating valve may be located in the basement or inside a cupboard. When shutting this valve off it is best to open the outside tap and then shut down the inside valve. This will allow any water that is left in the line between the bib and isolating valve to drain.

Clogged toilets – step-by-step instructions:

- Place the cup of the plunger over outlet opening (Flanged plunger works best on toilets).
- Pour enough water into bowl to cover rubber cup.
- Plunge down and up rapidly.
- Pour a bucket of water into the bowl. If water passes through, flush toilet several times to wash debris through drain.
- Some toilets run incessantly. This can be caused by a float arm that doesn’t rise high enough, a float ball that has become waterlogged, a tank stopper (flapper) that doesn’t sit in the valve properly or an inlet valve that doesn’t shut off.
- Sometimes by just reaching into the tank and resetting the tank stopper (flapper) in the flush valve the running will stop or try bending the float arm down or away from the tank wall.

Electricity on and off

Main switch

Know where your home’s main electric switch is, so you can turn off the electric supply to your entire home quickly in case of an emergency.

Fuses

- Know where your fuse box or circuit-breaker box is located.
- Know the correct sizes of any fuses needed in your home and keep spares on hand. Blown fuses must be replaced, not repaired. Do not replace a fuse with one of higher amperage.
- If a fuse blows, disconnect or turn off the appliance(s) that may have caused the problem.
- Shut off the main electric switch before replacing a fuse.
- Do not insert pennies into fuses.
Circuit breakers

- Know how to reset a circuit breaker. After turning off or unplugging appliances on the circuit, push the switch firmly to the OFF position, and then back ON. If the overload is cleared, the electricity will come back on.
- If your circuit breakers trip off repeatedly, there could be a problem with the appliance(s) on that circuit. If the appliances are unplugged but the circuit breaker trips off again, call 311, 905-825-6000, or 1-866-442-5866 and advise.

Cords

- Do not place electric cords under rugs or where they can be walked on or damage can go unnoticed.
- Check for cords that are broken, frayed, damaged or tied in knots, or that have melted insulation. Have them repaired or replaced promptly.
- Extension cords with three-pronged plugs should only be used as a temporary measure; power bars should be used in their place.
- Insert and remove plugs by grasping the plug. Pulling on the cord could damage it. Be careful not to let fingers touch the metal prongs.
- Use ULC/CSA approved power bars and avoid overloading circuits.

Tenant damage/chargeback

If a tenant or a tenant’s visitor causes property damage, HCHC will charge the tenant with the amount it cost to repair or replace the damaged property. This will include any staff time. Staff will take into consideration the condition of the damaged property when assessing the chargeback.

Your rent

Paying Your rent

**Your rent is due on the first of the month.**
To ensure that your rent is always paid on time, we strongly suggest that you set up a pre-authorized payment plan or give us post-dated cheques once a year. Not paying your rent or paying your rent late on a regular basis could result in your eviction.

Types of rent

**There are two kinds of rental housing available within HCHC:**

1. **Market rent** is the full rental amount charged to tenants who are not receiving rent subsidy (similar to the rents charged in the private sector). Market rents are reviewed annually.

2. **Rent-Geared-To-Income (RGI) assistance** is the financial subsidy provided to a household to reduce the amount the household must otherwise pay to occupy a unit with HCHC.
Changes to your Rent

**Market rent rates** are reviewed annually. Market rent tenants are given 90 days notice of an increase. Social housing is not subject to rent controls under the Residential Tenancies Act.

Changes to your rent

**RGI rents** are reviewed whenever there are changes in household income or family composition. In order to remain eligible for RGI assistance, RGI tenants are required to provide proof of all changes in family composition and household income. In order to remain eligible, RGI tenants must:

- **Complete and submit Annual Renewal documents once per year.** The Annual Renewal documentation will be mailed to tenants a few months before the anniversary of their move in date each year. The Annual Renewal Form must be completed, signed and witnessed and must be submitted with copies of the most recent year’s income tax information, recent banking information and documentation to show proof of all sources of income, for all household members.

- **Report all changes in household income within 30 days.** In order to remain eligible for RGI subsidy, households must report all changes in income for all household members by providing relevant documentation to verify the change. This includes reporting changes in the source of income, even if the amount of income does not change.

- **Report all changes in family composition within 30 days.** In addition to changes in income, the family composition and number of occupants living in a household may affect the rent. If anyone moves into or out of a household, this must be reported within 30 days of the change.

- **Report income from fluctuating sources every month.** Often when household members are employed part-time or full-time, the monthly income will fluctuate. Tenants who earn income from fluctuating sources may be required to submit pay stubs and proof of income each month.

Failure to report changes in income and household composition will result in the loss of RGI subsidy and an increase to market rent.

Service Manager Review – RGI rent

You have the right to request a Service Manager Review of the decision to change the RGI rent. You may submit a Service Manager Review request form or a written request to our office within 10 days of being notified of the change.

Service Manager Review

Tenants have the right to request a Service Manager Review for decisions made about rent, subsidy and household composition. Tenants may submit a Service Manager Review request form or a written request to our office within 10 days of being notified of the change. Tenants can ask for a Service Manager Review if they disagree with a decision to:

- Increase the monthly rent and/or charge overpaid subsidy
- Withdraw rent subsidy and increase the household to market rent
- Refuse a request for internal transfer
- Deem a household to be over housed
Guest Policy

You are welcome to have friends or relatives stay overnight or for short periods of time. In HCHC’s Guest Policy, a guest shall not be permitted to remain in the unit longer than seven consecutive days within a 30-day period without the prior written consent of HCHC. Failure to report longer stays by guests could result in the loss of subsidy. Your home is meant to accommodate only those who are listed on your lease. Please contact your Tenant Services Advisor if you have any questions.

Transferring to a different unit

In accordance to HCHC’s Internal Transfer Policy, some tenants may be eligible to apply for an internal transfer to another unit or property.

Tenants who are not approved for internal transfer may still reapply to the Centralized Waitlist through HATCH (Halton Access to Community Housing) for a transfer to another unit or property.

If your transfer request is approved, your name will be placed on HCHC’s internal transfer waitlist. Once your name reaches the top of the list, you will receive an offer to transfer. A $250.00 administrative fee may apply.

Eviction

Eviction is always a last resort. Your unit is your home. Our goal is to help keep you in your home. If you have a problem paying your rent on time, please let us know right away and the staff will try to work with you.

The Residential Tenancies Act provides the following grounds for eviction:

You may be evicted if you:

- Do not pay your rent on time
- Frequently pay your rent late
- Have more people living in the unit than health, safety, or housing standards allow
- Give false information about your income or the income of other family members living in a rent-geared-to-income unit

You may be evicted if you or your guests:

- Cause serious damage to your unit, the building, or the residential complex.
- Make noise or act in a way that seriously bothers any other tenant or the landlord
- Threaten the safety of another tenant or person(s) employed by the landlord
- Break the law on HCHC’s property

You may be evicted if you keep a pet that:

- Injures someone
- Causes damage that you refuse to pay to repair
- Makes an unreasonable amount of noise or is an unreasonable nuisance
- Disturbs the reasonable enjoyment of other tenants, (for example, not picking up after your pet)
Your rights and responsibilities

Your lease

Please read your lease carefully because it sets out your rights and responsibilities as a tenant. It protects you as a tenant, and HCHC as the landlord. If you have any questions about your lease, please contact your Tenant Services Advisor.

Your visitors/guests

It is your responsibility to make sure that your visitors and guests comply with the rules and regulations of your housing community.

No-smoking by-law

Halton Region has a no smoking by-law that strictly prohibits smoking in the public areas in your building. Please be considerate of your neighbours and smoke in your unit or outside of the building.

Please note: If smoking outdoors, maintain a distance away from the exit doors of at least three meters or 10 feet.

Safety and security

Emergency contact

For all medical and fire emergencies, call 911.

For building and unit-related emergencies, call 311, 905-825-6000 or 1-866-442-5866.

Smoke alarms

For your safety, your unit is equipped with one or more smoke alarms. Your smoke alarm will be tested and cleaned once a year. If you suspect that your smoke alarm is not working properly, please contact your Tenant Services Coordinator. Never disconnect your smoke alarm. It is a Provincial offence to tamper with a smoke alarm.

Carbon monoxide detectors

We advise you to install a carbon monoxide detector.
Electric and water

Electric appliances and water can be a lethal combination. If an appliance falls into a sink or tub of water, or if you touch an appliance with wet hands or while standing in water, you risk severe electric shock and possibly death.

- Never use any electric appliances — radios (except small battery-powered ones), TVs, hair dryers — near sinks, toilets or bathtubs.
- Always dry your hands before touching electric appliances.
- Keep the floor around your washer and dryer clean and dry.

Building safety and security

Protecting your safety and security is paramount. The security of your building depends largely on the precautions you take to ensure your own safety and the safety of your fellow residents.

Below are some precautions you can take to ensure the safety of your building:

1. Always keep hallways clear of items such as scooters, wheelchairs, walkers, boot trays, and doormats. This will help emergency workers and cleaning staff.
2. Close and lock your apartment and building doors at all times.
3. When using the intercom systems, be sure to ask the caller to identify him or herself so that “uninvited” persons cannot gain access to the building or your unit.
4. Do not let salespersons or canvassers into your building.
5. HCHC does not permit soliciting in its buildings. Sales people may claim to be Halton Region employees or claim to have the permission of the Region to enter your building. Always ask for identification of anyone you do not know or who claims to be an employee of Halton Region.
6. Do not give out copies of your keys. HCHC cannot keep people out of your building if you have given them keys.
7. If someone you do not know is trying to enter the building, do not let them in. Ask them to use the intercom to contact the person they wish to see, and that person can let them in.
8. If you plan to be away from your home for an extended period of time, please notify the office through your Tenant Services Advisor. Be sure to close and lock all of your doors and windows before you leave. Consider using window locking devices for additional security.
9. Do not remove window screens as it makes unwanted entry easier.
Fire safety

If you discover a fire:

- Leave the fire area immediately
- Do not use elevators
- Close the door in the fire area; do not lock it
- Pull the nearest fire alarm station
- Confirm by phoning 911 from a safe location

When the fire alarm sounds

- Stop what you are doing
- Feel door for heat
- Check corridor for smoke by standing behind a door and opening it very slowly
- If the corridor is clear, close the apartment door, exit using the stairway; do not use elevators
- If you encounter smoke in the stairway, use an alternate stairway

For apartment buildings:

If smoke is heavy in corridor, it may be safer to remain in your apartment:

- Keep your apartment door closed
- Place a wet towel at the base of door
- Call 911
- Wait on balcony or in the solarium
- Signal your position by waving
- Remain calm

For townhouse communities:

- Plan your escape route in advance
- Exit the townhouse
- Meet family in a predetermined area
- Remain calm
- Call 911
Your community

Groups and social clubs

HCHC would like to encourage tenant participation in our communities. HCHC has a vibrant Tenant Advisory Group that works closely with staff to improve service to our tenants.

Currently, the Tenant Advisory Group has been formed to facilitate tenant involvement and effective communication to ensure the successful operation of HCHC. Residents volunteer to be elected as members of the Tenant Advisory Group.

Residents are encouraged to join any social groups in their community. Volunteer members help empower residents to strengthen their communities through active participation in matters that affect them.

Tenant groups may plan and host social and recreational programs for residents and give residents an opportunity to channel their concerns to HCHC and other public organizations.

Policies

HCHC has developed policies to provide staff and residents with consistent guidelines across our communities. If you would like to review a policy, please contact your Tenant Services Coordinator.

More Information

Visit www.halton.ca for more details.

Call 311

- 311 is a three-digit, non-emergency telephone number providing direct access to Halton government services.
- 311 provides free, multilingual assistance to anyone calling from within Halton.
- It allows citizens to request a service or receive general information.