

The Halton Landlord Guide

Everything you need to know about leasing a rental property in Halton Region — pricing, screening, the law, and avoiding the costly mistakes.

A plain-English guide for landlords in Milton, Oakville, Burlington & Halton Hills

Leasing Your Property in Halton

A practical guide from a licensed REALTOR®

Becoming a landlord in Halton Region can be a rewarding way to build wealth — but it comes with real responsibilities, real risks, and a legal framework you need to understand. This guide walks you through the essentials: pricing your rental correctly, screening tenants legally and effectively, understanding your obligations under Ontario law, and avoiding the mistakes that cost landlords the most.

This is general information, not legal, tax, or financial advice. For your specific situation, consult the appropriate professional. Rules and figures referenced here can change — always confirm current requirements before acting.

1. Pricing Your Rental Right

Pricing is the single biggest lever you control. Get it right and you lease quickly to a strong tenant; get it wrong and you either leave money on the table or sit vacant while the market passes you by.

The cost of overpricing

Many landlords anchor to what they *want* to earn rather than what the market will pay. An overpriced unit sits empty while well-priced competitors lease. Every month of vacancy is a month of total lost rent — far more costly than pricing \$50–\$100/month under an aspirational number. A property priced correctly from day one often attracts multiple applicants, letting you choose the strongest tenant.

How to price correctly

Base your price on a current comparative market analysis (CMA) — what similar units in your area have actually leased for recently, not what they were listed at. A licensed REALTOR® can pull this data from the MLS. Factor in your property's condition, finishes, parking, and included utilities relative to those comparables.

2. Screening Tenants — Legally and Effectively

The quality of your tenant determines the quality of your experience. Thorough screening is your best protection against missed rent and property damage — but it must be done within the law.

What to check

- **Credit report:** Look for a pattern of meeting obligations, not just a high score. Collections and prior tenant judgments are red flags worth investigating.
- **Income verification:** A common guideline is gross monthly income around three times the rent. Verify with pay stubs and an employment letter.

- **References:** A previous landlord (not just the current one) often gives the most honest picture.
- **Identity:** Confirm identity per FINTRAC requirements.

What you CANNOT do

Ontario's Human Rights Code prohibits discrimination in housing based on race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, family status, disability, and receipt of public assistance. You may not refuse an applicant — or apply different standards — based on any of these. The safest practice is a consistent, written screening standard applied identically to everyone.

3. Your Obligations Under Ontario Law

Residential tenancies in Ontario are governed by the Residential Tenancies Act (RTA). Here are the essentials every landlord must know.

Topic	What the RTA requires
Deposits	Maximum one month's rent (or one rent period), almost always applied as last month's rent. No separate 'damage deposit' allowed. Deposit must earn annual interest.
Rent increases	For most units: capped by the provincial guideline, once per 12 months, with 90 days' written notice on the proper form.
Maintenance	Landlord must keep the unit in a good state of repair and meet health and safety standards, regardless of what the tenant knew at move-in.
Entry	Generally 24 hours' written notice required, entry between 8am and 8pm, except emergencies.
Ending a tenancy	Only for specific RTA-defined reasons, each with its own form and process. Leases convert to month-to-month automatically; you cannot simply decline to renew.

Disputes are resolved through the Landlord and Tenant Board (LTB), not the courts. The process is formal and can be slow — your best protection is doing the front-end work right: screen well, use a proper lease, and document everything.

4. The Five Costliest Landlord Mistakes

- **Weak screening.** Skipping the credit check or references to fill a vacancy faster almost always costs more than the vacancy would have.
- **Overpricing.** Chasing an aspirational rent leads to long vacancies that wipe out the hoped-for premium many times over.
- **Poor documentation.** No move-in inspection, no written communication — then no evidence when a dispute arises.
- **DIY leases.** Using a generic or outdated lease instead of the current OREA standard lease can leave key protections unenforceable.
- **Ignoring the RTA.** Asking for an illegal deposit or trying to 'not renew' a tenant invites an LTB complaint.

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