

Multi-Tenant (Rooming) Houses: Owner Guide

A Guide for Owners of Multi-Tenant Houses and
Personal Care Multi-Tenant Houses



About This Guide

The Municipal Licensing and Standards division at the City of Toronto has prepared this guide for the owners of multi-tenant (rooming) houses. The guide aims to assist in reading Municipal Code Chapter 285, [Rooming Houses](#), and provides information to help you prepare your applications for multi-tenant house licences.

Throughout this guide, rooming houses will be referred to as multi-tenant houses and personal care rooming houses will be referred to as personal care multi-tenant houses. All references to multi-tenant houses include personal care multi-tenant houses and all mentions of the Licensing Commissioner also include the Deputy Licensing Commissioner.

You should not rely only on this guide to ensure that you are in compliance with Chapter 285 (also called “the bylaw” throughout this guide). This guide does not include each and every factor that may apply in different situations. You should review the bylaw yourself and consider seeking legal or other professional advice to make sure that you comply with the bylaw and any other applicable law.

Bylaws and Legislation

This guide is based on the following bylaws and legislation:

- Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 285, [Rooming Houses](#)
- Former Municipality of Toronto Zoning Bylaw 438-86
- Toronto Municipal Code Chapter 629, [Property Standards](#)
- [Building Code Act](#), 1992, S.O. 1992, c. 23 (and the Building Code, O Reg 332/12)
- [Fire Protection and Prevention Act](#), 1997, S.O. 1997, c. 4 (and the Fire Code, O Reg 213/07)

Contact Information

If you need more information or require this guide in an alternate format, please contact Municipal Licensing and Standards. For assistance, you may also call 311.

Municipal Licensing and Standards

Multi-Tenant Housing
Municipal Licensing and Standards
Etobicoke Civic Centre
399 The West Mall, The North Block, 3rd Floor
Toronto, ON M9C 2Y2
Phone: 416-394-8178
Email: MultiTenantHousing@toronto.ca

311 Toronto

311 is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Phone within Toronto: 311

Phone outside Toronto: 416-392-CITY (2489)

TTY customers: 416-338-0TTY (0889)

Email: 311@toronto.ca

Web: toronto.ca/311

Fire Prevention

North Command

Wards 6, 8, 15, 16, 17, 18

5100 Yonge Street

Toronto, ON M2N 5V7

Phone: 416-338-9150

East Command

Wards 14, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25

150 Borough Drive, 4th Fl.

Toronto, ON M1P 4N7

Phone: 416-338-9250

South Command

Wards 9, 10, 11, 12, 13

77 Elizabeth Street, 2nd Fl.

Toronto, ON M5G 1P4

Phone: 416-338-9350

West Command

Wards 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7

399 The West Mall

Toronto, ON M9C 2Y2

Phone: 416-338-9450



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Multi-Tenant House: Introduction

What is a Multi-Tenant House?

A multi-tenant house is where an individual rents a room and shares a kitchen and/or washroom with three or more other people who also rent rooms and pay rent individually. These houses can also include self-contained units/bachelor apartments.

Multi-tenant houses are an important part of the affordable rental housing market and provide single-room accommodation to diverse tenants including students, seniors, new immigrants and low/moderate-income residents. Certain designated studio apartments in Parkdale are also designated as multi-tenant houses.

Information on personal care multi-tenant house is available in the section: Personal Care Multi-Tenant Houses.

Where can Multi-Tenant Houses be Located?

While any owner of a multi-tenant house property should obtain independent advice on whether zoning and any other applicable by-laws permit a multi-tenant use on their property, the following is a summary of requirements in various parts of the city. Multi-tenant houses are only permitted in certain parts of Toronto where the zoning permits.

Multi-Tenant Houses

- **Former City of Toronto:** multi-tenant houses are permitted and need to be licenced by Municipal Licensing & Standards Division, according to Chapter 285, [Rooming Houses](#).
- **Former City of York:** multi-tenant houses are permitted but do not need to be licenced.
- **Former Cities of East York, North York, Scarborough:** multi-tenant houses are not permitted.

Where required, you must have a licence to operate multi-tenant houses. Once a licence has been issued to you, you cannot use your multi-tenant houses for other purposes and you must comply with the terms of your licence and City bylaws and all other applicable law.

Lodging Houses

- **Former City of Etobicoke:** lodging houses are permitted and need to be licenced by Toronto Public Health, according to Chapter 166, [Lodging Houses](#). Note that the definition of a lodging house in Etobicoke under Chapter 166 is different from the definition of a rooming house under Chapter 285. For more information, Chapter 166, Lodging Houses.

This guide does not cover requirements under Chapter 166, and focuses only on requirements under Chapter 285 that are administered by Municipal Licensing & Standards Division.

Multi-Tenant House: Licensing

How to Apply for a Licence

Step 1: Confirm that your area is zoned for multi-tenant houses

In the former City of Toronto and Etobicoke, contact [Toronto Building](#) to confirm that your area is zoned for multi-tenant houses. Call 416-397-5330 Monday to Friday from 8:30a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Step 2: Identify the licence fee for your house

The licence fee ranges from \$100 – 300. The fee is \$100 if:

- you as owner of the property occupy living space of 30 square metres or less as your personal residence
- the house is operated by a non-profit corporation; or
- the house has up to three storeys (not including the basement) and contains up to 14 bedrooms, with fewer than five bedrooms on the third storey.

If none of the above conditions apply, then the fee is \$200 if:

- the house has up to three storeys (not including the basement) and contains up to 14 bedrooms, with five or more bedrooms on the third storey
- the house has up to three storeys (not including the basement) and more than 14 bedrooms.

The fee is \$300 if the rooming house has more than three storeys (not including the basement).

Step 3: Submit an application

Only completed applications will be accepted and you must include:

- the completed application form
- the licence fee, paid with a certified cheque or money order and made payable to Treasurer, City of Toronto, or by credit card and
- a floor plan for the multi-tenant house, where requested.

You must submit the application form along with the licence fee to:

Multi-Tenant Housing
Municipal Licensing and Standards
Etobicoke Civic Centre
399 The West Mall, The North Block, 3rd Floor
Toronto, ON M9C 2Y2
Phone: 416-394-8178
Email: MultiTenantHousing@toronto.ca

Step 4: City inspections after application submission

After you apply for a licence, the City will conduct inspections and indicate that the rooming house complies with:

- [Fire Protection and Prevention Act and Fire Code](#)
- [Chapter 629, Property Standards](#)
- Any applicable zoning bylaw
- [Health Protection and Promotion Act](#)

New applications for multi-tenant house licences are circulated to the local Councillor, who is also informed when a licence is issued in their ward. Multi-tenant house licences are not transferable. A new multi-tenant house licence application must be submitted before you sell or transfer your property or business.

How to Renew a Licence

A renewal notice will be sent to you about three months in advance of the renewal date. The licence renewal application follows the same process as an initial application.

Who Licenses Multi-Tenant Houses?

The Licensing Commissioner may issue, suspend, renew, or revoke a multi-tenant house licence, and may also place conditions on the licence.

A hearing is held if the Licensing Commissioner is considering refusing, revoking, suspending or attaching additional conditions to the licence. This will give you and the City the opportunity to present evidence to the Licensing Commissioner, who then makes a decision about the licence. A licence can be refused, revoked or suspended if an owner:

- fails to comply with the bylaws or applicable law;
- denies the City's entry and inspections, or
- fails to manage the property with proper management, honesty, and integrity or in accordance with the conditions attached to their licence.



Multi-Tenant House: Requirements and Standards

What are the Operating Requirements?

A multi-tenant house must be operated according to the bylaw. You must:

- Designate an agent who will be contacted in emergencies or with any inquiries about the operation of the multi-tenant house.
- Post the following information for tenants at the entrance of the multi-tenant house:
 - o the multi-tenant house licence
 - o the name and contact details of the owner and agent
 - o the fire safety plan, and
 - o details of any conditions on which the licence was granted.
- Allow inspections.
- Allow the City to provide notices to tenants
- Maintain the multi-tenant house according to the floor plans submitted as part of the licence application.
- Notify the Licensing Commissioner of any change in ownership or any change in the contact information of the owner and agent.

What are the Property Standards?

Multi-tenant houses must meet the property standards found in the by-law and in Municipal Code Chapter 629, Property Standards. Some property standards include the following:

Rooms

- You can only have tenants living in rooms designated as living spaces. All living space must be permitted by zoning and other laws.
- Do not rent out areas of the house not designed for living, such as cellar space, unless permitted by law.
- The maximum number of people living in each room cannot be more than one person for every nine square meters of floor area for that room.
- The minimum height of your rooms must be 1.95 metres over at least half the floor area. If any area has a ceiling height of less than 1.4 metres, that area does not count towards the floor area.
- Any room used by one person to sleep must be at least six square metres. Make sure the room is at least two meters wide on one side.
- If two or more people are sleeping in a room, that room must have a minimum of four-square metres of floor area per person occupying the room.

Stairs, doors and handrails

- Keep stairs, porches, decks and other common areas safe, clean and well-maintained.
- Maintain and repair handrails and steps properly.
- Do not block doors and passageways and make sure these remain safe for tenants.

Air conditioning

- Ensure that all air-conditioning systems are maintained.
- Water from air conditioners cannot flow onto sidewalks, entrances areas or other areas where people walk or drive.

Ventilation

- Ensure that there is adequate ventilation in all areas of a building.
- Regularly clean and maintain the ventilation system.

What are the Occupancy Standards?

Multi-tenant houses must meet fire code occupancy standards. Your house needs to have:

- appropriate floor assemblies (how a floor is built)
- basement fire separations, where required
- interior walls with fire-resistance ratings, as appropriate
- fire separations between furnace rooms and other rooms
- appropriate levels of combustion air in furnace rooms, where required
- minimum number of exits for floors e.g. two exits for each floor, and one exit for basements where sleeping accommodation is not provided
- minimum standards for how exits and corridors are connected
- minimum standards for fire escapes
- fire separations for doors that are exits and interior stairways
- minimum standards for door frames, in accordance with the Building Code
- exit signs with specific lettering and colours
- minimum standards for flame-spread rating of the interior finishes
- lighting requirements for corridors and emergency lighting for houses that accommodate more than 10 people
- specific standards for installation of fire alarms and smoke alarms, depending on the type of house
- portable extinguisher on each floor and at least one portable extinguisher in each kitchen where shared cooking facilities exist.

In some cases, the Fire Code states that alternate measures may be approved. These alternate measures must prove to the Chief Fire Official that lives will be protected in the same way as the Fire Code occupancy standards. Consult the Fire Code to understand which of the above requirements apply to the multi-tenant house.

Penalties and Offences

If you do not comply with Chapter 285, you are guilty of an offence and, on conviction, may be fined a maximum of \$5,000. Violations of other bylaws or legislation may also result in different offences and penalties.

Personal Care Multi-Tenant House

What is a Personal Care Multi-Tenant House?

A personal care multi-tenant house is where meals and services are provided to residents to care for their personal needs and health.

What are the Operating Requirements and Occupancy Standards?

Personal care multi-tenant houses must meet the following operating requirements and occupancy standards.

Sanitary Conditions

- Clean and sanitize bathroom at least once each day and more frequently, if necessary
- Line bathtubs with slip-resistant material to prevent slips
- Make sure bathrooms have toilet paper, soap, waste bins, towels and hot air dryers

Bedrooms and beds

- Provide a minimum of 0.42 cubic metre of storage space for each resident in every bedroom
- Make sure the storage has locks and is only used by the resident and you
- Beds for the residents must at least 91.34 centimetres wide and 0.91 metres apart

Towels, washcloths, linens and laundry

- Provide each resident clean towels, wash cloths and bed linen. These must be changed at least once a week and when there is a new resident
- Have at least one automatic washer and dryer for every 25 residents and maintain these regularly

Staff

- Adequately staff your house to meet operating requirements and occupancy standards at all times
- Have people in-charge 24 hours a day. This staff will:
 - o handle emergencies
 - o ensure the safety and security of residents, and
 - o respond to inquiries from the community

Nutrition

- Serve residents three meals and at least one snack every day
- Make sure the meals are well-balanced according to Canada's Food Guide and served between the following times:
 - o Breakfast: 7 a.m. to 9 a.m.
 - o Lunch: 12 p.m. to 2 p.m.
 - o Supper: 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.
 - o Snack: 8 p.m. to 10 p.m.
- Provide special diets and nutritional supplements to residents, if directed by doctors
- Save meals for residents, if advance notice is given.
- Post menus in a visible location
- Keep menus for meals served within the last three months on file so that these are available for inspection

Medical

- Make sure a house doctor is on call for emergencies when residents' doctors are not available. Residents can choose whether to accept medical attention from the house doctor.
- Provide residents emergency nursing care or home care, if determined by doctors.
- Keep all prescription drugs in locked drug cabinets or with residents
- Update daily a list of the contents of all drug cabinets. These must be available for inspection by the Medical Officer of Health.
- Make sure prescription drugs are available only to the person they are prescribed to
- Injections must be given by registered nurse or doctor. Residents can give themselves injections based on doctor's order.
- Maintain a locked file containing the personal records of each resident. The records must contain:
 - o the resident's name, OHIP number and drug plan number
 - o the date when the resident moved into the personal care multi-tenant house
 - o the name and contact information of any personal doctor.



Multi-Tenant House: Owner Checklist

Checklist for Licensing a Multi-Tenant House

Did I follow the licensing process and submit a complete application for my multi-tenant house?

Did I pay all the fees and receive the licence?

Checklist for Operating a Multi-Tenant House

Does my property meet the operating requirements and occupancy standards?

Have I installed the fire safety equipment?

Do I have appropriate lighting?

Do my residents have enough space?

Do I keep appropriate records of all safety, health and hygiene maintenance?

Checklist for Operating a Personal Care Multi-Tenant House

Does my property meet the operating requirements and occupancy standards?

Have I installed the fire safety equipment?

Are the bedrooms and beds arranged according to the required space requirement for each resident?

Are the washer(s) and dryer(s) available and in working condition?

Are the bathrooms set up according to recommended standards?

Do residents have access to a doctor when needed?

Is there staff available to attend to the needs of the residents?

Is there a register for all meals? Is a staff member assigned to update the register?

Is there a prescription drug cabinet to store the prescription drugs?