



York Region Housing Guide for Newcomers

Guide for newcomers, providing information on housing options, tenant rights, and how to protect yourself from scams.

HomeSafe York



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Midaynta
Community Services

**“Empowered
COMMUNITIES
Driven by
UNITY &
OPPORTUNITY”**

Program Overview

The HomeSafe York Program supports York Region residents who are experiencing housing instability, eviction risk, or challenges finding safe and affordable housing. The program provides culturally responsive, client-centered services with a strong focus on prevention, housing navigation, and community support.

Who We Are

Midaynta Community Services is a registered Canadian charitable organization that provides settlement services and other programs that advances education by providing courses, seminars, meetings, counseling and other support services for refugees, immigrants and youths in need. We are a social and settlement services agency, working to improve the quality of life of newcomers.

HomeSafe York is funded by York Region’s Community Investment Fund and is open to all York Region residents, regardless of background, income level, or immigration status.



What the Program Offers

Housing Search Support

Help finding safe, affordable housing; understanding rental listings; and completing applications for subsidized and community housing.

1-on-1 Case Management

Personalized housing plans, advocacy, goal setting, and referrals to community, financial, and employment services.

Eviction Prevention & Stability

Support with landlord issues, tenancy rights, eviction prevention, and referrals to legal clinics and emergency financial supports.

Housing Clinics Across York Region

Drop-in clinics offering on-site help with applications, tenancy questions, and workshops on tenant rights and housing options.

ELIGIBILITY:

- ✓ **Must be a resident of York Region**
- ✓ **Priority groups:**
 - Indigenous, Black and other racialized populations
 - Newcomers
 - Residents living with disabilities
 - Women
 - LGBTQ2S+ Community

Community Education & Outreach

Information sessions, workshops, housing resources, and partnerships with local agencies to strengthen housing pathways.

How to Access Services:

 905-832-1110

 326-9401 Jane St,
Maple ON L6A 4H7

 www.midaynta.com



INTRODUCTION

Welcome to York Region! Finding safe, affordable housing is one of the most important steps in settling into your new community. This guide is designed specifically for newcomers like you, providing clear information about housing options, tenant rights, and how to protect yourself from scams. Whether you're arriving alone, with family, or with roommates, understanding the local rental market will help you make confident decisions. York Region offers diverse neighborhoods from Vaughan to Newmarket, each with unique housing opportunities. This guide breaks down everything you need to know in simple, practical terms so you can find a place to call home safely and with confidence.



Understanding Your Housing Options

York Region offers several types of rental housing to fit different needs and budgets. Each option has unique benefits, and understanding these differences will help you choose what works best for your situation.



**Always ask:
Are utilities included?**

Basement Apartment

Often the most affordable option for families, basement apartments typically offer separate entrances and private living spaces. These units are usually part of a house and may include kitchen facilities and bathroom. They're ideal if you're looking for family-friendly, budget-conscious housing with some independence.

Room Rental

Perfect for singles, students, or those just starting out, room rentals mean you have your own bedroom but share common spaces like the kitchen and bathroom with others. This is typically the lowest-cost option and offers opportunities to build community with housemates.

Apartment / Condo

These private units in multi-story buildings offer complete independence. Many include amenities like laundry facilities, parking, and sometimes utilities. While typically more expensive, apartments provide privacy and often come with building management for maintenance issues.

Shared Home

In this arrangement, you rent part of a house and share common areas with the homeowner or other tenants. It's more affordable than renting alone and provides a community-style living environment. This option works well if you value social connection and lower costs.

Types of Rental Housing in York Region

Finding the right place to live can be challenging, especially for newcomers. This section introduces the main types of rental housing available in York Region and explains how each option works.

1

RENT-GEARED-TO-INCOME (RGI) HOUSING

Subsidized housing where tenants pay about 30% of their household income toward rent.

- Managed by community housing providers, non-profits, and co-ops
- Waitlists are managed through Access York
- Income and household size determine eligibility
- Intended for individuals and families with low incomes

2

SUBSIDIZED HOUSING

Some residents may receive a rent benefit or housing allowance to help pay part of their rent in the private market.

- You choose your own rental unit and receive a monthly benefit to reduce what you pay
- Benefit amounts vary based on need and income
- Supports renters who cannot access RGI units immediately

3

MARKET RENT HOUSING

Market rent units are rented at the full price set by the landlord—no subsidy is applied.

- Found on rental websites, landlord listings, real estate platforms
- Prices vary depending on location, size, and condition
- Tenants are responsible for the full monthly rent

4

AFFORDABLE HOUSING (BELOW-MARKET RENT)

Affordable housing units have rent that is lower than typical market rent, but not as low as RGI.

- Usually set at 80% of the average market rent
- Offered by non-profits, co-ops, and some private developers
- No ongoing income-based calculation—rent stays fixed

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CO-OPERATIVE (CO-OP) HOUSING

Co-ops are communities where residents are members, not tenants.

- Rent is often lower than private market
- Some co-ops offer RGI units
- Members participate in decisions and the running of the co-op
- Long-term, stable housing with community involvement

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SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

Housing for individuals who need ongoing supports.

- Includes mental health supports, seniors' housing, or special needs housing
- Support services are provided on site or through community agencies
- Eligibility varies by program

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TRANSITIONAL HOUSING

- Temporary housing with support services for individuals and families moving from crisis or homelessness toward stable, long-term housing. Stays usually last a few months up to two years and include case management and referrals to help residents rebuild stability and independence.

How Renting Works in Ontario

Ontario has specific laws that protect both tenants and landlords. Understanding these rules will help you navigate the rental process confidently and know your rights from day one.

Lease Agreements

In Ontario, you must sign a standard lease form. This official document outlines the terms of your rental, including rent amount, payment dates, included utilities, and house rules. Never sign an informal agreement or pay rent without a proper lease. Keep your signed copy in a safe place—you'll need it for reference.

Rent Increases

Your landlord can only increase your rent once per year, and they must give you 90 days' written notice before the increase takes effect. There are legal limits on how much rent can increase each year. Don't accept verbal rent increases—always get it in writing.

Deposits and Payments

Landlords can legally ask for two things: first month's rent and last month's rent. That's it. Security deposits are illegal in Ontario. If a landlord asks for additional deposits, damage deposits, or key deposits, this is a red flag. Only provide these two months of rent, and always get a receipt.

Repairs and Maintenance

Your landlord is legally responsible for keeping your home in good repair. This includes fixing broken appliances, plumbing issues, heating problems, and structural damage. You must report problems promptly in writing (text or email works). Keep copies of all communication about repairs.

Documents and Your Privacy Rights

When applying for rental housing, landlords need some information to verify that you can pay rent reliably. However, Ontario law protects your privacy and limits what information landlords can request.

Knowing the difference between legal and illegal requests helps protect you from discrimination and identity theft.

Landlords CAN ask for:

- ✓ Employment letter confirming your job and income
- ✓ Recent pay stubs (usually 2-3 months)
- ✓ Bank statements showing you have funds
- ✓ Reference letters from previous landlords or employers
- ✓ Credit check permission (with your consent)

These documents help landlords verify that you can afford the rent. Always provide copies, never originals. It's reasonable for landlords to want proof of income and rental history.

Landlords CANNOT ask for:

- ✗ Social Insurance Number (SIN) - this is private
- ✗ Immigration status or documents - discriminatory
- ✗ Credit card numbers - risk of fraud
- ✗ Passport copies - they can view it but not photocopy
- ✗ Information about children, religion, or ethnicity

If a landlord requests these items, it's a warning sign. They may be attempting discrimination or identity theft. You have the right to refuse these requests without losing your housing opportunity.

SAFETY CHECKLIST



Before committing to any rental, you need to inspect the property carefully and watch for warning signs of rental scams. Unfortunately, housing scams target newcomers who may be unfamiliar with local practices. Protecting yourself starts with knowing what to check and what red flags to avoid.

Before You Rent: Property Safety Inspection

Security and Locks

Check that all doors have working locks, including bedroom doors if you're renting a room. Windows should close and lock properly. Ask who has keys to the unit—only you and the landlord should have access.

Health and Safety

Look carefully for any signs of mold (black or green spots), water damage or leaks, and pest problems like cockroaches or mice. These issues can affect your health and are the landlord's responsibility to fix before you move in.

Essential Systems

Test everything: smoke detectors should be installed and working, heating and air conditioning should function properly, and hot water should run from all taps. Ask how the heating system works and who pays for utilities.

Amenities and Services

Clarify what's included: Is laundry on-site or in the unit? Is Wi-Fi included or do you need to arrange it? Is parking available and at what cost? Where is garbage disposal located?

Golden Rule: NEVER send money before seeing the unit in person.



AVOID SCAMS

Warning Signs: Avoid These Rental Scams



Deposit Before Viewing

Never send money, deposits, or e-transfers before seeing the property in person. Scammers post fake listings and disappear with your money. Always insist on viewing the unit first.



Too Good to Be True

If the rent is significantly lower than similar properties in the area, it's likely a scam. Scammers use unrealistically low prices to attract desperate renters. Research average rent prices in the neighborhood.



No In-Person Viewing

If the rent is significantly lower than similar properties in the area, it's likely a scam. Scammers use unrealistically low prices to attract desperate renters. Research average rent prices in the neighborhood.



Urgent Pressure

Scammers create false urgency: "Send money now or you'll lose it" or "many others are interested." Legitimate landlords give you time to decide. Never rush financial decisions.

Communication Best Practices

When contacting landlords, be professional and respectful. A simple message like: "Hello, I am interested in the rental unit at [address]. When would be a convenient time for me to view the property?" works well. Always ask questions about anything unclear, save all messages and emails, and follow up politely if you don't hear back within a few days.

Trust Your Instincts

If something feels wrong or too rushed, trust that feeling. Take time to research the property address online, ask friends or settlement workers for advice, and don't let anyone pressure you into quick decisions. Legitimate housing opportunities will still be available after you've done your due diligence.

Your Rights and Responsibilities Next Steps

As a tenant in Ontario, you have important legal rights that protect you from unfair treatment. You also have responsibilities to maintain a positive relationship with your landlord and neighbors. Knowing both will help you succeed in your housing journey.

Your Rights as a Tenant

- **Safe, clean home:** Your landlord must maintain the property in good repair and meet health and safety standards
- **Privacy protection:** Landlords must give 24 hours' written notice before entering your unit (except emergencies)
- **No discrimination:** You cannot be denied housing based on race, religion, family status, or country of origin
- **Legal eviction process:** Landlords cannot evict you without following proper legal procedures and providing adequate notice
- **Rent control:** Protection from excessive rent increases beyond legal limits

Your Responsibilities as a Tenant

- **Pay rent on time:** Always pay by the date specified in your lease, typically the first of each month
- **Keep home clean:** Maintain cleanliness and don't cause damage beyond normal wear and tear
- **Respect neighbors:** Keep noise levels reasonable, especially during evening hours
- **Report repairs quickly:** Notify your landlord promptly about maintenance issues to prevent larger problems
- **Follow building rules:** Respect house rules about guests, parking, garbage disposal, and shared spaces

York Region Resources to Help You!

Housing & Basic Needs

York Region Housing Access: Provides access to subsidized housing, emergency shelters, supportive housing, and homelessness services.

Phone: 1-877-464-9675 ext. 76140

Website: york.ca/housing

York Region Food Network (YRFN): Offers food programs, community gardens, and nutrition education.

Phone: 905-841-3101

Website: yrfn.ca

211 Ontario: Free, confidential 24/7 helpline connecting people to housing services, food programs, financial assistance, mental health supports, and community programs.

Phone: 2-1-1

Website: 211ontario.ca

Ontario Works (York Region): Financial help, health benefits, and employment supports for individuals and families in financial need.

Phone: 1-877-464-9675

Website: york.ca/OW

Financial Assistance & Emergency Supports (York Region): Information on rent assistance, housing stability programs, and emergency supports.

Website: york.ca/supports

Settlement & Newcomer Services

Welcome Centres (Newcomer Centres): One-stop hubs offering settlement counselling, employment services, referrals, and language assessments.

Phone: 1-877-761-1155

Website: welcomecentre.ca

Locations: Markham North, Markham South, Newmarket, Richmond Hill, Vaughan

COSTI Immigrant Services: Settlement counselling, language classes, employment programs, and housing supports.

Phone: 905-669-5627

Website: costi.org

Catholic Community Services of York Region (CCSYR): Settlement services, counselling, youth programs, and newcomer workshops.

Phone: 905-770-7040

Website: ccsyr.org

Health & Wellness

Health Connect Ontario (Ontario Health): Provides 24/7 health advice from registered nurses and helps locate nearby health services.

Phone: 811

Website: healthconnectontario.health.gov.on.ca

York Region Public Health: Immunizations, parenting programs, breastfeeding support, sexual health clinics, and general health information.

Phone: 1-877-464-9675

Website: york.ca/health

York Region Centre for Community Safety (YRCCS): Provides coordinated, wrap-around support for individuals and families experiencing intimate partner violence, sexual violence, human trafficking, and high-risk situations. Services include safety planning, crisis intervention, counselling referrals, legal support navigation, and connections to community resources.

Phone: 905-836-1088 | **Toll-Free:** 1-855-542-2822 | **Website:** yrccs.ca

Women’s Support Network of York Region (WSN): Crisis support and services for survivors of sexual or gender-based violence.

24/7 Crisis Line: 1-800-263-6734

Website: wsnccf.org

Education, Children & Families

York Region Children’s Services: Child care subsidies, early learning programs, and supports for families.

Phone: 1-877-464-9675

Website: york.ca/children

EarlyON Child & Family Centres: Free early learning and parent support programs for families with children aged 0–6.

Website: york.ca/EarlyON

School Boards

York Region District School Board (YRDSB)

Phone: 905-727-0022

Website: yrdsb.ca

York Catholic District School Board (YCDSB)

Phone: 905-713-1211

Website: ycdsb.ca

Transportation & Mobility

York Region Transit (YRT/Viva): Public transit services including local routes, Viva rapid services, and mobility transit.

Phone: 1-866-668-3978

Website: yrt.ca

Service Ontario: Provides driver’s licences, health cards, Ontario Photo Cards, vehicle registration, and vital documents.

Phone: 1-800-267-8097

Website: ontario.ca/serviceontario

Emergency

911 – Police, Fire, Ambulance: Call 911 for any life-threatening emergency, including medical crises, fires, or situations requiring immediate police assistance.

York Region Crisis Line – 310-COPE: Call 310-COPE (2673) for 24/7 crisis support for mental health, emotional distress, family conflict, or urgent counselling needs. (No area code required.)

York Region Emergency Shelters: Shelters provide temporary housing, safety, and basic needs for individuals and families experiencing homelessness or crisis.
Access Shelters: Call 1-877-464-9675 or visit york.ca/emergencysshelters.

Mental Health Crisis Line (Ontario): For urgent mental health support and referral to local crisis services.

Phone: 1-866-531-2600

Domestic Violence Crisis Lines

Assaulted Women’s Helpline: 1-866-863-0511

Text: #SAFE (#7233)

Human Trafficking Hotline: Individuals who are being exploited or suspect human trafficking can call the Canadian Human Trafficking Hotline at **1-833-900-1010**, available 24/7 for confidential help, safety planning, and referrals to shelters and supports across Ontario.

York Region Street Outreach Services: Street Outreach teams support individuals who are homeless or sleeping outdoors by providing basic needs, safety checks, and connections to shelters, housing supports, and health services. Workers meet people where they are and help them move toward safer, more stable housing.

Contact: 1-877-464-9675 (ask for Street Outreach)

Kids Help Phone: 24/7 support for children and youth through phone, text, or online chat.

Phone: 1-800-668-6868

Text: 686868

Website: kidshelpphone.ca

Municipal By-Law Enforcement (Property Standards): Each city/town in York Region has a by-law enforcement unit that responds to unsafe or unhealthy rental conditions, such as:

- No heat or electricity
- Unsafe living conditions
- Pest infestations
- Structural issues
- Overcrowding or illegal rooming situations

Tenants can contact their municipality to file a complaint if their landlord is not addressing serious maintenance or safety issues.

Municipal Contacts:

- Markham: 905-477-5530
- Vaughan: 905-832-2281
- Richmond Hill: 905-771-0198
- Newmarket: 905-953-5300
- Aurora: 905-727-3123

Rent Enforcement – Landlord and Tenant Board (LTB): The Landlord and Tenant Board handles disputes between landlords and tenants, including:

- Illegal rent increases
- Eviction notices
- Maintenance issues
- Harassment or illegal entry
- Lease disputes

Phone: 1-888-332-3234

Website: tribunalsontario.ca/ltb

Investigation & Enforcement Unit (Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing):

This provincial enforcement unit investigates serious violations of housing laws, such as:

- Illegal rent increases
- Fraudulent activity by landlords
- Misuse of Rent-Geared-to-Income units
- Housing benefit fraud

Phone: 1-888-772-9277

Website: ontario.ca/housing

Legal & Advocacy

Legal Aid Ontario: Free or low-cost legal help for eligible individuals dealing with housing, immigration, family, or employment issues.

Phone: 1-800-668-8258

Website: legalaid.on.ca

Community Legal Clinic of York Region (CLCYR): Legal support for low-income residents on housing, benefits, and employment issues.

Phone: 905-508-5018

Website: clcyr.on.ca

Employment & Training

Employment Ontario Centres: Job search support, résumé assistance, training programs, and skills development.

Phone: 1-800-387-5656

Website: ontario.ca/employmentontario

Job Skills: Employment workshops, career planning, and skills training.

Phone: 1-866-592-6278

Website: jobskills.org

Regional & Municipal Information

York Region: Information on community services, housing, waste collection, public health, transit, and regional programs.

Website: york.ca

Municipal Websites

- **Markham:** markham.ca
- **Vaughan:** vaughan.ca
- **Richmond Hill:** richmondhill.ca
- **Newmarket:** newmarket.ca
- **Aurora:** aurora.ca
- **East Gwillimbury:** eastgwillimbury.ca
- **Georgina:** georgina.ca
- **Whitchurch-Stouffville:** townofws.ca
- **King Township:** king.ca

Midaynta Community Services



326-9401 Jane St.
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WWW.MIDAYNTA.COM



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