

OFF-CAMPUS HOUSING GUIDE

WINTER 2024

YOUR CANADIAN HOUSING SEARCH

Thank you for choosing Conestoga. We are excited for you to begin your journey with us. Conestoga's International Transition Coordinators are available to help you with your transition to Canada, including providing information and resources to help with your housing search.

This handbook provides essential information to help you with your off-campus housing search in Ontario, Canada.

If you have specific questions related to housing that are not included in this guide, please email internationaltransition@conestogac.on.ca.

You can also book an appointment with an International Transition Coordinator through the [Student Success Portal!](#)

TYPES OF HOUSING

- *On-Campus Residence*
- *Homestay*
- *Off-Campus Housing*

Find more information about on-campus residence and homestay options on our [website!](#)



HOW MUCH DOES HOUSING COST?

Many factors such as location, size and quality of unit, and included amenities determine rental rates. Examples listed below reflect the average rates for rentals across our campus communities.

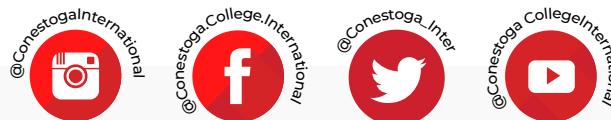
| Rental Type | Average Monthly Rate |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Single room in an apartment or house | \$800 |
| One-bedroom apartment | \$1800 |
| Two-bedroom apartment | \$2200 |
| Three-bedroom house or apartment | \$3000 |

Extra Costs

To avoid unexpected fees, ask the landlord if there are any costs in addition to the rental price. Possible additional costs may include:

- Hydro and utilities (water, electricity, gas)
\$150 +
- Internet \$50 - \$100 +
- Coin laundry \$3 - \$5 per use
- Parking \$50 - \$200 + per month
- Furniture - confirm if the unit will be fully furnished or if you will need to purchase furniture

Please note: you will need to factor in other budgetary costs such as transit, mobile phone fees, food, and the purchase of items such as sheets, pillows, dishware, cutlery, personal essentials, etc.



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SIX STEPS TO SECURING OFF-CAMPUS HOUSING

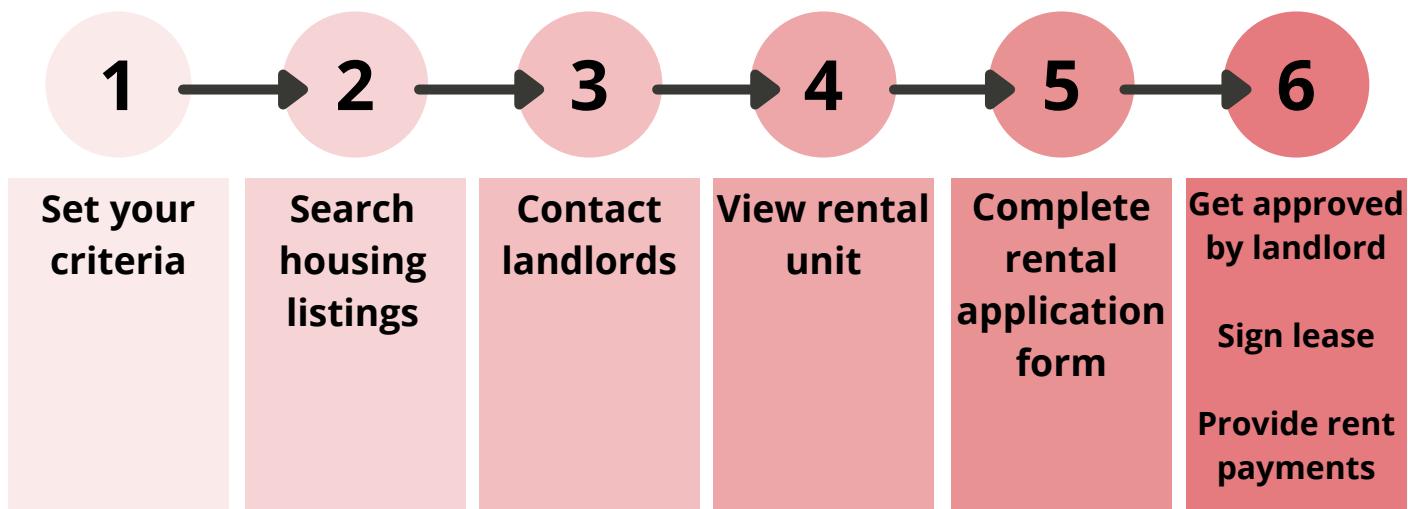
The rental market in Canada is competitive. We recommend you start searching for housing a minimum of eight weeks prior to the date you will need to move into your accommodations.



Visit our housing website!



Follow these six steps to success in securing your off-campus housing:



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STEP 1: Set your criteria

Focus your housing search on accommodations that meet your needs. Create a list of criteria by asking yourself the following questions:

Where is it located? Can you easily travel to your Conestoga campus with public transit?

Use Google Maps, local transit websites, or local transit apps to see how long it will take you to commute between your place of residence and your Conestoga campus. To reduce exposure to freezing temperatures during cold weather, we recommend that your commute to campus involves no more than a 15-minute walk.

| Campus | Transit Service |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Brantford | Brantford Transit |
| Guelph | Guelph Transit |
| Cambridge | Grand River Transit |
| Doon | Grand River Transit |
| Kitchener (Downtown) | Grand River Transit |
| Waterloo | Grand River Transit |
| Milton | Milton Transit |



Are you looking to rent space on your own or with other students?

If you know other Conestoga students studying at the same campus, we encourage you to look for housing together. It may be easier to find a larger unit compared to a single room rental, and the cost may be more affordable.

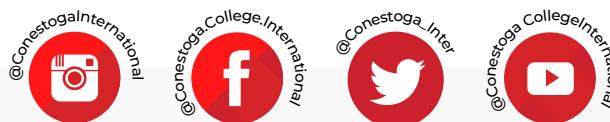
What is the maximum rent you can afford to pay?

Expect to spend an average of \$800 per month for a single room with shared living spaces.

Utilities such as monthly heat, hydroelectric, gas, and water may be extra. Consider the cost of amenities such as food, phone, internet, transportation, and the cost of rental insurance.

Is it close to important amenities?

Check if your housing is near a grocery store, a bank, your preferred bus route, or any other resources you consider necessary for day-to-day living.



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STEP 2: Search housing listings

The most common way to secure off-campus housing is to search housing websites and to network through local family, friends, and current Conestoga College students.

Off-campus housing websites

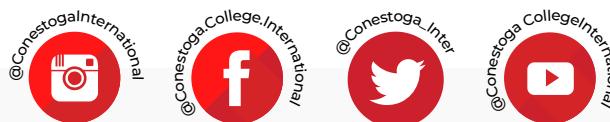
- www.places4students.com
- www.kijiji.com
- www.facebook.com/marketplace
- www.padmapper.com
- www.walkscore.com
- www.gottarent.com

Please note: The websites listed above are not affiliated with or monitored by Conestoga College.
Please use with caution.

Be aware of scams!

Potential signs of a scam:

- The rent of the unit is much lower than similar listings.
- The landlord or property manager is very eager to offer the unit with almost no screening or application process.
- The landlord or property manager gives an excuse as to why they cannot show you the unit in person (out of the country, renovation, family emergency, etc.).
- Photos in the listing do not match what the building looks like on Google Street View
- The landlord or property manager will only communicate via text or Whatsapp, as opposed to using email or phone calls
- The account used to create the listing is new, or the account history shows multiple similar listings in different cities. For example, the same photo of a house being used in different cities with different addresses.



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Networking through friends and family in Canada

Networking through friends and family in Canada is one of the most effective ways to secure off-campus housing. If you have friends or family living in Canada, you can ask them if they know of any housing available through their social networks or community contacts.

If you do not have friends or family living in Canada, you can connect with other students by creating a roommate profile on [Places4Students](#). You can also try to find other students through social media. For example, you could join one of the Conestoga College Viva Engage groups for international students looking to make housing and rideshare connections. You may find postings about available housing, or you can create a post indicating that you are looking for housing.

Note: Most Facebook pages described as being for Conestoga College students are not affiliated with or monitored by Conestoga College. Some groups may expose students to scams or inappropriate online behavior. Please use with caution.

STEP 3: Contact landlords



Make a positive first impression

Remember to be polite, respectful, organized and show gratitude in your responses. Tip: Do not be too pushy. This will not be well received by Canadian landlords and property managers.



Express interest in the accommodation

Ask if the rental is available and tell the landlord you are interested. Get more information about the rental: How much is the rent? Are utilities included? Are there roommates already living in the unit?



Avoid giving too much personal information

Be careful not to give too many personal details the first time you contact the landlord, such as your stress level related to finding housing, the specific reasons you need to find housing, your bank account information, your Social Insurance Number, passport information, etc.



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Request an appointment

Arrange an appointment to view the accommodation.



Present yourself as an ideal tenant

An ideal tenant keeps continuous communication with the landlord. Make sure you respond to the landlord right away when they contact you. Being responsive will help build trust and increase your chances of being selected as a tenant. Do not email the landlord multiple times if they have not responded to you yet.

Sample Script

Consider using the following sample script for your first contact (email or phone) with potential landlords. Adjust specific details to your situation.

- “ Hello, my name is *(name)* and I am very interested in your *(apartment / room for rent)* that I found advertised on *(Kijiji)*. I am a *(responsible/mature student)* and will be studying at Conestoga College, *(your campus location)* this *(Fall / Winter / Spring)*. Is this *(apartment / room)* still available and, if so, could you please provide more information about the unit and when can we arrange to meet for a viewing?

I can be reached at
(conestoga123@conestogac.on.ca / 519-555-1234).
Thank you for your consideration and I hope to hear from you soon!

My name
conestoga123@conestogac.on.ca
519-555-1234

”



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STEP 4: View the rental accommodation

There are three options for viewing a potential rental accommodation

If you are in Canada

- **In-person:** We strongly recommend that you view the rental in person.

If you are not yet in Canada

Virtual viewing: You can request a virtual viewing to see the rental unit. You can ask your

- landlord their preferred method such as FaceTime, WhatsApp, or any other video app.
- **Family or friend view on your behalf:** If you have family or friends living nearby to the accommodation, they can view the rental unit and show you through a video call. You should share all your questions and concerns about the rental so that they can clarify with the landlord.

Tips for viewing a potential rental accommodation

- Be professional at the viewing. Use polite language and dress to make a good impression.
- Ask questions and confirm the details mentioned in the rental listing/advertisement such as if utilities are included, where laundry is located, parking availability, policies on overnight guests, and all the questions that are relevant to the rental.
- Be prepared to answer questions that the landlord may ask you. For example, you may be asked about employment/income (to determine if you can afford the unit), credit check information, how many tenants will be living in the unit, or references and contact information of previous landlords.
- Be aware that under Ontario law, as stated in the Ontario Human Rights Code, landlords cannot legally ask about a tenant's ethnic background, religion and sexual identity or any other questions that infringe on a tenant's human rights.
- Consider safety. Check to ensure that the unit is free of any obvious signs of damage or in need of repair. Make sure that smoke detectors and locks on windows and doors are present and functional.



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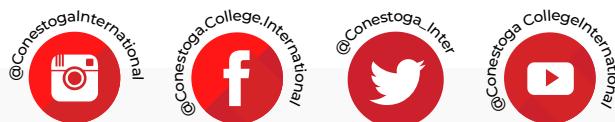
STEP 5: Complete the rental application form

Once you have viewed the rental unit and determined that you are interested in applying, you can ask your landlord for a rental application form. Each rental application is unique, but it is common for applications to ask for rental and work history and references.

If you are a newcomer to Canada, you will not be able to provide Canadian rental references. However, it may be helpful to provide any reference letters or English-speaking professional contacts who can speak positively about your character and reliability. If you have a professional background or if you plan to stay in Canada long-term, emphasize these facts when communicating with the landlord.

Tips for rental applications

1. Print clearly and write N/A (not applicable) in sections that do not apply to your situation so the landlord knows you did not skip answering the question.
2. If you have not arrived in Canada and the application requires your current address, you can write your home address and state that you are "Moving to Canada on [\(your travel date\)](#) for studies at Conestoga College" to let them know exactly when you are coming to Canada. If you are staying with your family in Canada temporarily, you can use their address in this section.
3. Landlords want to know you will have enough money to afford rent and that you will pay on time. However, many landlords do not know that international students must show proof of financial security to be granted a study permit. You can explain to the landlord that as an international student in Canada, you had to prove to Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) that you have a minimum amount of funds available to support yourself. You can also offer the landlord the link to this information on the [IRCC website](#). If you are eligible to work in Canada and plan to work, you can share this information with the landlord.
4. Be sure to use the same signature as your proof of ID (i.e. passport) and bank accounts.
5. The length of time it takes a landlord to view an application depends on the landlord, so you could ask when they plan to make a decision and if it is okay to follow up at that time.



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Some landlords may require additional information if you are not in Canada when you submit your rental application. They may be concerned or confused about why they are being contacted by someone who is outside of Canada. Even if the landlord does not ask directly, it can be helpful to provide your prospective landlord with a rental application package.



SUGGESTED DOCUMENTS TO INCLUDE IN YOUR RENTAL APPLICATION PACKAGE

- Rental application form
- Proof of your student status and intent to come to Canada
- Proof that you can pay for the unit
- Rental or character references
- Guarantor or co-signer information

What is a guarantor or co-signer

A 'guarantor' is someone who signs to take responsibility for payment if you cause damage, break the lease, or do not pay rent. In Canada, a family member or family friend can act as a guarantor.

If you do not have a guarantor, briefly explain that you are an international student and you don't have a guarantor in Canada. Ask if you can provide the following information for consideration instead:

- Evidence of financial security
- Intent to stay in Canada long-term (proof of the length of your program)
- History of being reliable in other situations (employment, school, rental history etc.)



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STEP 6: Get approved, sign the lease, and provide rental payment

Once the rental application is approved by your landlord, the next step is to sign the lease or rental agreement and provide rent to the landlord.

What is a Lease?

A lease is a legally binding document between a landlord and a tenant that gives a tenant the right to live in a rental unit for a fixed period at a fixed rate of payment. It is important to read the lease carefully, ask questions, and make sure all information is correct before you sign.

Lease Terms

A lease is a legal contract between the landlord and the tenant that both parties are committed to for at least the initial term of the lease. Leases in Canada are typically for one year. However, 4-month and 8-month leases can be negotiated with some landlords who focus on student rentals.

Both parties will sign the lease after it is approved. Be sure the landlord provides you with a copy of the lease immediately after it has been signed. Keep a copy of the signed lease in a safe place for future reference.

Please note that leases can look different depending on the landlord. Click [here](#) to view the Standard Form Lease which most Ontario landlords use.

Rent Payment

After signing the lease, you will be expected to provide two payments to the landlord:

- Last month's rent (deposit): The payment for the very last month that you live in the unit. You will pay this after the lease is signed. This payment will be used for the final month of your agreement.
- First month's rent: The payment for the first month that you live in the unit.

You should pay rent using a cheque or e-transfer so that you have proof that you paid your landlord. Always avoid paying rent in cash. If you must pay cash, be sure to receive a rental receipt from your landlord immediately. Rent prices are not negotiable and you must pay on time according to the lease agreement terms.



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Your rights as a tenant

As a tenant in Ontario, you have legal rights that are explained in the [Human Rights Code](#) and the [Residential Tenancies Act](#). The Human Rights Code applies to every person in Ontario. The Residential Tenancies Act applies to most people who rent housing. This [online tool](#) from Community Legal Education Ontario helps renters determine if they are covered under the Residential Tenancies Act.

What is the Residential Tenancies Act (RTA) ?

RTA is a law that details the rights and duties of both landlords and tenants. It gives landlords and tenants specific rights and responsibilities. For example, it provides rules for increasing rent and evicting a tenant. The policies in the Residential Tenancies Act are enforced by the [Landlord and Tenant Board \(LTB\)](#)

Legal Resources

CSI Legal Protection Program

The CSI Legal Protection Program is automatically included in each full-time student's tuition and is called "CSI Legal Protection" on your student invoice. The program provides access to a toll-free legal helpline for legal advice on any area of law and further counsel regarding housing and employment disputes. Call 1-833-202-4571 or visit [Legal Protection](#) for more information.

Legal Aid Ontario

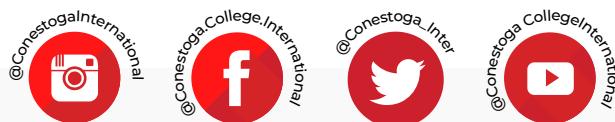
Legal Aid Ontario provides free and confidential legal consultation, including Ontario housing law. Call 1-800-668-8258 or visit [Legal Aid Ontario](#) for more information.

Steps to Justice

[Steps to Justice](#) is a free, online resource providing legal guidance, including Ontario housing law.

Community Legal Education Ontario (CLEO)

[CLEO](#) is a free online resource that provides practical information on Ontario housing law.



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