

# ... AND YOU ... CODE IS OFTEN IGNORED

In houses an hour rating will do - a substantial plaster or plasterboard (similar to but better than the 3/4 hour) finish but in apartments only masonry will give the two hour ratings required.

### Exits:

You must be able to leave the building quickly and conveniently even if you are confused by the smell of smoke or the presence of fire.

Every dwelling must have two separate exits. However, one exit is allowed when the unit is on ground level and is not shared with anybody else. Windows don't count. Each FLOOR of any apartment building must provide for at least two separate exits, placed as far apart as possible.

All doors must separate you from potential sources of fire hazard must be equal in rating to the walls in which they are built. Doors must separate stairs from public corridors or apartments and they must have the same rating as the walls and work with automatic closers. If staircases are not isolated in this way, they could become chimneys in case of fire and spread the fire more quickly.

In apartments or houses, doors are required to the dwelling unit itself, to rooms containing a boiler, furnace, or water pump, and between finished and unfinished space. Any door less than two feet wide

or six and a half feet high is illegal. Apartment building doors have to open out. Doors have to be either swing type or revolving - not folding or sliding. And exit doors must open without keys, from inside. All exits must be marked as such with sign lights which are on permanently. Doors which do not provide direct access to the outside, like basement doors in stairs or corridors, must be clearly marked to prevent people from blindly fleeing a fire and getting trapped.

### Special features.

A fire alarm system must be installed in any apartment building in which ten or more people sleep. An exception is made if the building is two stories, and exits providing direct access for all persons to the outside are present. This system is simple to install, and you should insist that your landlord add one if none exists now.

Only a hot water heating system can be used. A communal forced air system would circulate the smoke and superheated air between dwelling units and kill you without there being any substantial fire at all.

Furnace rooms or incinerator rooms are not to be used for fuel storage. Fuel lines must be enclosed and supported; which usually means buried. The space under a stairway must be either left open or must be enclosed completely. The idea is to keep the stairs from burning up and trapping people.

### Liveability

Any apartment should let you live comfortably, accommodate the usual furniture, and provide convenient liveable rooms.

Generally, habitable rooms must have ceilings at least 7 and one-half feet high over at least 50 percent of the living area.

Living rooms should provide at least 145 sq. ft. of floor space, dining rooms at least 75 sq. ft., and kitchens at least 45 sq. ft. In combination, total floor space of kitchens, living, dining, and bedroom areas (as in bachelor apartments) must be at least 120 sq. ft. If one bedroom is provided it must be 105 sq. ft.; if more than one bedroom is provided the second one must be 75 sq. ft. A student found living in a bedroom closet was, needless to say, somewhat short of space. On the subject of closets, at least one must be provided in each bedroom, and in the entrance way, with about 3 ft. of hanging rod.

### Natural light

In all rooms of the dwelling unit, bedrooms, living rooms and dining rooms, a window is required, 10 per cent of the floor area in size.

In bathrooms with electric lighting, no windows are required. Windows are not required in kitchens that have electric lighting.

### Ventilation

Bedrooms and other habitable rooms must be ventilated by natural or mechanical means. Living and dining rooms need not be ventilated. Natural ventilation must consist of an opening for each room or space. Mechanical ventilation must provide at least one air change each hour (the fan must remove all the air in the space served each hour.) If the kitchen is part of the living room, as it is so often in bachelor units, it must have natural or mechanical ventilation. Only the Victorians thought that fresh air was harmful - you need it and should insist on it.

### Heating

Houses and apartment buildings must be provided with heating facilities capable of maintaining an indoor temperature of 72 degrees. Heating systems must be installed by trained personnel. Basements are to be heated.

### Plumbing

Every dwelling unit must have a kitchen sink, washbasin, bathtub and water closet. Within each dwelling unit a space must be provided of sufficient size to contain a bathtub, toilet and wash basin or vanity. Bathrooms as dwelling units should be equipped also with a wall cabinet or vanity, a mirror, a toilet paper holder, soap dish, grab bar, and towel bar. When a shower is provided, a shower rod or enclosure is to be installed.

Plumbing must, incidentally, be done by a trained

plumber - not by the average landlord.

### Electrical

Lights with wall switches should be grounded at the entrance to houses and apartment buildings, and in all rooms used for habitation or utility. All stairways must be adequately lighted; with switches at either end. Similarly electrical outlets shall be provided sufficient in number and convenient in location.

Electrical work must be done by a licensed electrician, in accordance with the Canadian Electric Code.

Provision must be made for the parking of one car per dwelling, on or near the site, 20 feet away from windows of habitable rooms (either enclosed or unenclosed).

Driveways, at least 8 feet wide, are to be provided to the parking areas. Dirt doesn't count - the driveway must be either paved or made up of crushed stone or similar material. Walkways are required from the street to each entrance to a house or apartment building. Main walkways must be at least 2 and one-half feet wide, and, again, they can't be just dirt.

Some cautions to consider before you run out to sue or otherwise confront your landlord. This is a summary of the law, and there are many specific cases which constitute exceptions. The only way we could cover all of these would be to reprint the Residential Standards in its entirety, a fairly dull and laborious endeavor which is unnecessary because it already been done. You can get a free copy from the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation office in your area, and a short form of the National Building Code is available for 50 cents from the Queen's Printer.

In most areas the building codes and fire prevention acts will apply, but will have been inadequately enforced. Complaining often brings results in this sort of situation; large numbers of complaints can change the whole atmosphere of enforcement. Not the least of the results of a rash of complaints is that even landlords who have not been complained against begin rechecking their own dwellings for violations. This is because the penalties are not negligible; for instance, violation falling under the N.B. provincial Fire Prevention Act can bring fines of \$25 per day, sometimes more; fire marshals can order electricity turned off or forbid the lighting of fires in unsafe furnaces.

The argument which will most often be used against your complaints will be that if the fire laws or the building codes are rigidly enforced, most dwellings would be found unsafe, many landlords could not afford the improvements, and thus the housing shortage would be worse than it is now. The only reasonable answer has to be that this is the landlords' and the government's problem, not the tenants'. It's his life that is endangered by faulty wiring, inadequately shielded furnaces, and insufficient means of egress. How many buildings burn to the ground every winter here in Fredericton?

In any case, the residential standards we have listed are the bare minimum standards for construction. Many cities - Toronto, Ottawa, Hamilton - have "Maintenance and Occupancy" by laws which provide for things over and above these basics - things having to do with safety and comfort inside a dwelling. For example, there is a section on how floors should be maintained - free from dirt or protruding boards or loose linoleum, and so forth.

Aside from the necessity of making sure your own dwelling meets the minimum standards, there are some other fundamental things that need to be done. Provinces should at least adopt the National Building Code and should press for municipal acceptance of a "Maintenance and Occupancy" bylaw. Municipalities, particularly larger urban centres, should be adopting such laws now, before slums and substandard housing spread any wider and the argument that enforcement would worsen the housing shortage becomes even stronger. The longer we put it off, the more irredeemable dwellings there are going to be.

Letters to MLA's, provincial premiers, and municipal officials might yield surprising results here, particularly if the letters are quite specific about the action you expect to be taken.

Other provinces of provincial legislation to protect tenant's rights?  
Tenant Rights by Michael Audain and Chris Bradshaw printed by  
ment.

Alta.	Sask.	Ont.	Que.	N.S.	P.E.I.	Nfld.	N.B.
no	no	no	yes	yes	no	yes	no
yes	no	yes	?	yes	no	no	no
no	no	yes	yes	no	no	?	no
yes	some	yes	some	yes	some	some	some
yes	no	no	?	yes	no	?	no
no	yes	yes	some	yes	yes	no	yes
no	no	yes	no	yes	no	no	no
yes	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	no
no	no	yes	yes	yes	some	no	no
yes	no	yes	no	yes	no	no	no
no	no	some	no	yes	no	no	no
no	some	yes	yes	no	no	no	no
no	no	no	no	no	no	no	no
no	no	no	no	yes	no	no	no
yes	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	no	yes
yes	no	yes	no	some	no	yes	no
yes	some	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	no
yes	no	no	yes	no	no	no	yes
no	no	no	no	?	no	no	no

nswick complete  
uated landlord legislation since 1952 - 19 years.