

Frequently Asked Questions: Individual Air Conditioning Units in Rental Units

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PURPOSE

This document provides answers to frequently asked questions about the City of Toronto's requirements for window and portable air conditioning units in rental units. Concerns about the safety of a window and portable air conditioning unit can be reported by calling 311 or emailing 311@toronto.ca.

SUMMARY

City of Toronto bylaws do not prohibit window or portable air conditioning units in rental units. Effective July 1, 2026, changes to the provincial [Residential Tenancies Act, 2006](#) permit tenants to install window or portable air conditioning units if the landlord (as defined by the Residential Tenancies Act) does not supply air conditioning, subject to certain conditions (e.g., safe and secure installation). In cases where the landlord is obligated under the tenancy agreement to supply electricity to the rental unit, the property owner/operator may charge the tenant a seasonal rent increase, subject to the rules under the Residential Tenancies Act.

The City of Toronto's Property Standards Bylaw requires property owner/operators to ensure that individual air conditioning units (portable and window) are installed and maintained in a safe way. If the City determines that an individual air conditioning unit may be unsafe, it may require the property owner/operator to prove that a qualified tradesperson has installed, or confirmed proper installation and maintenance of, the air conditioning unit.

There are no City bylaw provisions requiring this proof from tenants or allowing property owner/operators to require this proof from tenants. However, the terms of the lease agreement between the property owner/operator and tenant may include requirements concerning air conditioning in the rental unit.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q1. Is the tenant or the property owner/operator of the rental unit responsible for making sure that individual air conditioning units (portable and window) are installed safely?

A1. Under City bylaws, the property owner/operator must ensure that all supplied facilities (including air conditioning of all types) are constructed, installed, and maintained to function safely and effectively.

It is the responsibility of the property owner/operator, when requested or ordered to by the City, to hire a qualified tradesperson to undertake the work and provide proof of this to the City. There are no City bylaw provisions requiring this proof from tenants, including no City bylaw provisions allowing property owner/operators to require this proof from tenants.

If the lease agreement specifies that the tenant is responsible for the installation and maintenance of an individual air conditioning unit, the property owner/operator is responsible for ensuring that tenants comply with this term of their lease agreement. Property owner/operators and tenants may wish to seek legal advice and information on how the [Residential Tenancies Act](#) applies.

Q2. The property owner/operator of my rental unit is telling me I cannot install air conditioning because the window safety device and window screen need to be on my windows at all times as per City bylaws. Is that accurate?

A2. Many residents who live in apartment buildings open their windows to let in fresh air. However, open windows can also present hazardous conditions, particularly to young children.

For the protection of tenants and children, City bylaws require window safety devices (if the window is not located over a balcony) and window screens on rental apartment windows. These prevent windows from opening more than 10 centimetres (four inches), the space wide enough for a child to crawl through.

Despite the requirement for window safety devices, **City bylaws do not prohibit air conditioning being installed.** A window air conditioning unit or portable unit that vents out a window may be acceptable where it is safely and securely installed, tightly fitted within the window opening, and maintains an equivalent level of protection with respect to limiting the window opening. However, there may need to be further measures taken to ensure safety requirements are met.

Where the installation leaves gaps or openings, it is not securely installed, or does not maintain the required level of protection, additional safety measures may be required. If the unit is removed, altered, or no longer provides the necessary level of protection, a compliant window safety device is required. Property owners/operators remain

responsible for ensuring that all window openings and installed equipment are maintained in a safe condition and comply with applicable municipal code requirements.

However, when the air conditioning unit is removed, the property owner/operator is responsible for ensuring the screen and the window safety device are re-installed as per bylaw requirements. For more information about window safety devices, please visit:

www.toronto.ca/rentsafeto-building-owners-requirement

Q3. Does a tenant need to hire a qualified tradesperson to install and maintain their air conditioning unit?

A3. It depends on the wording of the lease agreement between the property owner/operator and the tenant.

Under the Property Standards Bylaw, property owner/operators are responsible for ensuring individual air conditioning units are installed and maintained to function safely and effectively. To ensure that they meet their obligations under the Property Standards Bylaw, the property owner/operator may hire a qualified tradesperson to install or verify proper installation and maintenance of air conditioning units in their building. In this case, the City recommends that tenants cooperate with their property owner/operator and provide property owner/operators with access to their rental unit so that the qualified tradesperson hired by the property owner/operator can inspect the air conditioning unit.

The lease agreement may make it the tenant's responsibility to ensure that the air conditioning unit is installed and maintained safely. The property owner/operator, and not the City, is responsible for ensuring that tenants comply with the terms of their lease agreement. Lease agreements vary and tenants may wish to seek legal advice and information on how the [Residential Tenancies Act](#) applies; some potential options *may* include:

- Hiring a qualified tradesperson to conduct an inspection and provide proof of safe operation to the property owner/operator and/or the City;
- Replace a window air conditioning unit with a portable air conditioning unit; and/or
- Removing a window air conditioning unit all together.

Q4. Does a property owner/operator need to provide written proof to the City that an individual air conditioning unit was installed by a qualified tradesperson? And if so, when?

A4. Only when requested or ordered to do so by the City. Written proof may entail written sign off by the tenant or the superintendent.

Q5. How does the City enforce air conditioning installation requirements?

A5. The City may request or order property owner/operators to provide proof that an air conditioning unit has been installed and maintained to function safely and effectively.

Through inspections, when the City determines that an air conditioning unit may be unsafe, it may require the property owner/operator to prove that a qualified tradesperson has confirmed that the installation and/or maintenance of the air conditioning unit has been done a safe manner.

Q6. Can property owner/operators require tenants to provide proof that the individual air conditioning unit was installed by a qualified tradesperson?

A6. No, unless the lease agreement requires this. The property owner/operator, and not the City, is responsible for ensuring that tenants comply with the terms of their lease agreement. Property owner/operators and tenants should refer to their lease agreement and may want to seek legal advice and information on how the provincial [Residential Tenancies Act](#) applies.

Q7. What recourse is available to the property owner/operator if the tenant does not comply with a property owner/operator's demand that they use a qualified tradesperson?

A7. Under City bylaws, the property owner/operator is responsible for the safe installation and maintenance of individual air conditioning units in the building. There are no City bylaw provisions that allow property owner/operators to require this proof from tenants.

If the lease agreement specifies that the tenant is responsible for the installation and maintenance of an individual air conditioner unit, the property owner/operator is responsible for ensuring that tenants comply with this term of their lease agreement. Tenants and property owner/operators may want to seek legal advice and information on how the [Residential Tenancies Act](#) applies.

Q8. How is a property owner/operator expected to meet their obligations related to individual air conditioning units under the bylaw as it relates to property owner/operators entering units?

A8. Property owner/operators must follow all relevant legislation, including the [Residential Tenancies Act](#), when seeking access to a tenant's unit so that the qualified tradesperson hired by the property owner/operator can install, maintain or inspect an individual air conditioning unit.

The City recommends that tenants cooperate with their property owner/operator and provide property owner/operators with access to their rental unit so that the qualified

tradesperson hired by the property owner/operator can install, maintain or inspect an individual air conditioning unit.

Q9. What specific certification(s) will the City accept if it requires a property owner/operator to prove that they have used a qualified tradesperson?

A9. The property owner/operator must use someone certified under the Ontario College of Trades (OCAT) or an engineer. OCAT members must adhere to provincial regulations, which includes not committing professional misconduct ([O. Reg. 97/13: Professional Misconduct](#)).

Q10. Do property owner/operators of rental units have the legal ability to ban individual air conditioning units (window or portable) in the City of Toronto?

A10. City bylaws do not prohibit individual air conditioning units (window or portable) in apartment buildings.

Effective July 1, 2026, changes to the provincial [Residential Tenancies Act](#) came into effect that explicitly permit tenants to install window or portable air conditioning units if the landlord (as defined by the Residential Tenancies Act) does not supply air conditioning, subject to certain conditions (e.g., safe and secure installation). In cases where the landlord is obligated under the tenancy agreement to supply electricity to the rental unit, the landlord may charge the tenant a seasonal rent increase, subject to the rules under the Residential Tenancies Act. For more information, a tenant may wish to contact the provincial [Landlord and Tenant Board](#). The City cannot intervene if a dispute arises about the application of any provision under the Residential Tenancies Act

Q11. Does it matter for the safe installation of air conditioning whether the property owner/operator provided the individual air conditioning unit or whether it belongs to the tenant?

A11. No. Regardless of the ownership of the individual air conditioning unit (property owner/operator or tenant), the property owner/operator is always responsible for safe installation of an air conditioning unit.

Q12. What should a tenant do if their property owner/operator has told them that they must pay money (such as a fee or a fine) related to the individual air conditioning unit?

A12. If the property owner/operator of a rental unit (i.e., a landlord) is charging a tenant money (for example, fees or fines), tenants may [contact the Landlord and Tenant Board](#) for more information about their rights. If a tenant has a dispute with their landlord, the tenant may qualify for free legal help from Legal Aid Ontario. To contact Legal Aid Ontario about tenant rights, the Client Service Centre can be reached toll-free at **1-800-668-8258** (or at **416-979-1446** in the Greater Toronto Area).

Q13. What should a tenant do if their property owner/operator has threatened eviction over the use of an individual air conditioning unit?

A13. Effective July 1, 2026, changes to the provincial [Residential Tenancies Act](#) came into effect that explicitly permit tenants to install window or portable air conditioning units if the landlord does not supply air conditioning, subject to certain conditions (e.g., safe and secure installation). In cases where the landlord is obligated under the tenancy agreement to supply electricity to the rental unit, the landlord may charge the tenant a seasonal rent increase, subject to certain rules under the Residential Tenancies Act. For more information, a tenant may wish to contact the provincial [Landlord and Tenant Board](#). The City cannot intervene if a dispute arises about the application of any provision under the Residential Tenancies Act

In general, if a tenant is faced with the threat of eviction, or if their housing is at risk, the landlord must:

- Provide a notice terminating the tenancy giving the reasons;
- Apply to the Landlord and Tenant Board for an order to evict them; and
- If there is a hearing, the tenant has the right to attend and present their facts.

Please see the [City's Housing at Risk webpage](#) for more information.

In most cases, the responsibility for ensuring that individual air conditioning units are safely installed falls on the property owner/operator and not the tenant (unless the lease agreement states otherwise). The City recommends that tenants cooperate with their property owner/operator and provide property owner/operators with access to their rental unit so that the qualified tradesperson hired by the property owner/operator can install, maintain, or inspect individual air conditioning unit.

The lease agreement may make it the tenant's responsibility to ensure that the individual air conditioning unit is installed and maintained safely. The property owner/operator, and not the City, is responsible for ensuring that tenants comply with the terms of their lease agreement. Lease agreements vary and tenants may wish to seek legal advice and information on how the [Residential Tenancies Act](#) applies; some potential options *may* include:

- Hiring a qualified tradesperson to conduct an inspection and provide proof of safe operation to the property owner/operator and/or the City;
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