

Aboriginal Housing Society of Prince George



Rent Geared to Income

Tenant Handbook

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“We Provide Safe, Healthy and Affordable Housing for Aboriginal People of all Incomes, Ages and Capabilities”

Introduction




This handbook provides you with an understanding of guidelines and policies that the Aboriginal Housing Society of Prince George follows to help make your home a safe, affordable, and comfortable place to live.

It does not include detailed information for specific locations. However, it does provide a good overview of how the Aboriginal Housing Society of Prince George operates, as well as what is required of our tenants.

Keep this handbook in a convenient place for future reference. If you have any suggestions for future editions of this handbook, please contact your property manager.

Values







The values of the AHSPG reflect the traditional culture of our diverse Aboriginal ancestry. We honor our cultures by fostering the physical, spiritual, emotional, and intellectual elements of human life. Accordingly, our organization and staff:

-  Treat all tenants, applicants, employees, and volunteers with dignity and respect
-  Act with integrity, honesty, and transparency to demonstrate accountability to the community
-  Demonstrate caring and compassion for our tenants, without compromising the fair and consistent application of society policies and rules

Roles of the Board

The AHSPG Board of Directors oversees, authorizes, and evaluates the operations of the organization.

They meet every two months and their duties include, but are not limited to:

-  Acting as the trustees of the society on behalf of the membership.
-  Approving the society's goals and objectives.
-  Establishing organizational policy and other general guidelines and limits for the society's operations.
-  Authorizing all programs developed by the society.
-  Properly evaluating the rules that govern the society's operation
-  Reviewing the board's own performance.

Notes:

Roles of the Staff

Executive Director

The executive director oversees all operations of the organization, as well, liaises between members of the community, provincial, national, and local governments, funding agencies, sister Aboriginal agencies, and other service providers.

Reception

Reception is the first point of contact and the central switchboard for the office. They will assist you with your application and collect any required paperwork. The receptionist will also accept your rent at the office, take your calls, place your maintenance requests, and book your appointments.

Property Manager

Before you move in, your property manager helps you complete your tenancy forms if needed and calculates how much rent you will pay. Property managers also work with tenants to work through problems related to their tenancies and resolve any concerns or complaints.

Finance/Office Manager

The Finance /Office Manager is the one who helps set up the pre-authorized payment plan. This helps with the cost of making out money orders for monthly rent for our tenants. They also perform many other accounting related duties.

Roles of the Staff cont'd

Maintenance Worker

Maintenance handles the day to day maintenance jobs in common areas, for example, leaky pipes, appliance repairs and lock changes. They also coordinate other contractors when doing larger contract jobs and help prepare the rentals for new tenants moving in.

Janitor

The janitor in your building provides cleaning services in the common areas, such as lobbies, hallways and amenity rooms.

Grounds

Seasonal grounds staff provide snow removal and gardening services to the common areas of your development, Duties include clearing and sweeping parking lots, walk ways, leaf blowing, maintaining lawns, tree pruning and weeding, these staff only perform these duties at AHSPG apartments and row housing. In single housing units, tenants are expected to perform the above tasks for their own yard.

Notes:

Moving In

The property manager will set up a date and time for you to move into your new home. On the date of the move in, the property manager will complete a move in inspection with you and have you sign a number of other documents before handing over keys.

Keys and Locks

AHSPG will install a new lock on your door before you move in and give you keys for your unit, the front door of the building, and your mailbox, upon your move in inspection. Please note that we charge \$5.00 per key for any replacements or if you require extras. We keep master keys to all AHSPG units to ensure your safety in the event of an emergency. You must not change your locks or add security devices without prior approval from AGSPG. If you need your locks changed, please ask the property manager. If you are locked out, you can contact our office to let you in. Please note that we may charge for these services.

Parking


Tenant parking is available at most AHSPG locations. Vehicles must meet certain conditions, including being licensed and in running order. It may be necessary to register your vehicle to obtain a parking space. It is important to check with your property manager for tenant and visitor parking provisions.


Insurance

AHSPG insures only its buildings and does not insure tenant's belongings. Although you are not required to purchase content insurance, we recommend you do so to protect your belongings in case of fire, theft, earthquake or other damage, Contact your property manager for more information.

Hydro and Gas

In all units, tenants are responsible for paying their own hydro and/or gas from the day that they move into a unit.

 BC Hydro - 1-800-224-9376

 Fortis BC - 1-888-224-2710

Rent

How Your Rent Is Calculated

For tenants who pay rent geared to income (RGI), your monthly rent is 30 percent of your adjusted total gross household income before tax, for all persons aged 19 and over living in your home. If you are receiving Ministry assistance, your rent is calculated on a flat rate table based on the number of occupants in the household. If any of your income comes from income assistance, you will be charged a flat rent rate based on you family size.

We look at income, source of income, family size, and whether someone is a student when we assess rent calculation. For example, student scholarships are not included as a source of income while wages and provincial income assistance are. Check with your property manager for more details on the calculation process.

Should a change to your family size or income occur, you must contact your property manager. For example, your source of income may change between employment, employment insurance, and income assistance. Your property manager will advise you whether your calculation can be adjusted at that time. If a significant loss of income occurs, your property manager may be able to adjust your rent immediately to make it more affordable

Rent

How to Pay Your Rent

- 🏠 Your rent must be paid on or before the first day of each month.

Direct Deposit of Ministry Funds

- 🏠 You can have payments sent directly to AHSPG each month to automatically pay your rent.

Pre-Authorized Rent Payments

- 🏠 With this option, you must pay your rent by arranging to have automatic monthly withdrawals from your bank account.

Bank Draft, Money Order or Debit Interact

- 🏠 With this option you can go to your bank, the post office, or any local money cashing outlet and get a bank draft or money order. You can also come in to the office and pay with your debit card. **WE DO NO TAKE VISA**

Please note that we do not accept cash and hold no cash in the office.

Notes:

Annual Review Process

You will need to complete a **Declaration of Income (DOI)** form at least once a year. We will send you all of the necessary forms in the mail two months before the end of your current DOI. It is your responsibility to fill out all necessary forms in order to complete your DOI

Be sure to attach copies of any documents that provide proof of your stated income. We also require 3 months' worth of all bank accounts.

Documentation for your income review must be current and verifiable. It may include items such as pay stubs, verification of income forms, tax records, bank statements, and government benefits statements. All tenants are required to submit a copy of their previous year's **Notice of Assessment** annually.

Additionally, each year we randomly audit a percentage of the declarations to ensure that we are following proper procedures and the information provided is adequate and accurate.

Under the terms of your tenancy agreement, you are responsible for paying the rent established for your unit, which is based on the information provided in your declaration form.

Notes:

Rights & Responsibilities

Privacy Policy

The Aboriginal Housing Society of Prince George is committed to maintaining confidentiality, respecting personal privacy and as a public body that falls under the BC Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPP)

When you apply for housing, we collect only the personal information required to administer our housing programs. We will only use this information to support you in your tenancy.

Household Size

If there is an increase or decrease in the number of residents in your family, even temporarily, you must contact your property manager right away.

Tenancy Agreement

At the time of your move-in inspection with the property manager, you will sign a copy of your tenancy agreement. Your property manager can help you understand any parts of the agreement that you may have questions about.





To obtain access to your records or to request a correction to your records, you must make a written request. Please contact the Executive Director at ed@ahspg.ca for assistance or to receive more information about our policy.

Notes:

Rights & Responsibilities

Care of Your Home




It is your obligation to keep your home safe and clean. These include the following responsibilities:

-  Leave common areas like hallways, laundry rooms and grounds clean for other tenants
-  Remember that children should not play in hallways, common areas, or laundry rooms
-  If your children keep bicycles in your home, please make sure that they do not ride them inside
-  Picture hooks, rather than nails or screws, must be used to hang wall decorations



Any requests for alterations or renovations in your home must be approved in advance and in writing by the Property Manager.

Bathrooms

Please use a gentle, non-abrasive cleaner on bathtubs, sinks, and toilets. A rough cleaner will scratch and remove surfaces, making fixtures harder to keep clean. You may have a condensation problem in your bathroom if there are symptoms such as:

-  Condensations on the fixtures or walls
-  Mould and mildew between ceramic tiles, in the corners or on the ceiling
-  Peeling paint, rotting or blackened window sills, damaged drywall under windows, curling floor tiles, musty smells, or water dripping from vents

Condensation is caused by:

-  Excessive house humidity
-  Moisture from hot baths and showers

- 🏠 Dampness from wet bath mats, towels and drying clothes
- 🏠 Inadequate ventilation
- 🏠 Cold air from outside leaking inside

While you cannot change any structural causes, there are a number of things you can do to reduce condensation:

- 🏠 Turn on the bathroom fan or open the bathroom window while you are showering or bathing. Keep the fan running or window open for approximately 1 hour after showering or bathing or until all condensation is evaporated
- 🏠 Turn on the heat lamp during your bath or shower
- 🏠 If you have a de-humidistat in your bathroom, leave the dial setting at 40% for optimum humidity control
- 🏠 Keep the kitchen fan on or open the kitchen window while cooking and washing dishes

***Note:** It costs less to heat dry air than wet air, so keeping a window slightly open or the fan running will result in smaller utility bills. AHSPG publishes a Mold Management Fact Sheet for tenants, available upon request.*

Yards and Balconies

If you live in a unit with a fenced yard, it is your responsibility to mow and weed the grass. A lawn mower is available for loan from AHSPG. If you have outside water taps, shut them off inside your unit before winter. The maintenance manager can show you where the shut off is if you are unsure. AHSPG will shovel snow from city sidewalks and common parking lots but you are responsible to shovel your own walk ways. If you are in a house you are also responsible for the snow removal of your driveway.

If your home has a balcony it must not be used for storage. BBQs, whether charcoal or propane, are not permitted on balconies as the fumes and burning coals are a potential health and fire hazard. In the winter, you should clear any snow from

your balcony because accumulated melting snow could leak under the door and into your home.

Household Garbage and Recycling

Disposal of furniture, electronics, appliances or other large items is not permitted. Tenants must arrange for removal of these items at their own expense.

Laundry Rooms

Buildings that have laundry rooms are available for use by tenants only. We ask that you:

- 🏠 Check with your property manager whether there is a laundry schedule
- 🏠 Check for posted laundry room regulations
- 🏠 Remove lint from the lint screen in the dryer after each use to reduce drying times and prevent fires
- 🏠 Report any washer or dryer that is not working to the AHSPG office

Guests

Guests may stay with you for a total of 15 days in a calendar year. If you require a longer visit, you must obtain approval in advance from your property manager.

Pest Control

Please report the first sign of pests in your unit to the office. Pests include (but are not limited to) rodents, cockroaches, ants, silverfish, and bedbugs. Treatments will be scheduled to avoid further infestations.

You can reduce pests by:

- 🏠 Keeping your dry goods (flour, cereal, sugar, etc.) in glass, metal, or hard plastic containers with tight-fitting lids
- 🏠 Keeping your garbage, including recyclables, in tight-closing hard containers
- 🏠 Blocking any holes in your deck or foundation

- 🏠 Keeping the grass and shrubs in your yard trimmed
- 🏠 Making sure the cover on your basement drain is securely in place

To avoid bedbugs, it is important that you do not bring any furniture or household items into your unit from dumpsters or second-hand stores. Should you discover bedbugs in your unit, notify the office immediately.

Noises and Disturbances

You and your neighbors are entitled to privacy and the quiet enjoyment of your homes. Please ensure that you, your household members, and guests live in a manner that does not have a negative effect on your neighbors.

Conflicts and Complaints

If you are involved in a conflict with another tenant, try to resolve the issue as it relates to your tenancy by contacting your property manager in writing.

After Hours Maintenance

If you have a serious problem after hours, phone the 24hr emergency line (250-564-9794). This number is intended for maintenance emergencies such as a flood, power or heat system failure, a broken window, or a leaking roof.

Note: *Written complaints must be dated and should state facts (who, what, where, when) rather than personal judgments, opinions, or conclusions. All complaints are kept confidential and are for office files only.*

Notes:

Conserving Energy

There are many ways that you can save energy and lower your utility bills, including:

- 🏠 Turn off lights in rooms that are not being used. When possible, use natural light and energy-efficient light bulbs
- 🏠 Unplug electronic devices and chargers when not in use
- 🏠 To save hot water, run full loads in the washing machine and the dishwasher, take shorter showers, use cold water to wash clothes, and plug the sink or rinse dishes in a dishpan rather than under hot running water
- 🏠 When it is cold out, keep your temperature at 20 degrees Celsius
- 🏠 If you have a thermostat in your unit, turn it down when you leave home or open windows
- 🏠 Keep your refrigerator on a medium or low setting
- 🏠 Remove the lint from the lint screen in the dryer after each use to reduce drying times and to prevent fires

Please contact the office if your home is too hot or too cold and you cannot control the heat or you notice a leaky tap or toilet. Do not turn your thermostat below 15 degrees Celsius in the winter even if you will be away for a long period of time.

Notes:

Transfers

AHSPG receives many requests each year from tenants wishing to transfer to another unit or another building. There are no guarantees another unit will be offered or how long it will take to process a request. Transfer requests are evaluated along with new applications for housing. They will be accepted if the tenant and all members of their household still meet the basic eligibility requirements for housing and all of the basic transfer eligibility criteria outlined below.

Basic transfer eligibility requirements:

- 🏠 The tenants have lived in their current unit for a minimum of one year
- 🏠 Their tenancy is in good standing
- 🏠 They have no outstanding debts, including chargeback's or rental arrears

You will also need to meet one of the following reasons for a transfer request:

- 🏠 Your place of employment or schooling has changed and your transportation is unavailable
- 🏠 A change to your household size or condition that would be stabilized or improved by a change of location (over-housed tenants are required to move to an appropriately sized unit)
- 🏠 You or your family member has a medical condition that would be stabilized or improved by a change of location (your physician must provide documentation)
- 🏠 You or a household member's well-being is at serious risk from trauma, violence, harassment, or other undesirable consequences (you may need to supply police documentation)

If you would like to transfer but are unsure of your eligibility, please contact your property manager at the office.

Protecting You and Your Home

Entrance into Your Home

Do not let strangers follow you into the building as you enter. If your building has an intercom, ensure your guests use it. When visiting you. When you receive a call on the intercom, be sure that you know the person before allowing them into the building.

Only let workers come into the building or your unit if you know they should be there. (For example, if notices have been posted) and they have proper identification.

If you see a stranger loitering around the building, please contact the office. If you observe suspected criminal activity, do not attempt to intervene. Phone the police immediately.

Be Prepared for an Emergency












Keep an emergency supply kit with a minimum five day supply of water, foods (especially foods that do not require cooking such as energy bars and crackers) and clothing. Also include a first aid kit, flashlight, extra batteries, a portable battery operated radio, and any required medications.

If your safety or someone else's safety is at risk, call 911 immediately.

Notes:

Fire Safety

Here are some fire safety tips to protect your home and your family:

-  Do not store flammable materials such as paint thinner, solvents, propane tanks or gasoline inside your home or attached storage.
-  Regularly recycle old newspapers as they are a fire hazard if you let them stack up.
-  Make sure you know what to do in case of fire. If you live in an apartment building, you will find fire safety and evacuation information posted on each floor.
-  If you live in a townhouse, draw a floor plan of your unit on the fire escape plan, located on page 23 of this handbook.
-  Make sure you know at least two ways out of the building in case one escape route is blocked by fire.
-  If you hear a fire alarm, always leave the building right away. Follow your fire escape plan.
-  If a fire occurs in your unit, evacuate safely, activate the fire alarm, and call 911 for the fire department.
-  Call the office if the smoke alarm goes off frequently. This alarm is wired, so there is no battery to replace. We inspect the smoke alarm and test it regularly. Do not remove or disable it.
-  By keeping your oven, stove, and toaster clean so they do not smoke, you can prevent setting off your smoke alarm. Use the exhaust fan when cooking to reduce the possibility of false alarms. Never leave cooking unattended.
-  Advise the office immediately if you become aware of any fire hazards in your home or building (for example, accumulation of combustible materials, flammable liquids, or blocked exit routes).
-  Only use a fire extinguisher if you have been trained. If you would like to learn how, contact your local fire department.

- 🚫 Do not prop open fire doors or disable automatic door closers, as you place both yourself and your neighbors in danger in the event of a fire.
- 🚫 Do not overload power outlets or use damaged, old, or frayed power cords. A power bar with a shut-off feature can protect your electrical appliances.

Crime Free Multi-Housing Program

The tenant(s), any occupant of the tenant(s)' household and any persons invited onto the residential property or residential premise by the tenant(s) or any member of the tenant(s) family shall not engage in any criminal activity on the premises or property. This includes, but is not limited to:

- 🚫 Any drug-related criminal activity
- 🚫 Solicitation (sex-trade workers and related nuisance activity)
- 🚫 Street gang activity
- 🚫 Assault or threatened assault
- 🚫 Unlawful use of firearm
- 🚫 Any criminal activity that threatens the health, safety, or welfare or the tenant(s), other tenants, or persons on the residential property or premises

Vandalism to stairwells and hallways can result in costly repairs. Graffiti on brickwork is difficult to remove and is unsightly. We ask that you call the police right away and tell the office if you see anyone damaging the property of AHSPG.

If your safety or someone else's safety is at risk, **call 911** immediately.

Moving Out

When you decide to move out, you need to give the property manager written notice. This notice must be received by the last day of the month, one month before you plan to move. For example, if you were planning to move out on April 30, you would need to notify the property manager by or before March 31.

Your property manager will make an appointment with you to inspect your unit before you leave and will give you a list of the cleaning you have to do before moving out. Except for normal wear and tear, any damage to your unit is your responsibility. You may be charged with repairs.

You must be moved out on 1pm on the last day of the month, unless otherwise agreed upon. It is your responsibility to return all keys and to sign the move out inspection before you leave.




Notes:

Gas Leaks

What Do You Do If You Smell Gas?

If you smell gas or hear the flow of escaping gas, exit immediately and call - **1-800-663-9911**.

Follow these steps immediately:

-  Get out fast! Exit the building; leave the door open and any windows that may already be open.
-  Don't use either your cell phone or landline. Don't smoke, light matches, operate electrical switches, or create any other source of ignition.
-  Get to a nearby phone and call the Fortis BC 24 hour

Emergency line at 1-800-663-9911.

What Does Natural Gas Smell Like?

Natural gas smells like rotten eggs -a bad smell for a good reason. Natural gas and piped propane smell like rotten eggs or sulphur. Natural gas is actually odorless, but Fortis BC adds trace amounts of a chemical called mercaptan, which has a distinctive rotten egg or sulphur-like odor. It smells bad for a good reason! In case of a leak, we want you to be able to detect and identify it.

Notes:

Contacts Us

Aboriginal Housing Society of PG
1224 Houston Lane
Prince George, BC
V2L 5G2

Phone: 250-564-9794
Fax: 250-564-9793
Email: info@ahspg.ca

Web Page: www.ahspg.ca

Prince George Resource Contacts

Prince George Native Friendship Centre	250-564-3568
Ketso Yoh (Men's Shelter)	250-563-1982
Central Interior Native Health	250-564-4422
BC Housing	250-562-9251
Elizabeth Fry	250-563-1113
AWAC (Women's Shelter)	250-562-6262
Active Support Against Poverty	250-563-6112
Friendship Lodge	250-562-3004
Residential Tenancy Branch	1800-665-8779
Aboriginal Business Development Centre	250-562-6325
PGNAETA	250-561-1199
BC Hydro	1-800-224-9376
Fortis BC Gas	1-888-224-2710