

Metro Vancouver Refugee Readiness Team (MVRRT) Housing Resource

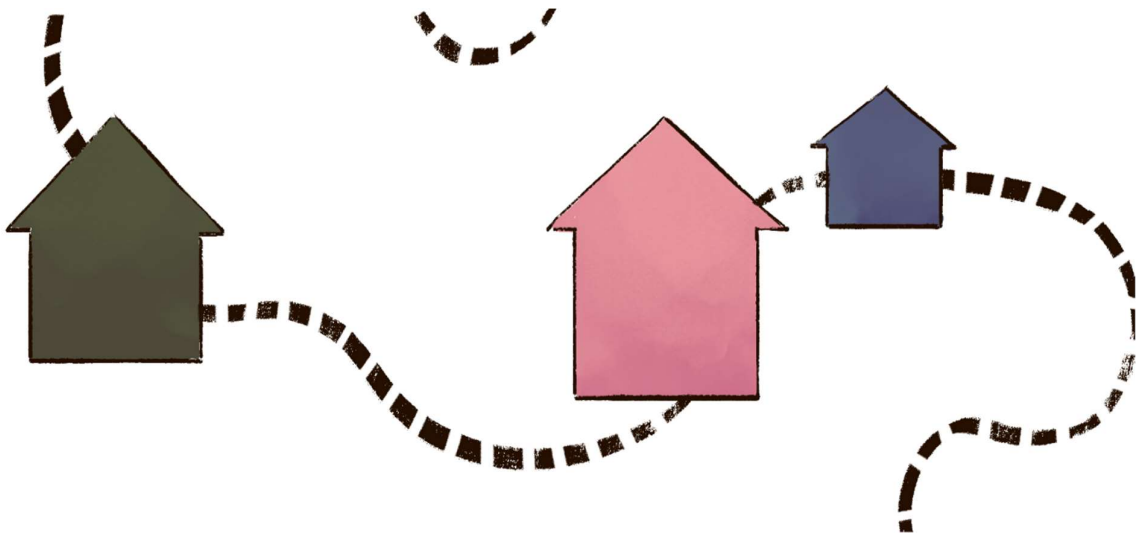


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Summary of Housing Reality

After arriving in Canada, there will be many steps to complete in order to successfully resettle. One of the first, most important and most challenging steps will be to find housing. This is because there is not enough housing available, and housing is very expensive. This resource document is meant to help with the process of finding housing.

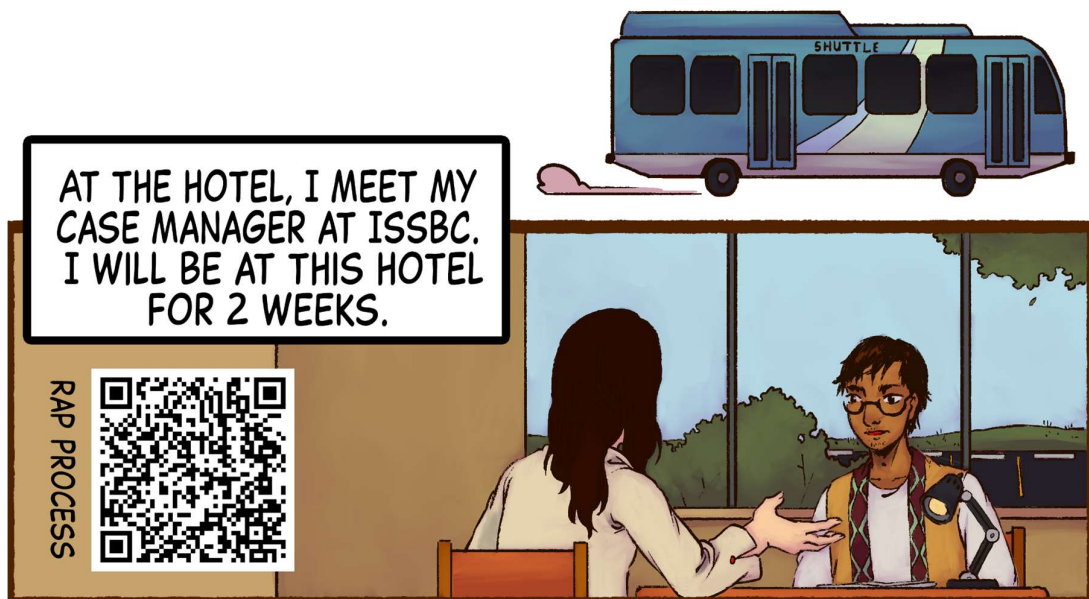
Housing Stages

The process of finding housing for newcomers in Canada can be split into three stages:



Emergency Housing

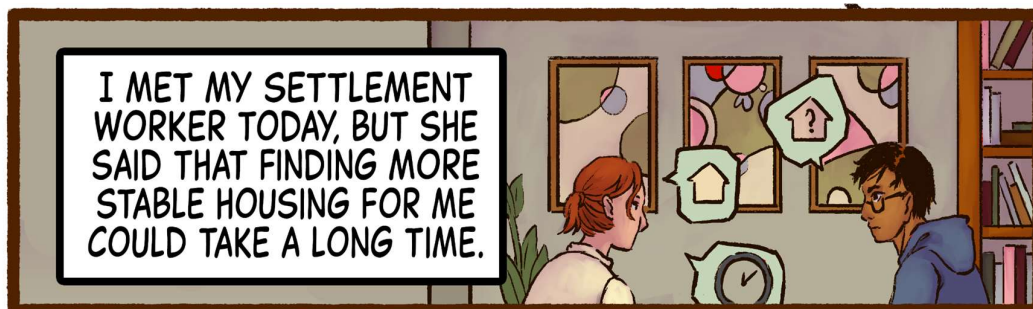
This is the very first stage when you arrive in Canada and need a place to stay right away. This might be in the form of a hotel or shelter. For many, this step lasts much longer than expected.



Note: Length of stay at hotel/temporary accommodation may vary.

Transitional Housing

This is the second stage in finding housing and it usually takes longer to secure than expected. This resource document is meant to help you with this step.



Permanent Housing

This is the last stage in finding housing in Canada when you have found the home that you would like to stay in long term.

Timeframe of Typical Housing Progression

It is important to understand that the emergency housing stage often lasts longer than expected. While you may plan to be in emergency housing for only a few days, it is more likely to be for weeks, months or even longer. In some cases, it can take a year or longer to secure transitional housing.

This can be because:

- There is no housing supply available.
- The price is too high to afford the first month rent and damage deposit.
- The housing supply available is for a specialised population (example: people over 55 years old or PR card holders)

Shift from Emergency to Transitional Housing

Once your emergency stay has ended and you are preparing to move into transitional housing, it will be important to consider what additional items you may need for your next housing situation. It is ideal to find accommodation that is furnished. However, if you are moving into an unfurnished home, you will need to think about acquiring furniture and other household items.

Transitional Housing Difficulties

Many people who are in the process of resettling have found there to be significant challenges. It is important to be aware of these difficulties while also knowing that every pathway to successful resettlement is unique. Some of the challenges include:

- **Inaccessible and unaffordable housing:** All types of housing in the Lower Mainland are expensive and difficult to find.
- **Housing ineligibility:** Some organisations offer housing for special populations such as students or single mothers. If you are applying to housing and you don't meet the requirements of the housing organisation, they may not be able to offer you housing.
- **Long waiting list to get into subsidized housing (processed through BC Housing):** The demand for subsidized housing far exceeds the available supply. As a result, it is not possible to predict when a unit may come available. Wait times depend on the number of unit turnovers and the needs of other households applying for housing. To increase your chances of obtaining a unit, select a range of developments with the Housing Registry and apply directly to developments that are not part of the registry.

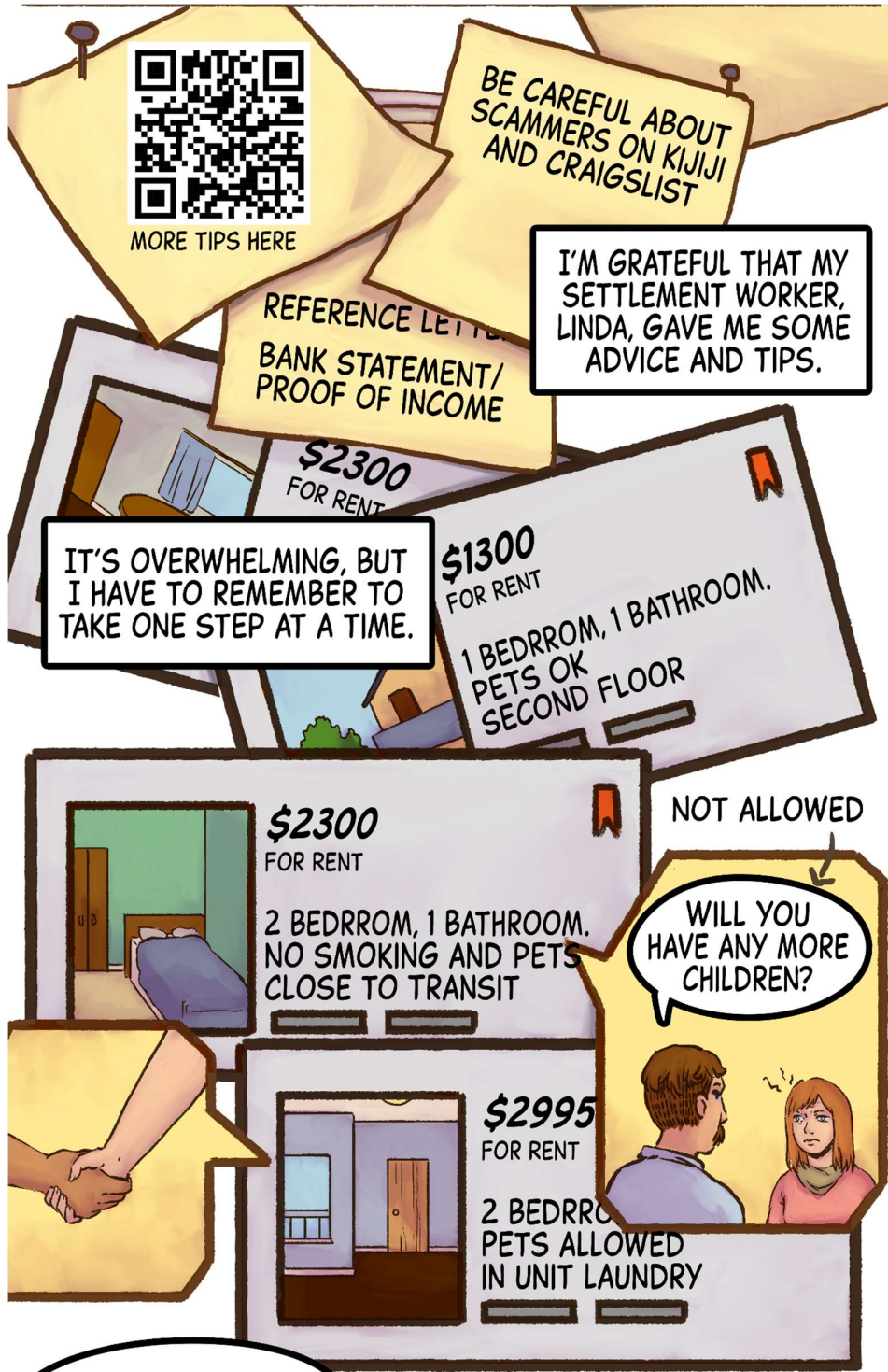
****Please Note: BC Housing is currently not available for CUAET visa holders**

- **Financial hardships:** If you do find a rental unit, it will most likely be very expensive and difficult to afford.
- **Communication -** Speaking with landlords can be difficult, especially if you do not speak the same language.



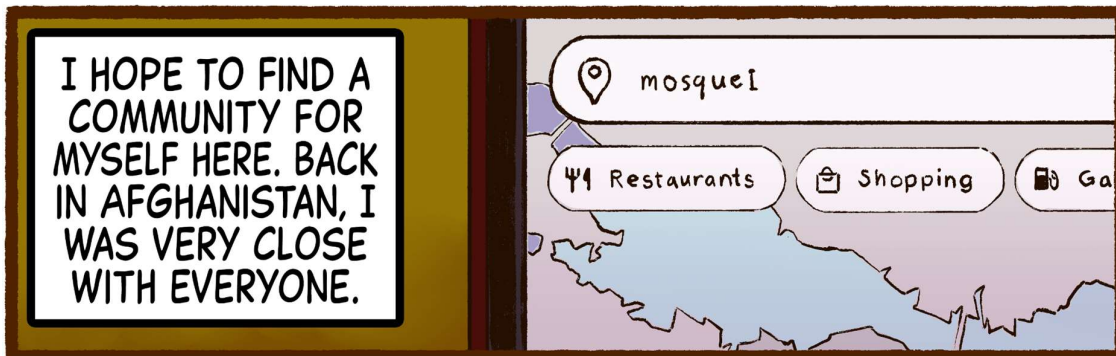
Due to the challenges of the housing market in BC, it is important to have realistic expectations. It will be important to be creative and open-minded during the process. House sharing or finding roommates are examples of options that can create more pathways in

resettlement. Settlement workers will be an integral resource to help find and secure housing. As you settle and start working, you may find that over time you can move up the housing ladder.



Things to Consider When Looking for Housing:

- Who are you looking for?
 - One person? A family? How many adults and children?
- Where are you looking?
 - Is there a city or neighbourhood that you're looking in?
 - What transportation do you have/need? Is it close to public transit?
 - If you or your children intend to study, is it close to the school?
 - Is it close to a supermarket and other services?



- What documentation do you have?
 - Do you have a pay stub or a bank statement for the rental? What ID or papers can you share?
- Who is in your network of support?
 - Who can write you a reference letter or co-sign on a rental?

Longer Term Transitional Housing Options

Although this will be a hard step, there are ways to prepare. Below are some different types of housing and places to look.

Subsidized Housing from BC Housing

Subsidized housing is processed through BC Housing. Housing listings and application processes can be found on the BC Housing website. There is a long wait list and short supply of subsidised housing available in Metro Vancouver. The link to apply is:

<https://www.bchousing.org/housing-assistance/rental-housing/subsidized-housing>

If you plan to apply and meet the eligibility criteria for subsidized housing, it will be important to submit an application as soon as possible. However, the inventory available is limited and you may not hear back from BC Housing for months or years. Once you have applied, it will be important to continue to look for your own housing needs.

Note: To ensure that your application with BC Housing remains active, you must update your profile once every six months. If BC Housing does not hear from an applicant for over six months, their application will be put on hold and a card requesting an update will be mailed to the last known address. If there is no response or the card is returned, the application will be cancelled and the applicant may need to complete a new application in order to be considered for housing in the future.

Rentals

This is the most common form of housing for newcomers. Rentals can be month to month or signed for a longer lease such as 1 year. A lease is a contract that outlines the rules of the rental over a fixed period of time. When the lease ends, you may cancel or renew the lease.

Co-op Housing

Co-op Housing is when a legally organised group of people choose to live together and govern their space together. Housing Co-ops are often non-profit and can be apartments or condos or a small group of houses. They are not considered rentals nor individual homeownership, but rather collective ownership. Co-op housing is organised site by site. To find housing in a Co-op, you have to go to the Co-op and speak to the members. It can be difficult to travel to the location and to communicate with the members if you do not speak the same language.

- Find more information and a list of Co-op addresses:
 - <https://www.chf.bc.ca/>
 - <https://www.chf.bc.ca/find-co-op/>

Single Room Occupancy (SRO)

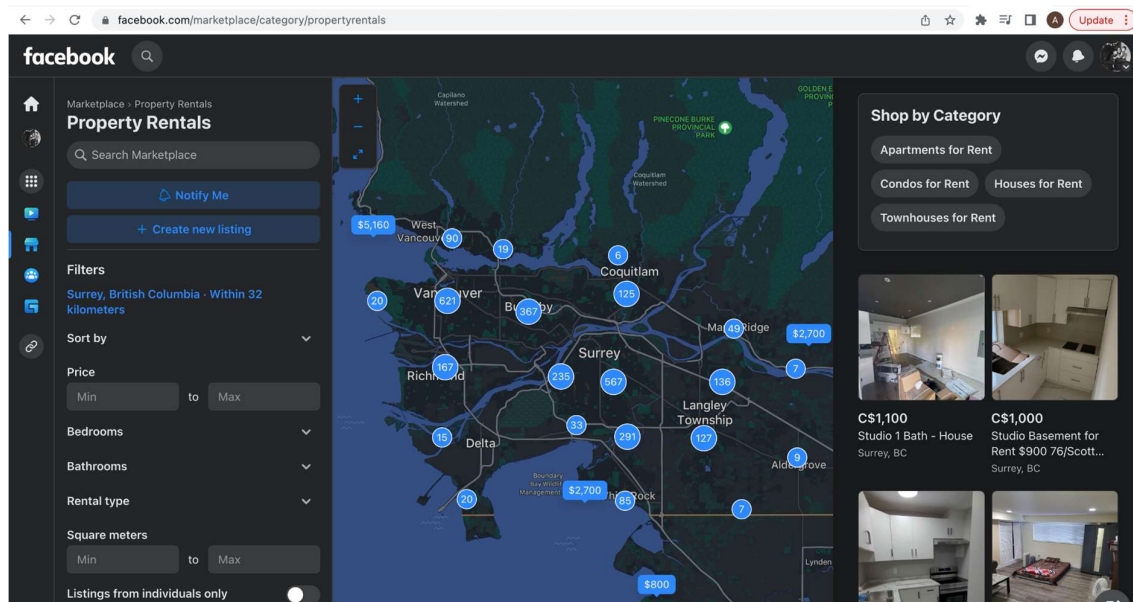
Single Room Occupancy are single rooms with shared bathrooms and minimal cooking meant to accommodate a single person. These rooms are meant for short term emergency stays; however, for some individuals, SROs are the most affordable option for longer-term temporary housing.

Shared Accommodation

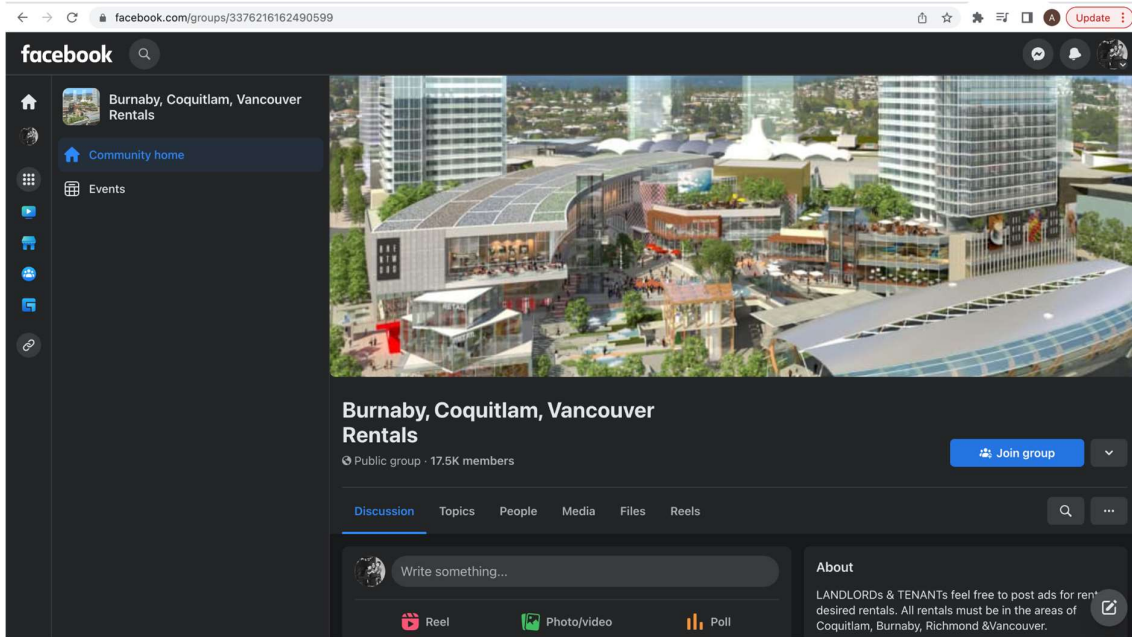
Many Metro Vancouver residents share apartments or houses with roommates in order to secure suitable housing within their budget. Shared accommodation and roommates can be found in many of the same ways as rentals, as described below.

Looking For Rentals

Facebook



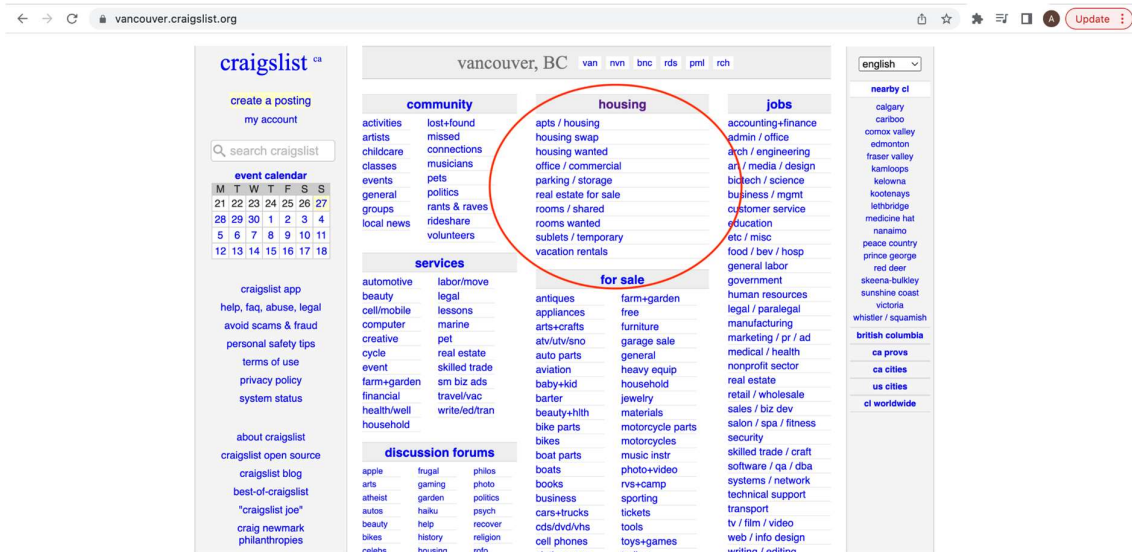
- **Facebook Marketplace:** You can search for rentals in your price range and also use the map function.
- **Local Community Organisations:** These can be found by searching the name of the neighbourhood (“South Burnaby” or “New Westminster”). Some examples include:
 - [Afghan Community Vancouver Group](#)
 - [Rooms for Rent Vancouver BC](#)
 - [New Westminster Community Group](#)
 - [Burnaby Community Group](#)
 - [Ukrainians in Vancouver](#)
 - [Ukrainians in Langley](#)
 - [New West Rent House/Basement/Apartment Group](#)



- **Other Facebook Groups:** In addition to neighbourhood groups, it may be helpful to join other Facebook groups that may offer assistance. Some examples include:
 - Mamas for Mamas - Burnaby/New West
 - Student affordable housing

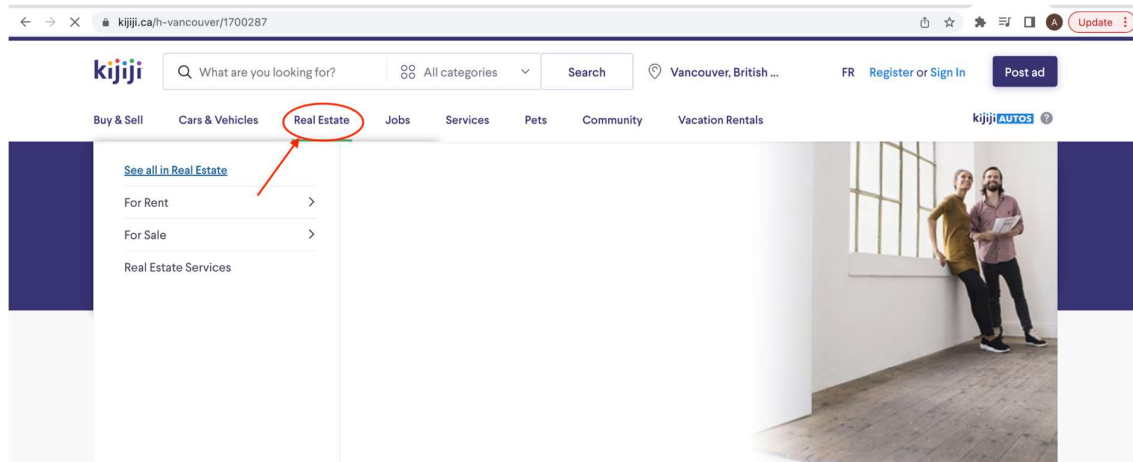
Craigslist

- Craigslist is a popular site to search for housing in various locations.



Kijiji

- Rentals on Kijiji can be searched by location, price, and size of house.



****Tip:** Sites like Kijiji and Craigslist tend to have many scammers. **If a listing seems too good to be true, it's probably a scam. Do not make any payments until you verify the place in-person and sign the appropriate paperwork.**

Please double check the housing ad with a Settlement Worker or a friend before paying for a rental.

Other Websites

These smaller sites tend to have less inventory and are not updated as frequently as the sites listed above.

- Happipad
- Apartment love
- Padmapper
- Rentseeker
- Rentsline
- Liv.rent

Summary of Websites:

| Name of Site | Link | What to Search | What to be aware of |
|-------------------------------|---|--|---|
| Facebook Marketplace | www.facebook.com/login/?next=%2Fmarketplace%2F | Search for rentals including apartments, houses, Co-op opportunities. | You will need to create a profile to search on Facebook. |
| Facebook Neighbourhood groups | www.facebook.com | Search for neighbourhoods that you would like to live in and post onto the group page asking for possible rentals. | You will need to create a profile to search on Facebook. |
| Craigslist | https://vancouver.craigslist.org/ | Search through the housing section posts. You can also change the city and location to see what is available. | Beware of scammers. Make sure you see the property before paying. |
| Kijiji | https://www.kijiji.ca/h-british-columbia/9007 | Search through the real estate section. You can also change the city and location to see what is available. You can also search apartments, houses, single rooms, etc. | Beware of scammers. Make sure you see the property before paying. |
| Rentline | https://www.rentline.com/ | Great option for shared and smaller housing rentals. | Much more detailed search options. Less stock than Facebook. |

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|----------------|---|--|---|
| Apartment love | https://apartmentlove.com/ | You can search different cities and locals. | Limited stock. |
| Rentseeker | https://www.rentseeker.ca/rentals/apartments/british-columbia/vancouver | You can search different cities and locals. | Limited stock. |
| Liv.rent | https://liv.rent/ | You can search verified listings which are less likely to be a scam. | You do have to sign up with a profile to search rentals |
| Padmapper | https://www.padmapper.com/apartments/vancouver-bc | You can search different cities and locals and also different budgets. | Limited and more expensive stock. |

Mobile Networks

- WhatsApp Groups: These are groups that are created to share information between group members. The easiest way to gain access to these groups is to find someone who already belongs to the group and ask them to add you. You may be able to find people to add you to these groups at places of worship, community centres, or community organisations.
- Telegram channels such as: <https://t.me/ukrvachat>

In-Person Places to Look

- Libraries are a central place to look in-person for local, neighbourhood housing.
- Religious sites (such as gurdwaras, temples, mosques, churches, etc) will often have message boards with basement suites and coach home rentals. This is a great place to look for bigger spaces like multi-bedroom basement suites.
- Ethnic grocery stores: small grocery stores will also often have a bulletin board.



Rental Process

Steps to finding a rental house:

Step 1: Look for housing on the websites and at the locations above.

Step 2: Contact the landlord responsible for the housing. It is important to speak directly with the landlord of the housing that you would like to rent to make sure it is not a scam.

Step 3: Get your documents ready. You will need bank statements or pay stubs. You might need to provide a reference letter or letter of employment.

Step 4: Discuss what is included in the rent and what is expected. Make sure you have a written contract for your rental.

Step 5: Know your rights and responsibilities as a renter. Tenants have rights and it is important to educate yourself so you can avoid being taken advantage of.

- <https://www.clicklaw.bc.ca/>
- <https://arrivein.com/daily-life-in-canada/understanding-your-rights-as-a-tenant-in-british-columbia-b-c/>



Who Can Help

There are people that can help in different ways to help find housing. Your **settlement worker** will be able to explain the steps to get a rental. They work hard to create long-term working relationships with landlords and property managers.

A **case manager** or **housing outreach worker** can also help you look for housing options and can help explain the steps to finding housing.

Finding someone to help co-sign your rental can be reassuring for the landlord and may help with your application. A **co-signer or guarantor** may be a family member or someone else who is a permanent resident in Canada. A co-signer is a person designated to make the rental payments if the tenant does not pay. They sign their name to the lease agreement and are held fully responsible for rent if the tenant stops paying rent.

Housing Organizations and Non-Profits

| Organization | Link to Website | What they do |
|--------------|---|--|
| MOSAIC | https://mosaicbc.org/ | MOSAIC is one of Canada's largest settlement non-profit organisations and can help with many aspects of resettlement |

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| <p>Immigrant Services Society of BC (ISSofBC)</p> | <p>https://issbc.org/</p> | <p>Services support settlement and English language needs, as well as your employment and career ambitions. Can provide reference letter for landlords</p> |
| <p>SUCCESS</p> | <p>https://successbc.ca/</p> | <p>S.U.C.C.E.S.S. is one of the largest social service agencies in the country. We are a non-partisan, non-profit multicultural Canadian organization serving newcomers, seniors, youth and families. Operates and manages over 900 affordable housing units in 10 locations across Metro Vancouver.</p> |
| <p>BC211</p> | <p>https://bc.211.ca/</p> | <p>211 is a free and confidential service that connects people to helpful and vital resources in their community.</p> |
| <p>BC Housing</p> | <p>https://www.bchousing.org/</p> | <p>BC Housing works in partnership with the private and non-profit sectors, provincial health authorities and ministries, other levels of government and community groups to develop a range of housing options.</p> |
| <p>New Hope Community Services</p> | <p>https://newhopecs.org/</p> | <p>New Hope owns and operates a 13-unit apartment building in Surrey. It is designed to provide housing for families as they transition to living in Canada.</p> |

| | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| Tenant Resource and Advisory Centre | https://tenants.bc.ca/ | Free legal education & advocacy for BC tenants |
| City of Vancouver Non-Market Housing | https://app.vancouver.ca/NonMarketHousing_NET/ | An inventory of Co-op non-market housing options |
| Afghan Community Vancouver Foundation | https://www.facebook.com/groups/309797040043093/ | Can provide reference letters of support for landlords. Supports the resettlement needs of the Afghan community |
| Rainbow Refugee | https://www.rainbowrefugee.com/ | Can provide reference letters of support for landlords. Rainbow Refugee promotes safe, equitable migration and communities of belonging for people fleeing persecution based on their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or HIV status. |

Talking with Landlords

Templates for Expressing Interest

Email Script:

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to express interest in your rental unit as listed on (website). My name is _____ and I am looking to secure housing for my family of (four). I am currently working full-time and can provide a letter of employment to support my application. I would like to arrange a viewing at your earliest convenience. You can contact me at (phone) or (email). I look forward to your response.

Thank you,

Text Script:

Hello. I am interested in your rental listing. I would like to arrange a viewing at your earliest convenience. I look forward to meeting you. Thank you, _____.

Important Questions to Ask the Landlord

- How much is the rent and security deposit (if applicable)?
- Is the lease month-to-month or a fixed term?
- Is the rental furnished or unfurnished?
- Are utilities such as hydro, water, cable, and internet included in the rent? If not, how much do the utilities typically cost?
- Are there laundry facilities like a washer-dryer in the unit, or are there common laundry facilities?

What Landlords Can and Cannot Ask You

Landlords can legally ask:

- About your income and where you work to ensure you can afford the rent
- How many people will live at the property.
- If you have any pets
- Permission to run a credit check.
- For references from your employer or previous landlords.

Landlords **cannot** ask you:

- About your ethnic background, religion, food habits, and sexual preferences
- For your Social Insurance Number (SIN)
- About your marital status
- Whether you plan to have more children
- If you have family visiting

If a landlord asks you one of the questions that are not permitted, a suggested answer may be to reiterate the topics they can ask you about including how many people will live at the property and whether you have pets.

To read more about what a landlord can and cannot ask, visit:

<https://www.oipc.bc.ca/investigation-reports/2141>

More Information

Additional Resources

[B.C. Newcomers' Guide in multiple languages](#)

[Residential Tenancies - British Columbia Government](#)

[Residential Tenancies – Resources and Calculators](#)

[Tenant Resource & Advisory Centre](#)

[Tenancy Agreement Forms](#)

Frequently Asked Questions

How can I ensure the rental is not a fraud?

It's best to have someone else take a look at the advertisement. It is also important to speak with the landlord before paying a deposit. For more tips, visit:

<https://bc-cb.rcmp->

grc.gc.ca/ViewPage.action?siteNodId=2081&languageId=1&contentId=18593

What is the deposit amount landlords can legally ask for?

From Renting it Right: The maximum amount a landlord can charge for a security deposit is half the monthly rent. If a landlord requires a security deposit, the tenant must pay it within 30 days of the date it is required to be paid. For more information, visit:

<https://rentingitright.ca/course1/51-security-deposits>

How do I cancel my lease?

From BC Government site: A fixed-term tenancy can only be ended early in any of these circumstances: both parties sign a mutual agreement to end the tenancy; the tenant is fleeing family violence or needs long-term care; or the landlord or tenant has breached a material term of the tenancy. For more information, visit:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/housing-tenancy/residential-tenancies/ending-a-tenancy#ending-a-fixed-term>

When can a landlord cancel my lease?

From BC Government site: Landlords can use the [10-Day Notice to End Tenancy \(PDF, 636KB\)](https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/housing-tenancy/residential-tenancies/ending-a-tenancy/landlord-notice/10-day-notice) when tenants haven't paid their full rent or utilities on time. For more information, visit: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/housing-tenancy/residential-tenancies/ending-a-tenancy/landlord-notice/10-day-notice>

What do I do about bed bugs or rodents in my suite?

From the Tenant Resource & Advisory Council: If you find evidence of bed bugs, inform your landlord in writing immediately and request that they treat the problem within a reasonable period of time. See TRAC's template letter, [Bedbugs and Other Rodents](#). It can also be wise to take photos, have a witness visit, and trap a bed bug in a sealed plastic bag. For more information, visit:

<https://tenants.bc.ca/your-tenancy/bed-bugs-and-other-infestations/>

When can my landlord increase my rent?

The 2023 rent increase limit is 2%. Landlords can only increase the rent once in a 12-month period by a percentage set by the Provincial Government. For more information, visit: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/housing-tenancy/residential-tenancies/during-a-tenancy/rent-increases#2023-limit>