



MULTIPLE TENANTS RESIDING IN A SINGLE FAMILY HOME

Telephone 311 or E-mail 311@winnipeg.ca

The issue of multiple tenants illegally residing in a single family home can be enforced through a variety of City of Winnipeg Zoning By-Laws and Neighbourhood Liveability By-Laws, but these incidents are challenging to investigate. Tenants and landlords are protected by privacy rights, legislated by the Federal Government. Exterior-related complaints are easily investigated; however, concerns focused on the interior of a home are much more complex to investigate.

There are TWO key factors in reporting suspected multiple tenants residing in a single family home:

1. Regular monitoring and documenting of key 'indicators' of a rental property
2. Reporting if you think people are living in a basement, and the basement windows do not meet the Province of Manitoba Building and Fire Safety Codes

Key 'INDICATORS' of a Rental Property

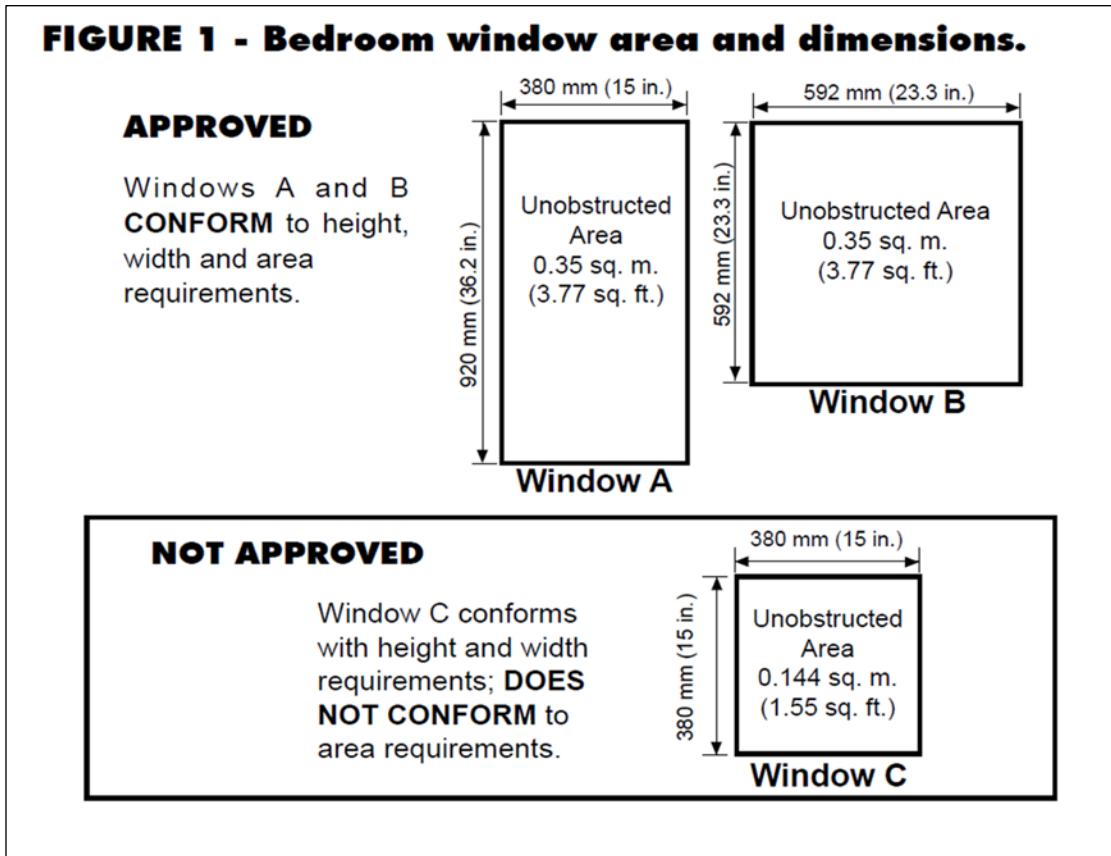
1. Excessive long grass or weeds around house
2. Excessive garbage in front and/or back yards
3. Excessive noise in evenings and/or weekends
4. 'FOR RENT' signs advertising rooms and/or parking
5. Multiple cars parking in front and/or back yards or on lawns
6. Multiple plug-ins along fencing, parking spots marked for vehicles
7. Annual turnover of different vehicles in driveway or on yards
8. Small, narrow horizontal basement windows often found in older homes

BEDROOMS IN BASEMENTS

Often, if there are many tenants living in a house, some tenants will be living in bedrooms in the basement. A bedroom is NOT permitted in a basement if there is only one exit in case of a fire.

To legally have a bedroom in the basement, the house must have TWO separate basement exit locations in case there is a fire.

- Large basement windows can be a legal second exit, but many older houses in the Fort Richmond and University Heights areas do not have large basement windows. These homes were built in the 1960’s and 1970’s with small narrow basement windows that present a serious fire hazard to anyone trying to escape from a basement.
- Often, you are able to see the size of basement windows from the street. Changing a small, old basement window to meet the Manitoba Building and Fire Code often costs from \$2,000 to \$8,000. Often landlords do not want to incur the costs, so they do not change basement windows.
- The diagram below represents legal window sizes that comply with the building code. Complete details can be found in the City of Winnipeg’s [Basement Development Brochure](#)





RECOMMENDED REPORTING for MULTIPLE TENANTS in Single Family Home:

- If possible, speak to your neighbor in person to share your concerns that if people are living in the basement they must have the legal size windows to allow an exit in case of fire. You may want to leave a flyer in the mailbox if you are unable to speak to your neighbour. A flyer on this topic has been created for you to print and leave in the mailbox. Flyers can be found on this website under 'RESIDENTS'

When reporting to 311:

- Reporting suspected multiple tenants requires reporting of BOTH the indicators (see above list) and the basement window observations.
- Take photos of long grass, garbage, FOR RENT signs, multiple cars parked (ensure the license plate numbers are in the photos so By-law enforcement can monitor), plug-ins or anything else you feel represents multiple tenants.
- Key to enforcement will be regular reporting of your observations. Email is the best way to do this. All reports will be documents and kept on file for the By-law officer to review prior to his visiting the address and email will provide you with a record.
- NOTE: By-law Enforcement Officers are 'case building' so they require comprehensive data which they collect AND which is reported by others.
- Report if you suspect someone is living in the basement
- Report if you see basement lights on frequently
- And above all, report if the window is a small narrow window that does not comply to the new larger sizes.
- Report if there is a low metal window well around the basement window. This is an almost positive indicator that the basement window does not meet building code. This is a fire hazard for the people living in the basement.
- You can request a follow up call if you want to know more information. Remember, if there is an investigation underway, you will receive limited information.



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EXPECTED RESPONSE from the CITY:

- The Officer will respond within 10 business days to conduct an investigation
- The Officer does not have the authority to shut the dwelling down but does have the authority to issue an immediate vacate order if he sees fire hazards.
- The Officer will ask the owner / landlord to comply with the building code if they plan to have people living in the basement.
- The Officer will inspect the home for smoke detectors and signs of multiple tenants.
- Often owners / landlords will move the tenant upstairs, for a period of time, and then move them back downstairs to the basement.
- Often the property will have to be reported again, and the Officer will have to visit again to ensure the owner / landlord is complying.
- Enforcement often takes time and repeated visits by Officers in suspected multiple tenant cases.
- Every inspection and repeat follow up inspections are documented, knowing that if compliance does not occur, the Officer will issue a Court Order. To stand up in Court and be enforced, the charge must be accompanied by solid documentation showing the officer did everything in his power to reach compliance.

CONSISTENT OBSERVATIONS AND REPORTING ARE CRITICAL to ensure life/fire safety for tenants in basements.