

Who should read this tip sheet?

If you are a tenant and your rent includes the supply of a vital service, this tip sheet is for you.

What is a vital service?

The Residential Tenancies Act (RTA) says “**vital service**” is:

Hot or cold water, fuel, electricity, gas or heat (during some parts of the year).

When is heat a vital service?

Heat is a vital service during the time that your local by-law says a rental unit must be heated. Most local governments (towns, cities, townships) have a property standards by-law that gives a date when heat must be provided. For example, in many places heat must be supplied between September 15 and May 15. A by-law may also set the temperature that the rental unit should be, usually around 20° C.

How do I know when heat is a vital service in my area?

In Hastings, Prince Edward and Lennox & Addington Counties you can get this information from CALC. You can also contact your local municipal government to ask what their by-law says.

What if my local government does not have a by-law?

Ontario has a provincial standard that applies if your municipality does not have its own by-law.

What do I do if one of my vital services stops or I get a cut off notice?

Contact your landlord to make sure he/she knows about the problem. If the problem is not fixed within a reasonable time you can complain to the Investigations Unit of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (1 888 772 9277). Call your local legal clinic.

It is an offence under the RTA for a vital service to be unreasonably withheld.

Some local governments have a “Vital Service By-Law” (Belleville, Deseronto, Bancroft, Centre Hastings)

If your landlord is responsible for payment for a vital service (that is, you do not pay the utility yourself) a Vital Services By-Law allows an outstanding utility bill to be paid by the municipality. This is to make sure tenants do not experience a utility cut off because of a landlord’s unpaid account.