

# Renting rules need revising

Landlords can be negligent, so they ought to give tenants a deposit as well



NINA  
VARSAVA

If you're about to move into an apartment, and you're getting a rental deal that seems just too good, be wary. If there are tiny black pellets in your cupboards, be very, very wary—and don't go near them. It's called the Hantavirus, and Edmonton is Canada's Hanta hotspot. A woman died in Edmonton last year from the Hanta after cleaning her mousy garage.

I recently had to move out of an apartment because the mouse problem had gotten so bad. At first I didn't mind the little critters so much; sure I had to clean out my feces-filled cupboards every couple weeks, but have you ever seen mouse pooh before? It's sooo cute. And I have an affinity for all things rodent—I used to have gerbils myself—so I kind of enjoyed having the mousies dart between my feet and scurry along the walls, freakishly slipping in and out of tiny cracks.

But when I realized that the house mouse can be dangerous, carrying all sorts of bacteria and diseases, I brought the infestation to my landlord's attention. He promptly loaded my apartment with bright blue pellets, which, he assured me, simply repelled the mice, making them "disappear."

A couple weeks later, I *did* have fewer mice, but my kitchen smelled like my old gerbil's cage after I hadn't cleaned it for six months—and after his

carcass had been rotting inside it for five. I just wasn't ready to go through with the burial yet, okay? But anyway, that's what my kitchen smelled like, only a hundred times more pungent.

I'm pretty sure one time I heard a mouse die behind my fridge, or maybe many were dying simultaneously; the noise was so awful: piercing shrieking and terrible gurgling—that's what mice sound like when their blood congeals from the fatal effects of delicious cheese-flavoured poison.

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By the time I finally moved out of the mouse house, I had thrown away cosmetics, food, clothes and school supplies that had been destroyed or contaminated by mice and poison. Needless to say, I felt I deserved some kind of compensation from my landlord. So imagine my shock when he told me he was withholding the greater part of my \$300 damage deposit because I hadn't adequately cleaned the place. Did he really expect me to clean up mouse carcasses, droppings and urine, when I had learned it was possibly fatally dangerous to do

so? Although I argued exhaustively with him, he still ended up keeping half of my deposit.

Your landlord is supposed to return your damage deposit when you move out, provided that you haven't damaged the property. In Alberta, a damage deposit can be as much as one month's rent. This deposit acts as an incentive for a tenant to take good care of the suite, and to clean it upon moving out.

Landlords often withhold damage deposits for unfair and even ridiculous reasons. And sure, tenants can take their landlords to small claims court, but this costs money and takes time, and tenants rarely bother. Landlords know this, and take advantage of it.

A friend of mine rented an apartment in the University area a couple years ago, and her landlord withheld her damage deposit when she moved out because he claimed that there was an oil spot on her parking spot. This friend of mine had never seen any oil on her parking space, nor did her car have any sort of oil leak. Still, she never took her landlord to court, and he got away with her deposit scot-free.

Therefore I propose a law that requires landlords to give tenants a damage deposit as well. Under current legislation, landlords are responsible for keeping their rental properties safe from pest infestations, floods and the like. If a landlord doesn't meet her or his responsibilities, tenants can suffer extensive property damage. If landlords had to give tenants damage deposits, then these landlords might be more inclined to take care of problems—and less inclined to steal their tenants' money.

## Bike bait program would curb crime on campus



MEGAN  
CLEAVELEY

Unless you're one of those fortunate souls blessed with a car, a parking pass and money to pay for gas, odds are you walk, take your chances with ETS or ride a bike to get to campus. And although there are some dodgy characters that ride the bus, the latter option is probably the sketchiest of the three.

Unfortunately, the frequent bike thefts on campus deter a lot of would-be cyclists, as well as those who've had their bike—or part of it—stolen on a previous occasion. University of Toronto Campus Security, along with the Toronto Police Service, have come up with a unique idea of how to combat the problem of bike theft on their campus. They've implemented a bait bike program using global positioning systems to catch bike thieves. They simply set up an invisible electric fence around the bike, and when the bike moves out of that zone, an alert is sent to officers on standby. Then they move out and take down the offender.

It doesn't take a genius to figure out that this is something the University of Alberta should look into. After all, according to Campus Security's

website there were 109 bikes reported stolen on campus last year, and as of October of this year there have been 70 reports of stolen bikes.

A similar project in Victoria has seen a 19 per cent decrease in bike theft; at the U of T, they've already seen a decrease after four thieves were caught in one day back in October. In the six weeks following, there was only one bike stolen. This is way down from the 97 bikes stolen the year before, and it looks like this trend will continue.

The only thing that could improve this initiative would be a public humiliation element like that of the bait car program in Vancouver. It's essentially the same idea Toronto has implemented with bikes: GPS tracks stolen cars that have been placed around Vancouver. But there's also a camera placed in every car that starts filming as soon as somebody enters the vehicle.

There's nothing more entertaining than watching 16-year-old punks panic as they realize they're about to be arrested and then start theorizing about how angry their mothers are going to be. These videos are posted online for anyone to access and watch.

This sort of embarrassment would act as the ideal deterrent for would-be bike thieves. Next time I'm browsing YouTube and putting off writing a ten-page research paper, hopefully I'll stumble upon a video of ruffians getting busted for stealing bikes from outside of SUB instead of just lonelygirl15's newest video blog.

## THE BURLAP SACK

Whyte Avenue, a place known for its trendy shops, good ol' Irish pubs and friendly crowds, used to define the pleasurable lifestyles of the young and hip. It was my escape from the typical West End bars, where violent activities are the norm. However, thanks to the recent stabbings and murder that have taken place on the famous strip, Whyte Ave has officially lost its innocence and its reputation.

It's as if the West End took over Whyte Ave, forcing people to choose between amusement and their safety. Personally, my mental health is far too important to become a hermit. Thanks to those idiots that think it's "cool" to go around stabbing people for fun, I must choose other alternatives to cure my winter blues.

Before Whyte, Jasper Ave was the place to be if one wanted to get shot or stabbed—and it's not like it's getting any better. Oh, and let's not forget the North Side either: that place is a mystery in itself. The amusing salsa and tango dances I indulged in are now up in smoke since the club Azucar was burned to the ground.

I feel like everywhere I want to chill now is a massacre waiting to happen. These night-club goons need some sense beaten into them, sack-style.

DARYN BADDOUR

*The Burlap Sack is a semi-regular feature where a person or group who needs to be put in a sack and beaten is ridiculed in print.*



## OUR WEEKLY LINEUP

### Mini Burger Mondays:

Cure that case of the "Mondays" with 99¢ mini burgers and \$10 jugs. House Rules Apply. 7pm to close

### Karaoke Tuesdays:

Downstairs in the LIBRARY. Like Canadian Idol, only our \$8.99 nachos are cheesier than Ben Mulroney. 7pm to close

### Wing Wednesdays:

Get in V-formation and migrate to the land o' 25¢ wings. House Rules Apply 7pm to close

### Loonie Thursdays:

\$1 Draught downstairs in the LIBRARY. Celebrate the invention of the loonie. 7pm to close

### Finally Fridays: Extended Happy Hour.

"True North strong and nearly free" 3pm to 9pm

### S.O.S. Saturdays:

\$2 Highballs downstairs in the LIBRARY. Your wallet is sending out an S.O.S. - Save On Spirits. 9pm to midnight

### Music Trivia Sundays:

Test your music IQ. No studying required. \$15 Buckets of Domestic beer! 7pm to close

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