
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2020MAH0048-000561
March 25, 2020

Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing

Supporting renters, landlords during COVID-19

Updated April 22, 2020, for clarification; Punjabi, French and Chinese translations available

VICTORIA – To support people and prevent the spread of COVID-19, the Province is introducing a new temporary rental supplement, halting evictions and freezing rents, among other actions.

The new rental supplement will help households by offering up to \$500 a month towards their rent, building on federal and provincial financial supports already announced for British Columbians facing financial hardship.

“With lost jobs and lost wages due to COVID-19, many tenants are worried they can’t make the rent. It’s a challenging time for landlords too,” said Premier John Horgan. “Nobody should lose their home as a result of COVID-19. Our plan will give much-needed financial relief to renters and landlords. It will also provide more security for renters, who will be able to stay in their homes without fear of eviction or increasing rents during this emergency.”

The funds will support renters experiencing a loss of income by helping them pay their rent and will be paid directly to landlords on their behalf, to ensure landlords continue to receive rental income during the pandemic. Benefiting people with low to moderate incomes, this supplement will be available to renters who are facing financial hardship as a result of the COVID-19 crisis, but do not qualify for existing rental assistance programs.

“People are feeling a lot of fear and anxiety and they need to be able to depend on the comfort and stability of home right now. Our government is taking steps to help take some of the pressure off renters and landlords and protect people’s health,” said Selina Robinson, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. “We’re helping renters pay rent and giving them the peace of mind that they have a stable home in these unprecedented times, and ensuring that landlords can count on some rental income right now to keep them afloat too.”

Spencer Chandra Herbert, MLA for Vancouver-West End, who led the Province’s Rental Housing Task Force, consulted with a broad range of tenant and landlord organizations to inform the development of these actions that meet the needs of both landlords and tenants during the pandemic.

“As we work together to fight this pandemic, we can’t afford to leave anyone behind,” Chandra Herbert said. “That’s why I delivered recommendations that address the immediate concerns of both landlords and tenants who are doing their best at this difficult time.”

The Province is implementing a number of additional measures to keep people housed and protect their health. The full list of immediate measures includes:

- The new temporary rent supplement will provide up to \$500 per month, paid directly to landlords.
- Halting evictions by ensuring a landlord may not issue a new notice to end tenancy for any reason. However, in exceptional cases where it may be needed to protect health and safety or to prevent undue damage to the property, landlords will be able to apply to the Residential Tenancy Branch for a hearing.
- Halting the enforcement of existing eviction orders issued by the Residential Tenancy Branch, except in extreme cases where there are safety concerns. The smaller number of court ordered evictions are up to the courts, which operate independently of government.
- Freezing new annual rent increases during the state of emergency.
- Preventing landlords from accessing rental units without the consent of the tenant (for example, for showings or routine maintenance), except in exceptional cases where it is needed to protect health and safety or to prevent undue damage to the unit.
- Restricting methods that renters and landlords can use to serve notices to reduce the potential transmission of COVID-19 (no personal service and allowing email).
- Allowing landlords to restrict the use of common areas by tenants or guests to protect against the transmission of COVID-19.

To further support renters and landlords, the Residential Tenancy Branch will implement several additional actions, including adjourning and rescheduling hearings in situations where people need additional time to prepare and extending timelines for filing applications for dispute resolution.

These latest steps are part of government's \$5-billion COVID-19 Action Plan to provide income supports, tax relief and direct funding for people, businesses and services.

Learn More:

For information about the temporary rental supplement, including eligibility criteria, visit: <http://bchousing.org/bctrs>

Or call 1 877 757-2577

For the latest medical updates, including case counts, prevention, risks and testing,

visit: <http://www.bccdc.ca/>

Or follow @CDCofBC on Twitter.

For provincial health officer orders, notices and guidance, visit: www.gov.bc.ca/phoguidance

For non-health related information, including financial, child care and education supports, travel, transportation and essential service information, visit: www.gov.bc.ca/Covid-19

Or call 1 888 COVID19 (1 888 268-4319) between 7:30 a.m. and 8 p.m., seven days a week.

Translations:

For a French translation, visit: http://news.gov.bc.ca/files/Renter-Landlord-Support_FR.pdf

For a Punjabi translation, visit: http://news.gov.bc.ca/files/Renter-Landord-Supports_COVID-19_BG_Punjabi.pdf

For a Chinese translation,

visit: https://news.gov.bc.ca/files/Rent_Support_COVID_Mar25_Chinese.pdf

A backgrounder follows.

Contacts:

NOTE: For public information about the temporary rental supplement, including eligibility criteria, visit:
<http://bchousing.org/bctrs>
Or call 1 877 757-2577

For media only:
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BACKGROUND

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Support details for renters, landlords during COVID-19

This comprehensive package supports renters by:

- halting new and active evictions, except for exceptional circumstances, so that no one is evicted because of COVID-19 and people can remain in their homes during this crisis;
- helping renters pay a portion of their rent each month through a new temporary rental supplement of up to \$500 per month, building on other federal and provincial financial supports;
- freezing annual rent increases to ensure that landlords cannot apply an annual rent increase for existing tenants during the COVID-19 crisis;
- supporting tenants in social distancing and self-isolation by providing them the right to prevent landlords from accessing rental units without the tenant's consent (for example, for showings or routine maintenance), except in exceptional cases where access is needed to respond to urgent health and safety concerns or to prevent undue damage to the unit;
- restricting methods of service for Residential Tenancy Branch disputes or notices to reduce the potential transmission of COVID-19 (no in-person service) and allowing service by email; and
- allowing landlords to restrict the use of common areas by tenants or guests to protect against the transmission of COVID-19.

The new changes support landlords by:

- providing a new temporary rental supplement of up to \$500 per month, which will be paid directly to landlords, ensuring they continue to receive rental income during the pandemic;
- preserving the ability for landlords to apply to the Residential Tenancy Branch for permission to issue a notice to end tenancy in exceptional circumstances, for example when the safety of landlord or other tenants is at risk;
- allowing landlords to restrict the use of common areas by tenants or guests to protect against the transmission of COVID-19; and
- restricting methods of service for Residential Tenancy Branch disputes or notices to reduce the potential transmission of COVID-19 (no in-person service) and allowing service by email.

Contacts:

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