

## Key Information and Resources for Tenants during COVID-19



### Updates

Important information for tenants specifically related to the COVID-19 pandemic can be found on the [Province's website](#) (updated: March 30, 2020). Some of the important updated information for tenants is summarized below:

- On March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021, changes were made to [Tenancy Laws](#). Here is a summary of these changes:
  - [The rent increase freeze has been extended until December 31, 2021](#). Annual rent increase notices with an effective date after March 30, 2020 and before January 1, 2022 are canceled. If you are a tenant and received a rent increase notice that falls within these dates, do not pay the increased amount. If a landlord does collect the increased amount during the period that rent increases are not allowed, tenants can deduct the additional amount from future rent payments. This rent increase freeze does not include commercial tenancies, non-profit housing tenancies where rent is geared to income, co-operative housing and some assisted living facilities. More information on if tenancies are covered under BC Tenancy laws can be found [here](#).
  - [Cap on rent increases](#); starting in 2022 and beyond, rent increases will be capped at the rate of inflation.
  - [Changes have been introduced to further protect tenants from evictions for the purposes of renovations](#). Effective July 1, 2021, landlords will be required to apply to the Residential Tenancy Branch (RTB) before they can terminate a tenancy agreement for the purpose of renovating. In addition, landlords will not be able to end tenancies for renovations that are not substantial or do not require the rental unit to be vacant.
  - Other proposed changes to the Residential Tenancy Act and the Manufactured Home Park Tenancy Act are outlined in the [Province's News Release](#).
- On March 8<sup>th</sup> the Province announced a new rent aid program called the [British Columbia Housing Benefit](#). This program will help make rent more affordable for select households that do not qualify for other rental assistance programs. The benefit will be distributed to identified priority groups either by non-profit housing providers who will identify and select eligible applicants, or in some cases by BC Housing who will select eligible households from [The Housing Registry database](#). More information will be posted on this benefit as it becomes available.
- [Federal Government Supports](#): refer to the second page of this document for information on federal supports during the pandemic.

### Resources for Tenants

If you are a New Westminister tenant with immediate concerns and questions about your existing tenancy or building, the following resources may be able to offer further assistance:

- [BC Government - Residential Tenancy Branch](#) provides information on tenant and landlord rights under the Residential Tenancy Act. Phone: 604-660-1020 or 1-800-665-8779, email: [HSRTO@gov.bc.ca](mailto:HSRTO@gov.bc.ca),
- [Tenant Resource and Advisory Center \(TRAC\)](#) provides support and guidance on starting a tenancy, issues during a tenancy, ending a tenancy, pursuing tenant rights, and dispute resolution. Tenant Infoline: 604-255-3099,
- [Community Legal Assistance Society \(CLAS\)](#) and [Access Pro Bono](#) offer free legal advice to tenants in British Columbia.

## Paying Rent during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Provincial legislation requires that tenants pay rent in full and on time during the pandemic, however, there are a number of support options available to tenants facing financial difficulties as a result of the COVID-19. A list of support resources is provided below:

Agency	Details and Web Resources
<p><b>The Purpose Society</b></p> 	<p><b>New Westminster Rent Bank (NWRB)</b>; the NWRB offers low-fee, no interest, short-term loans to low income individuals and families that live in the City of New Westminster and are at risk of eviction or essential utility disconnection due to a temporary and unexpected financial crisis. The NWRB also offers assistance with damage deposits, pet deposits and first month's rent for low income individuals and families who are moving into a new residence in New Westminster and are financially unable to meet these expenses.</p> <p>For more information on the New Westminster Rent Bank Program and to apply, please visit the <a href="#">Lower Mainland Purpose Society website</a> or call 604-526-2522.</p>
<p><b>Seniors Services Society</b></p> 	<p><b>Seniors Services Society Seniors Loan Program</b> can offer up to \$1,000 to seniors aged 60 and older who are at risk of eviction due to a temporary shortage of funds, or financial crisis. Funding may also be available for a utility payment or damage deposit, if the person is homeless or their current housing is unsafe or suitable. Funding is provided in the form of short-term interest free loans. For more eligibility and other information, please visit the <a href="#">Seniors Services Society website</a>.</p>
<p><b>Government of British Columbia</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Rental Assistance Program (RAP)</b> provides financial assistance to eligible low-income working families to help with their monthly rent payments.</li> <li>• <b>Shelter Aid For Elderly Renters (SAFER)</b> is a rent subsidy program for eligible seniors renting in the private market.</li> </ul> <p>The BC Temporary Rent Supplement (TRS) program ended on August 31, 2020.</p>
<p><b>Government of Canada</b></p> 	<p><b>Federal government financial supports</b> include benefits for individuals who are facing a loss of income due to the pandemic as well as other financial supports for low and modest income earners.</p> <p>The <b>Canadian Emergency Response Benefit (CERB)</b> has been replaced with three new Employment Insurance (EI) benefits programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The Canada Recovery Benefit (CRB)</b> will provide \$500 per week for up to 26 weeks to workers who have stopped working or had their income reduced by at least 50% due to COVID-19, and who are not eligible for Employment Insurance. <b>The CRB does not renew automatically. Each 2 week period must be applied for separately.</b></li> <li>• <b>The Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit (CRSB)</b> will provide \$500 per week for up to two weeks, for workers who are sick or must self-isolate for reasons related to COVID-19.</li> <li>• <b>The Canada Recovery Caregiving Benefit (CRCB)</b> will provide \$500 per week for up to 26 weeks per household for people who are unable to work because they are caring for either children under 12 or dependents with disabilities who cannot attend care, daycare or school due to closures, or who cannot attend care for medical reasons.</li> </ul> <p>More information is available on the Government of Canada website. Questions can be answered by calling 1-833-966-2099.</p>

While we strive to ensure the correctness of this information, should you find an inaccuracy or for more information on this document, please contact the Planning Division by phone at 604-527-4532 or by email at [plnpost@newwestcity.ca](mailto:plnpost@newwestcity.ca).