

## Rent – To Pay or Not to Pay?

The COVID-19 pandemic has turned our world upside down; whatever was normal isn't! This includes the many situations where residents have been laid off or had their work hours reduced. What can/should you do if a resident tells you s/he can't pay some or all of this or next month's rent?

This is one of the thousands of situations never experienced in our lifetime. The Ontario government has banned evictions for non-payment of rent during the pandemic. However, Ontario has always had unbalanced, tenant friendly legislation. I hope the BC government doesn't follow suit, ignoring the fact that the vast majority of rental housing providers are not like the big banks! They are individuals or families; in addition to operating their rental properties, part of the rents they receive pays their mortgage, funds their RRSP, or feeds and clothes their children.

Thus, the decisions you must make if residents say they can't pay rent are difficult and individual. Undoubtedly a few will try to take advantage of the situation and claim poverty, unemployment, etc. I suggest in any claim from residents they can only pay some or no rent, you ask for documentary evidence that they have been laid off or had their hours significantly reduced. An employer should give a layoff notice in writing and must provide a federal government form the person needs to apply for employment insurance benefits.

- You can give 10 days notice to end the tenancy, but choose not to follow up until XX date, but that can't be too long.
- You can sign a simple agreement that, once back to work, the resident will pay \$X per month for Y months to catch up on unpaid rent; this may or may not be difficult to enforce. I can draft an agreement for you.
- No matter what decisions you make, be sure to record them in writing and give the tenant a copy.