

The politicians made their announcements on Wednesday, but unfortunately, the Residential Tenancy Branch has issued zero information on how the various changes are supposed to work and what landlords and tenants can and cannot do; so, rumours and misinformation are flying. Here are the details as I know them today:

Rent payments

Tenants are still required to pay their full rent.

If tenants have lost their jobs, had their hours reduced, have to stay at home because quarantined, or to care for children or the sick, they are eligible for rent subsidy payments from both the federal and provincial governments.

Federal: By applying for employment insurance benefits, eligible tenants can receive up to \$2000 a month for the next four months to be used to pay rent. I believe this money will be paid directly to the tenants. The government is calling this the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB). Google CERB for more information.

Provincial: By submitting their EI documents to BC Housing, eligible tenants can receive a one-time payment of up to \$1000 plus up to \$500 a month for the next four months. The up to \$500 will be paid by BC Housing direct to the tenant's landlord. I don't know if that also applies to the up to \$1000 one-time payment. BC Housing will not have their application portal available until April 15!

I assume the federal money will be paid per tenant. The provincial money could be by tenant or by unit. At this point, 11:30 am, March 27, the Residential Tenancy Branch has said nothing about anything!

Bottom line: Be as flexible as reasonable with respect to April's rent as both governments need time to set up the systems and issue the payments. Each situation being different and it's important that you tell your tenant what is acceptable, not the other way around. Use the deferred rent payment agreement form available to members on the MHPOABC website and sent to my clients earlier this week.

Entering and Showing Rental Units and Sites

Somewhat buried in the politicians' announcements was a statement that tenants now can refuse landlord entry to their rental units, except in the case of emergency. This one is understandable, particularly with respect to showings to prospective tenants or purchasers. I wouldn't want strangers coming into my home right now. I don't know if this will apply to manufactured home park owners relative to entering residents' sites.

. . . . Al Kemp

Further to my email an hour ago, I've just heard from the RTB Executive Director about the amount of work they have to do to make sure implementation of the government's announcements are can be correctly and fairly done, through regulations, policies and processes. I'm sure the RTB will let stakeholders such as me know as soon as their work is complete and ready for guidance to landlords and tenants as we all try to cope with this unprecedented health crisis.

Stay tuned and stay safe.

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