

RENT SUPPLEMENT PROGRAM REDESIGN

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1. What is happening to the rent assistance?

- Alberta's government is re-opening its Rent Supplement Program and launching a new benefit.

2. What is changing?

- The Rent Assistance Benefit, formerly the Direct to Tenant Rent Supplement, will continue to provide long-term, stable support for those most in need.
 - This benefit will be open for applications on April 1, 2021.
- The Temporary Rent Assistance Benefit, a new benefit, will provide a modest subsidy for up to two years to help working Albertans and those between jobs afford their rent while they stabilize or improve their situation.
 - This benefit will launch and be open for applications on May 1, 2021.
- The Private Landlord Rent Supplement will remain closed to new applicants.

3. Why did the government decide to make changes?

- A new approach to rent assistance will provide housing support to more people and allow renters more flexibility in their housing choice.

4. How much consultation was done before implementing these changes?

- The Government of Alberta consulted housing stakeholders as part of the Rent Supplement Program redesign in 2019.
- A review of rent assistance was part of the Affordable Housing Review. The panel heard from almost 160 individuals, organizations and companies through engagement sessions and received more than 120 written submissions.

5. How much does this program cost taxpayers?

- The total funding for the Rent Supplement Program in 2021-22 is \$68 million. This includes an additional \$16 million allocated in *Budget 2021*.

6. I am a current recipient. How does this change affect me?

- Direct to Tenant Rent Supplement recipients will receive rent assistance through the Rent Assistance Benefit. There will be no change to their benefit amount.
- Private Landlord Rent Supplement recipients will be transitioned to the Rent Assistance Benefit, as funding agreements for those units expire. Recipients may see a decrease in their benefit amount when they transition to Rent Assistant Benefit.
 - Impacts will vary based on household size and location.

7. I receive Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped / Income Support. How does this change affect me?

- AISH and Income Support recipients receiving Direct to Tenant Rent Supplement will see no change except the name, now called the Rent Assistance Benefit.
- The rent benefit provided through private landlords (the Private Landlord Rent Supplement) will remain closed to new applicants, and current clients will be transitioned to the Rental Assistance Benefit, which will be paid directly to tenants, as agreements expire.
- These changes to the Rent Supplement Program will have no impact on benefit levels for the most vulnerable, particularly those receiving Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped and Income Support.

8. I'm on a waitlist for an affordable housing unit. Can I take advantage of the new benefit?

- If you meet the criteria, you can apply for the new Temporary Rent Assistance Benefit, even if you're already on a waiting list for an affordable housing unit.
- If you are already waiting for the Direct to Tenant Rent Supplement – now called Rent Assistance Benefit – you should contact the housing operator to ensure your application is up to date or apply for the new benefit.

9. Am I eligible for the Rent Assistance Benefit?

- Your household may be eligible if you are below the local income threshold. You can find information on local income thresholds online at alberta.ca/affordable-housing-programs.aspx.
- The Rent Assistance Benefit is available through most housing management bodies across Alberta.

10. Am I eligible for the Temporary Rent Assistance Benefit?

- Your household may be eligible if you are employed or have been recently unemployed in the last 24 months and are not receiving social assistance, including: Income Support, Learner Income Support, Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped, Alberta Seniors Benefit, Guaranteed Income Supplement, or Old Age Security.
- Available through housing management bodies in Calgary, Edmonton, Fort McMurray, Grande Prairie, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, and Red Deer.

11. Why is the new temporary benefit only available in Alberta's seven major centres?

- Alberta's government is committed to support those with the greatest need, while maintaining the sustainability of the rent supplement program.
- The temporary benefit is specifically geared to working Albertans in big cities, as that is where demand is the highest and affordability is the lowest.
- The long-term benefit continues to be available through most housing management bodies across the province.

12. Why has a two-year limit been placed on the new benefit, and what happens at the end of the second year?

- The new Temporary Rent Assistance Benefit is intentionally structured to encourage recipients to participate in the workforce, plan for their future, and eventually exit from supports.
- At the end of the second year, households can reapply for the Temporary Rent Assistance Benefit, or apply for the Rent Assistance Benefit or other housing supports if eligible.

13. How do I apply for rent assistance?

- First, determine which program meets your needs and then find a local housing operator
 - You can find local housing operators online at alberta.ca/affordable-housing-programs.aspx, under How to Apply.
- Contact the local housing operator for an application or if you have questions about the application process.