

FACT SHEET

Provincial supports and protections for senior renters in B.C.

If you are a renter in British Columbia, you have rights under the law and may have access to provincial support programs.

Provincial Support Programs

- If you are over the age of 60, you may qualify for the [Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters \(SAFER\)](#) grant which is a monthly rent supplement.
 - Your income and your rent will determine if you qualify.
- If you are over the age of 55, you may qualify for [Seniors Subsidized Housing \(SSH\)](#) which will provide you with an apartment directly subsidized by BC Housing. Your rent will be calculated as a percentage of your income or be capped at well below market rents.
 - Your income and assets will determine if you qualify for this program.

Renter Rights in B.C.

- If you are paying rent for living accommodation, you are presumptively covered by the Residential Tenancy Act. The only time the Act does not apply is if it falls into one of the exceptions in [s. 4 of the Act](#).
- Rental housing is still covered by the Act if you receive a subsidy. Subsidy alone is not a reason to be excluded from protections included in the Act.
- Rental housing is still covered by the Act if it includes the provision of services such as housekeeping or meals. Receiving services as part of your tenancy is not a reason to be excluded from protections included in the Act.
- If you live in a long-term care facility, you are not covered by the Act.

Legislated Rental Protections

- You are entitled to the following protections under the Residential Tenancy Act:
 - Your rent can only be increased once per year.
 - The landlord must provide you with three months' written notice on the official Notice of Rent Increase form.

- The percentage increase a landlord can charge is determined each year by the provincial government. Historically, allowable rent increases are close to the inflation rate.
- If you are required to pay for certain services or a service package as part of your rent, even if you pay for them separately, the percentage cost increase cannot be more than the annual allowable rent increase.
- If there are optional services that you can choose to purchase, you can not be evicted if you decide not to purchase them.
 - Optional services are not covered by the provincial allowable rent increase and landlords can increase these fees at their discretion.
- A landlord can only issue a Notice of Eviction for very specific reasons. The most common reason is failure to pay rent.
 - A landlord must deliver the Notice of Eviction on the official government form which must include the reason for eviction.
 - If the landlord is providing an eviction notice for necessary renovations or repairs, they must have already received the required work permits from local government and attach copies to the Notice of Eviction.
 - The amount of notice a landlord must provide depends on the reason for eviction.

Rent and Service Package Increases – Common Scenarios

Rent and Mandatory Service Package

A tenant pays \$1,500 a month for a one-bedroom unit and they are required, as part of their tenancy, to purchase a service package for \$2,500 a month that includes two meals per day and weekly cleaning. The landlord must treat the service package as part of the rent if they require the tenant to purchase the service package as a condition of the tenancy. The total monthly payment is \$4,000 and if the allowable annual rent increase is 2%, the rent would be \$1,530, the service package would be \$2,550 and the total monthly payments would be \$4,080.

Rent and Optional Services

When services are optional, a tenant can choose to purchase them or not. If the landlord allows a tenant to opt out of the service package, then any optional services purchased and service cost increases are not protected under the Residential Tenancy Act. However, any rental cost increases are protected and the tenant is required to pay the rent increase if it is within government's annual allowable amount.

In this case, if the rent is \$1,500, and the allowable annual rent increase is 2%, the rent is \$1,530. If the optional service package is \$2,500, and the landlord chooses to increase services by 5%, the total for services would be \$2,655. In this scenario, the landlord cannot evict the

tenant for opting out of optional services even if the tenant purchased them previously.

Dispute Resolution

If you believe your landlord has increased your rent and/or your service package beyond the allowable amount, you can apply for dispute resolution with the [Residential Tenancy Branch](#). An independent arbitrator will look at the facts and determine what increases the landlord is allowed to charge and issue a binding decision on both the tenant and the landlord.

You can apply for dispute resolution online or by submitting a paper application. An application for dispute resolution must be in the applicable approved form, include particulars of the dispute, and be accompanied by a \$100 fee. The Residential Tenancy Branch can also be reached by calling 1-800-665-8779.

If you have further questions or need assistance applying for SAFER, Seniors Subsidized Housing or submitting a dispute resolution with the Residential Tenancy Branch, please contact our office and we can assist you with completing the necessary forms.

About the Office of the Seniors Advocate

The Office of the Seniors Advocate is an independent office of the provincial government with a mandate of monitoring seniors' services and reporting on systemic issues affecting seniors. The office also provides information and referral to seniors and their caregivers by calling toll-free 1 877 952-3181, BC211, via email at info@seniorsadvocatebc.ca, Canada Post and the OSA web site <https://www.seniorsadvocatebc.ca/>.

Contact

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