



**MEDIA RELEASE:** New Housing Relief Fund and Rent Bank Launched in Greater Victoria to help renter households struggling to maintain their housing.

**For Immediate Release: February 16, 2021**

**VICTORIA:** The Community Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria and BC Rent Bank are launching a Rent Bank which will provide short term financial help for low-to-moderate income households at risk of losing their housing due to a temporary financial crisis. In conjunction with this the Community Council is also launching the Greater Victoria Housing Relief Security Fund, a one-time housing grant program between February and the end of April to provide eligible applicants with support for rent, essential utilities, and basic needs.

The Greater Victoria Rent Bank Program will provide small, interest-free loans to eligible renters who have the ability to repay the loans over a six- to 24-month period. Loans can be used for money owed for rent, overdue essential utilities, and security deposits or first month's rent to secure housing.

Some applicants may be eligible for small one-time grants. The one-time housing grant program is funded in part by the Government of Canada's Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy. The Government of Canada designated the Capital Regional District (CRD), as the community entity to administer the program.

A little more than \$500,000 of funding is being made available to assist capital region households at risk of homelessness through the Capital Regional District's administration of the Government of Canada's Reaching Home Program: Canada's Homelessness Strategy. The funding, ending April 30, 2021, will be available for one-time, non-repayable grants of up to \$3,000 to help renters who are experiencing rent arrears that threaten their housing security. The program is operated through the Community Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria and is available to individuals, families, and persons transitioning to stable housing.

The Greater Victoria Housing Security Fund & Rent Bank Program will complement loans with access to other information and local supports – including financial advice, mediations between renters and landlords, or access to other community supports and services to help stabilize an individual's housing in the future.

The Community Council will be working with local service agencies, and tenant and landlord associations to reach tenants in need. Individuals and referral partners can check eligibility and submit applications online at the Community Council's website: <http://communitycouncil.ca> or the BC Rent Bank <http://bcrentbank.ca>.

Before the COVID 19 pandemic hit, 44 per cent of renter households in Greater Victoria were housing insecure - spending more than 30 per cent of their income on shelter costs (rent and utilities). One in five were spending more than 50 per cent of their income on shelter costs. The pandemic has put many of these households at greater risk and many have been unable to pay their rent.

This program is only a short-term solution and may not be an option for renters who do not have any income source or capacity to pay rent in the future. Renters should check with the Greater Victoria Rent Bank -operated by Community Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria - for details on how to qualify (see link below).

The Greater Victoria Rent Bank joins the 16 other rent banks operating throughout the province.

**The Community Social Planning Council** is a non-profit community organization that has been leading housing and homelessness, antipoverty and broader community development initiatives across the region for over 80 years. Regional programs include Point in Time Homeless Count and the Low-Income Transit Assistance Program. For more information visit [communitycouncil.ca](http://communitycouncil.ca).

**BC Rent Bank** is a project of VanCity Community Foundation and funded by the Province of BC. The mandate of the BC Rent Bank is to support the funding of existing rent banks; to provide support and seed funding for the establishment of new rent banks in B.C.; and, to create the infrastructure necessary to support a potential future province-wide rent bank system or service. For more information or to find a rent bank in BC, visit <http://bcrentbank.ca>.

## Quotes

**Diana Gibson, Executive Director of the Community Social Planning Council:** “We are very keen to lead this initiative to directly support renters and are grateful to the Capital Regional District, the BC Rent Bank and our community partners for helping to make this a reality. Our recent research has shown the extent of housing insecurity in the region and how vulnerable households were when COVID-19 hit.”

**David Eby, Attorney General and Minister Responsible for Housing:** “A constructive way to address homelessness proactively is to support people in avoiding losing their homes in the first place. Rent Banks are an excellent way to prevent homelessness and help people in financial distress keep a roof overhead. Our government is supporting important and creative community-level work like rent banks to turn this housing and homelessness crisis around.”

**Nicholas Simons, Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction:** “A constructive way to address homelessness proactively is to support people in avoiding losing their homes in the first place. Rent Banks are an excellent way to prevent homelessness and help people in financial distress keep a roof overhead. Our government is supporting important and creative community-level work like rent banks to turn this housing and homelessness crisis around.”

**Colin Plant, Chair, Capital Regional District (CRD):** “Through its role in the Government of Canada’s Reaching Home Program, the CRD is pleased to be able to utilize a portion of this

funding to provide essential resources to a service that will reduce economic hardship, help keep individuals and families housed and prevent more people from falling into homelessness in the region.”

**Melissa Giles, Project Lead, BC Rent Bank:** “We are grateful to partner with the Community Social Planning Council to be able to offer rent bank services throughout the greater Victoria area. We know that the impact of COVID-19 has resulted in increased vulnerability for renters, and that a rent bank provides a vital service in assisting people to maintain their housing.”

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