

New provincial rental assistance programs brings much-needed relief to Edmonton renters

For Immediate Release

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EDMONTON – The Edmonton Social Planning Council is encouraged by the Government of Alberta’s [announcement](#) of two new rental assistance programs, the Rent Assistance Benefit and the Temporary Rent Assistance Benefit, which will be open for applications on April 1st and May 1st, respectively.

Our agency has identified the challenges facing renters in Edmonton as an intractable problem for more than a decade. Our 2020 report, [The High Cost of Waiting: Tenant-Focused Solutions to Enhance Housing Affordability](#), summarizes many of these challenges through a literature review, interviews with key informants, and most crucially of all the lived experiences of renters forced to wait on the bottom of a years long wait list to receive support through rental assistance programs.

The COVID-19 pandemic has posed a lot of challenges, especially for those living in poverty and low-income and facing precarious housing. As of February 2020, nearly 10,000 people alone were on the Capital Region Housing wait list to receive rent assistance. These benefits have the potential to greatly reduce that wait list, especially the Temporary Rent Assistance Benefit.

This particular benefit is only expected to last two years, but it still has the potential to help renters improve their situation, especially as we work towards recovering from this unprecedented pandemic. In addition, both benefits will go directly to the tenant instead of the landlord (which is how the [Private Landlord Rent Supplement](#) program, now closed for new applications, is designed). This was identified as a key ask from focus group participants who contributed to our *High Cost of Waiting* report.

While more permanent and sustainable solutions will need to be implemented—namely a federal-provincial agreement as outlined in the proposed Canada Housing Benefit—this measure will bring about some much-needed relief for renters in Alberta.

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