

# END LEGISLATED POVERTY

N E W S L E T T E R

July, 1992

#55

## Student loans being taken off tax credits

Lots of people on welfare have had a big problem getting their child tax credit or their GST credit this year. If they had an old student loan that wasn't paid back, the government deducts it from the child tax credit and the GST tax credit.

So if you were expecting \$500 in the mail, you might not get anything. Quite a shock! A woman who lives in Ontario had a student loan that was 18 years old. She is a single parent on welfare. The government took her tax credit and told her she had to pay \$600 interest on the student loan. This has happened to people in B. C. too.

There is a way to get your tax credit back if you are on welfare or low income. There is a hardship form you can fill out. You can get it by writing to: Student Assistance Branch, P. O.

Box 2090, Station D, Ottawa,  
Ontario K1P 6C8.

Or, you can get one of the groups  
on the back page to help you out.



## **Women on welfare to have choice on maintenance**

The NDP government is going to change the maintenance law for women on welfare.

The new changes should be in place by October.

Right now, any woman with children who applies for welfare has to register with the family maintenance program.

This means that the government will try to track down her ex-partner and force him to pay child support. They will do this even if the woman doesn't want it to happen.

End Legislated Poverty has been trying to get this law changed for years. We think women should have choice about pursuing the father of their children.

"Choice is the whole point of the new system," says Ron Willems, the Director of Income Assistance in Victoria.

Under the new system, this is what will happen:

The worker will ask the woman to talk to a Family Maintenance

Worker. The woman can refuse to do this if she wants to.

The Family Maintenance Worker will tell the woman what her options are for getting maintenance. She can get involved in the Family Maintenance Program if she wants. Or, she can refuse. Or, she could try getting private legal help.

But the law is not in effect until October, probably.

In the meantime you can work with the Family Maintenance Program if you want to. BUT you do not have to. If you don't want to work with the Maintenance Program, tell the Family Maintenance Worker that you do not want to participate in the program. You will then get a waiver which says you don't have to participate.

Willems says that all people who are registered in the program will get a letter from the Ministry before October. The letter will give them a chance to stay in the program or get out if they want to.

## Tenants Rights Action Coalition

The Tenants Rights Action Coalition was formed in June 1983 because there were some new changes to the Residential Tenancy Act which really hurt tenants. The Coalition represents all of the major tenant organizations in the Lower Mainland. We have been fighting for full rights for tenants ever since our group was formed. We believe that tenants can win proper protections with the help of a strong organization.

The Coalition is a membership organization. This means both individual tenants and groups such as one in your building, or your community can become members if you want.

For more information, for help to organize a tenant meeting, or for someone to speak to your group about tenants' rights, call the Coalition at:

**255-3099**



The Tenants Rights Action Coalition is funded by the Law Foundation of BC, the City of Vancouver and donations.

**THE**  **LAW**  
**FOUNDATION**  
**OF BRITISH COLUMBIA**

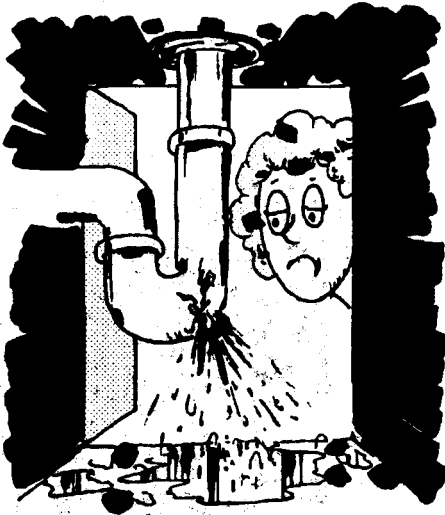
# Tenants Rights Action Coalition



**255-0546**  
Information Hotline

## Got a Problem?

Are you tired of repairs never being done? Have you been given a rent increase without proper notice? Have you just received an eviction notice that you do not think is fair? Are you having trouble getting your security deposit back? Not sure of what your rights are? **Call the Tenants Rights Action Coalition Information Hotline at 255-0546.**



## What Rights?

In 1984, the provincial government brought in major changes to the law covering landlord and tenant matters in British Columbia. But despite losing rent controls and other protections, you still have rights! And there still is a government office that settles problems. It is called the Residential Tenancy Branch and it is located at 5021 Kingsway in Burnaby. Here are some of your most basic rights. Call the Tenants Rights Action Coalition for more legal information on what you can do about your problem.

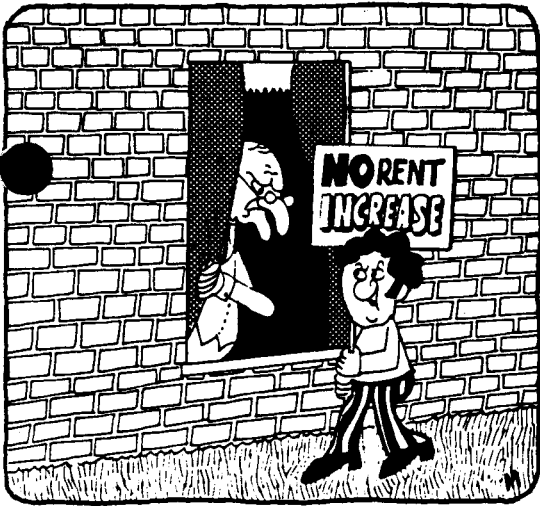
## Protect Yourself!

Wherever possible, make sure that all matters having to do with your tenancy are **in writing** and make sure you have witnesses. Always get receipts for any money you pay to your landlord and if at all possible pay by cheque. Have someone with you to witness the condition of your suite when you move in and when you move out in order to help you get back your security deposit later.

## Right to Repairs

Landlords are responsible for keeping their property in good repair and for making sure any service or facility that was originally included in the rent is continued. They also must keep the property up to standards set by municipal by-laws. If your landlord refuses to make needed repairs, you can apply for arbitration at the Residential Tenancy Branch or if you live in Vancouver you can call a city inspector at 873-7398.





## Rent Increases

Rents can be raised by any amount now that there are no rent controls. But you only have to pay one rent increase every twelve months. You must get three months notice of any rent increase **in writing**.

## Eviction Notice

Notices for eviction for any reason must be in writing and on a special government form. Your landlord **cannot** verbally tell you that you are evicted or write you a letter. You must receive a legal notice **before** the day the rent is due. You can get a **ten day notice** for not paying the rent.

You can get a **one month notice** for causing a problem (like seriously damaging the property or disturbing other tenants). And you can get a **two month notice** if the landlord intends to use the property for some other reason or intends to move in or renovate. If you do not agree with an eviction, fight it right away at the Residential Tenancy Branch.

## Damage Deposits

Landlords **cannot** take away money from your security deposit for things that normally just wear out over time. They can only make you pay if you damage something or if they lose money because you did not give proper notice when you moved. If you do not agree with the landlord when he has kept your money, you can take him to arbitration.

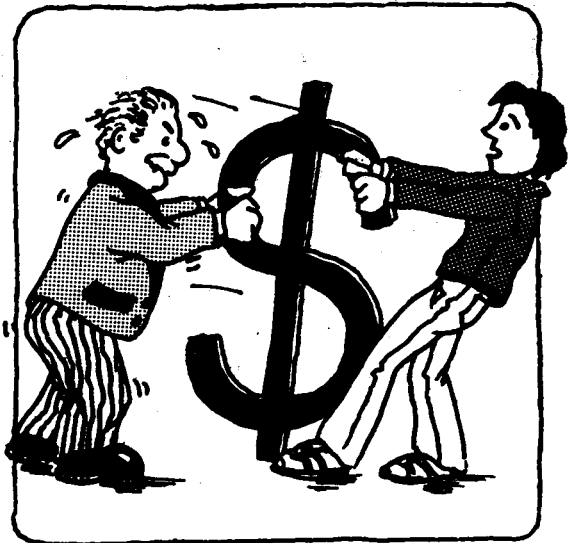
## Arbitration

If your landlord will not listen to reason, you may have to apply for arbitration through the Residential Tenancy Branch. It costs \$35 to file a dispute, but if you win, the money may be given back to you.

You apply for arbitration at

4TH Floor, 5021 Kingsway, Burnaby, BC

Telephone: 660-3456



## Get Organized

When tenants unite, landlords have to listen! If you have a problem that you think affects other tenants in your building, you will get results quickly if you gather together and take action. There is strength in numbers!

Tenants in the Lower Mainland have come together to form tenant committees to fight for repairs, to stop unjust evictions and to fight huge rent increases. The Tenants Rights Action Coalition can help you get started.



## Form a Group!

If your building has a common problem, organize a common solution! Talk to your neighbours and see if any want to help you set up a tenants meeting. Photocopy notices of the time and place, and put them under everybody's door. At the first meeting, make a list of complaints, then try to decide what problems all the tenants have in common. You may want to call city inspectors or phone the newspapers. **Joint action brings results!**



For quick information on your rights as a tenant, call the Tenants Rights Action Coalition Hotline at 255-0546.

If you have a complicated problem and it may be better to talk to someone in person, the Tenants Rights Action Coalition has a tenant legal clinic every Thursday evening at Britannia Community Centre.

## Tenant Legal Clinic

Britannia Community Centre  
1661 Napier Street, Vancouver, BC

Thursdays 6 - 9 PM

## Survival Guide

For a more complete explanation of your rights as a tenant, the Tenants Rights Action Coalition publishes the **Tenant Survival Guide**. Call us for a copy.

A decorative border with floral and leaf motifs surrounds the central text. The border is composed of stylized leaves and flowers, with a central floral element at the top and bottom, and leafy branches on the sides.

# WASTE OF A NATION

POOR PEOPLE SPEAK OUT  
AT

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MAIN & 15th

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END LEGISLATED POVERTY

For further info: 879-1229

## Get help with welfare from these groups

**Downtown Eastside Residents' Association**  
9 E. Hastings St. Phone 682-0931. Open Monday through Friday.

**First United Church**  
320 E. Hastings. Come Monday through Friday, 9 to 11 am.

**Vancouver and District Public Housing Tenants' Association**  
246 E. Broadway. Phone 872-8648. Open 9 to 4 Monday through Friday.

**B.C. Coalition of People with Disabilities**  
#204 456 W. Broadway. Phone 872-1278. Open 9 to 5 Monday through Friday.

**Little Mountain Tenants' Association**  
125 E. 37th. Phone 324-0555. Open 10 to 3 Monday through Friday.

**Law Students Legal Advice Program.**  
For help with a wide variety of legal problems. Locations throughout the Lower Mainland. Call 822-5791.



*For help with landlord and tenant problems:*

Call the Tenants' Rights Coalition Hotline: 255-0546.

*For help with welfare, serious criminal problems or urgent family problems related to the law:*

Go to the Legal Services Society, 191 Alexander St. Open 9 to 3:30 on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday. Open 12:30 to 3:30 on Wednesday. Legal Services may be able to help with child custody and restraining orders.