

Service Focus at the Residential Tenancy Branch

Residential Tenancy Branch (RTB)



UBCM - September 2024

Today's discussion

The role of the Residential Tenancy Branch

Current context

A citizen-focused approach to change

Progress to date

Looking ahead

Questions?

A semi-circular arrangement of several paper houses in various colors (white, red, yellow, brown) on a light-colored surface. The houses are stylized with cut-out windows and doors.

Today's objective:

To shed light on efforts made to speed up and strengthen residential tenancy dispute resolution and to outline commitments for the future.

The role of the RTB, broadly:

1. Information services
2. Dispute resolution
3. Compliance & enforcement





The Residential Tenancy Act

The Act was established to provide a fair balance between a tenants' right to find safe, secure and affordable housing with a landlords' right to maintain their property and realize a return on investment.

Current context

BC's Rental Market

- 1.5 million renters in BC living in approximately 600,000 households
- Low vacancy rates, insufficient supply and lack of access to affordable housing

RTB Wait Times

- Limited resources, increasing caseloads and legislated rules that focused on arbitration resulted in significant wait times for hearings and reduced citizen satisfaction with RTB services.



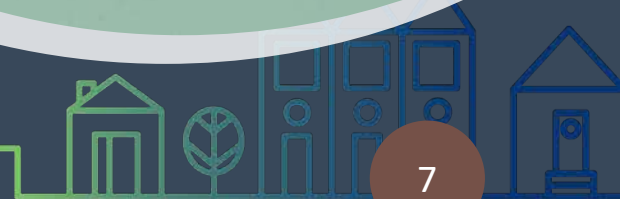
A citizen-focused approach

Going through a residential tenancy dispute is stressful, but confusing processes and lengthy wait times shouldn't add to that stress.

Investing to improve experience

In December 2022, the RTB's budget was increased by \$15.6 million. This 40% budget increase allowed:

- The creation of 50 full-time staff positions
- A doubling of the Compliance & Enforcement Unit
- Improvements to service accessibility
- Improvements to process efficiency





Revitalizing the RTB

Objectives

1. Promote and support the ongoing cultural shift away from being an arbitration focused organization to an organization that provides a continuum of dispute resolution services
2. Empower citizens to solve their disputes at the most appropriate level
3. Make the RTB dispute resolution services more accessible and efficient



Four pillars of focus

Strategic plan forms the foundation of a revitalized RTB

Adopted in December 2023, this plan focuses on four key areas:

- Our people – ensuring those who work directly with citizens feel empowered, valued and equipped to do their jobs well
- Service excellence – ensuring citizen satisfaction
- Culture of innovation – embracing new ideas and ways of working to enhance services to citizens
- Stakeholder & public education – ensuring the public understand tenancy rights and responsibilities

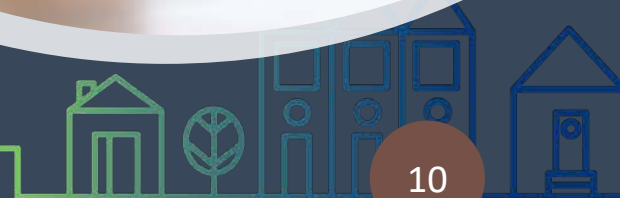


Dispute prevention

Ensuring access to information, quickly, and in multiple languages makes for successful tenancies.

Making complex policy accessible

One of the best ways to lower wait times for dispute services is to stop them before they happen. This has been achieved through user-focused website redevelopment, interpretation services, and through the call centre, which boasts a dedicated staff of 70 information officers.





Compliance & Enforcement

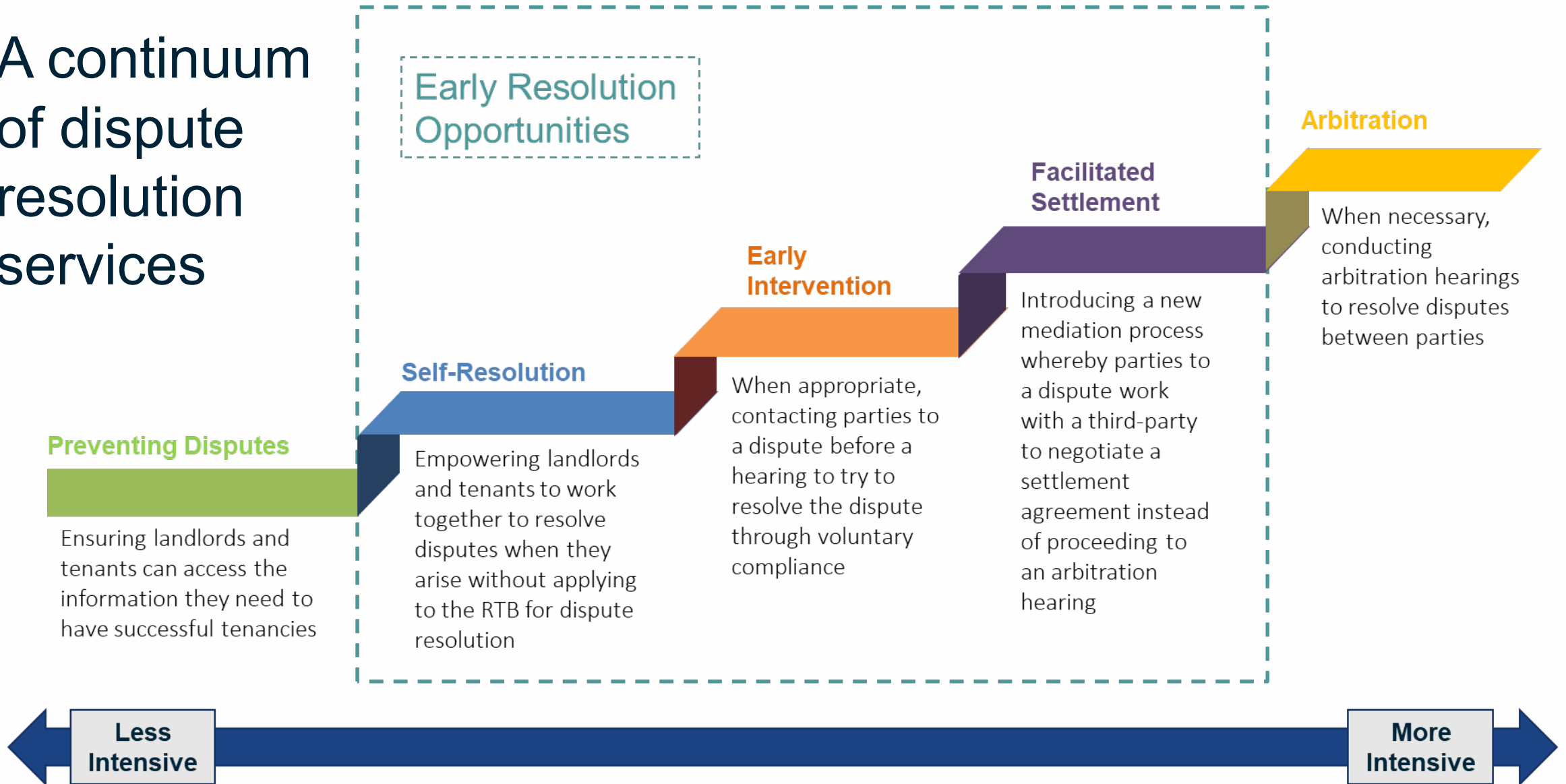
Partnering with local government

- Team of 10 investigators
- In 2023, 386 complaints were received by the CEU
- Collaborates directly with local governments to address problem properties

Education, early intervention and warnings leads to voluntary compliance in 65 – 70% of all cases.



A continuum of dispute resolution services



Facilitated settlements

A cooperative approach

The option to have a dispute mediated by a third-party facilitator was introduced May 1, 2024.

From May through August 2024, 468 disputes have been facilitated.

Facilitation makes a predominantly adversarial process, collaborative.

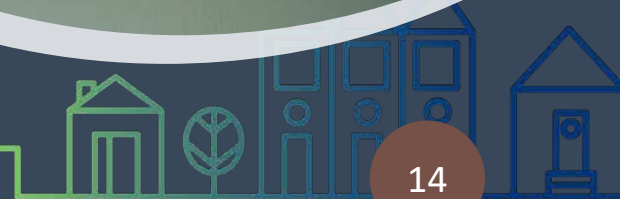


Progress to date

Substantial improvements realized in two years

Dispute resolution services have improved dramatically in the past two years:

- Average wait times for participatory hearings **down 64%** since 2022
- Average wait times for Direct Request decisions **down 80%**
- A **73% decrease** in average wait times for participatory hearings related to unpaid rent and utilities



Other recent changes

- Adjudicators may now issue decisions orally
- New exemptions allowing guest policies and wellness checks in supportive housing
- Enabling tenant protection bylaws at the municipal level to enhance provincial protections

Preventing bad faith evictions by...

- Increasing occupancy period from 6 to 12 months
- Increasing notice period from 2 to 4 months
- Prohibiting landlord use evictions in buildings with 5 or more units
- New portal to generate notices to end tenancies



Landlord Use Web Portal

New site prevents bad-faith evictions and simplifies processes

- ✓ To end a tenancy for their own use, landlords now must enter detailed information into the Portal before serving notice to the tenant.
- ✓ The Portal is designed to protect tenants and simplifies the process for landlords, so they get it right the first time.
- ✓ The Portal provides important data on the prevalence of "no-fault evictions," allowing the Compliance and Enforcement Unit to investigate repeat offenders.





Looking ahead

Commitment to continuous improvement

- Enhanced public education
- Renewed focus on stakeholder relationships
- Early resolution opportunities
- Continued process improvements



QUESTIONS?



THANK YOU

For more information visit: www.gov.bc.ca/landlordtenant

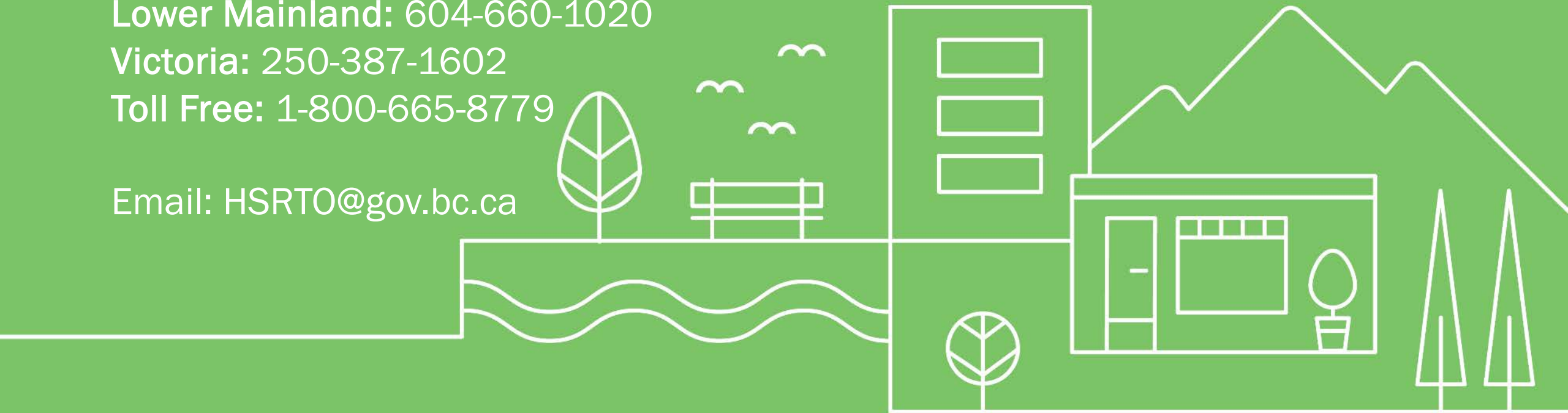
Or call the RTB Contact Centre

Lower Mainland: 604-660-1020

Victoria: 250-387-1602

Toll Free: 1-800-665-8779

Email: HSRTO@gov.bc.ca



Kootenay Family Place

In appreciation of our speakers today and with thanks for your contribution, UBCM has made a donation to the Kootenay Family Place. Kootenay Family Place is passionate about serving the needs of children, youth and families throughout the West Kootenay Boundary region through its services of early intervention, childcare, and providing a safe gathering place.