

B.C.'s Rental Assistance Program allows family to have a stable home life

A few years ago, life was not looking good for Jennifer Lepine and her son. She was involved in a bad relationship and the neighbourhood where they lived was full of drug dealers. Jennifer was scared to let Dené even go out the front door without her.

One weekend, she got up and left, taking Dené with her. They arrived in Parksville where they camped until they were able to move in temporarily with some relatives. "We loved it here and wanted to stay, but I couldn't afford a suitable place to live."

Fortunately, Jennifer heard about the Province's Rental Assistance Program that provides cash assistance to low-income, working families. Jennifer applied and, with the money she now receives on a monthly basis, is able to rent a two-bedroom home in a family-oriented neighbourhood where she feels safe. Dené, a typical 10-year-old, is able to ride his bike and play outside with his friends without his mom having to worry.

Jennifer, who works in an accounting office, looks forward to the day when she can be self-sufficient and earn enough money so she doesn't need the Rental Assistance Program anymore. In the meantime, the extra cash she gets means she can provide her son with a good home and give him a



Jennifer and Dené Lepine are able to live in a great family-oriented neighbourhood in Parksville thanks to the help they receive through B.C.'s Rental Assistance Program.

few extra treats, like a movie or an occasional dinner out.

"The Rental Assistance Program

has made a huge difference in our lives," she said. "We wouldn't be living in Parksville without it."

YWCA Vancouver partners with Province to help low-income families

"The YWCA Vancouver is dedicated to improving the lives of women, with a special focus on supporting single mothers," said CEO Janet Austin. "Affordable housing is fundamental to their success. The Rental Assistance Program allows them to supplement their income and thus afford their rent. The program is an important element in a housing strategy and we are pleased to be partnering with BC Housing to promote it to our clients."

"Single moms face many obstacles and many are worried about how the economic downturn will affect their bottom line," said Rich Coleman, Minister of Housing and Social Development. "By working with YWCA Vancouver, we are reaching more single mothers and helping ease

their financial burden."

The YWCA runs several single mother support groups in Vancouver. At Langara College, women meet weekly to share resources, raise self-esteem, and set goals. The participants attend school and work part-time while also raising their children.

"Finding an affordable place to live is the hardest and most important thing a single mom can do," said Kim*, the group's facilitator.

"One of the great things about the program is the money is paid directly into your bank account every month," said Nicole*. "Your landlord never has to know about it."

Nancy Olson, Program Manager, Single Mothers' Services, has attended a special presentation made to YWCA managers about the program and is now spreading the word to her staff.

Do you know someone who may be eligible for the Rental Assistance Program?

You or someone you know may also be eligible for the Rental Assistance Program. Monthly cash assistance is available to low-income, working families who earn up to \$35,000 a year. To qualify, families must have at least one dependent child, have lived in B.C. for the past 12 months, and have spent at least part of the last year working. Eligible families may receive between \$50 and \$765 a month, depending on their circumstances.

For more information and/or to apply:

• [604-433-2218](tel:604-433-2218) (Metro Vancouver) • [1-800-257-7756](tel:1-800-257-7756) (elsewhere in B.C.) • www.bchousing.org

Could the people your organization works with benefit from the Rental Assistance Program? Contact BC Housing's Communications Branch to find out how you can become a partner in promoting the program: communications@bchousing.org

** Last names withheld to protect the families' privacy.*