

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN

## British Columbia

### Landlords get a break with Act

The B.C. government has introduced new residential tenancy legislation that is widely seen as levelling the field for the province's landlords. The new rules will give owners of rental property more stability in setting rents and may encourage an increase in new rental projects, industry spokespersons say.

Highlights of the legislation, announced in October by Solicitor General **Rich Coleman**, include:

- **Security deposits:** The new law maintains the current half-month's rent as a damage deposit and allows landlords to collect extra deposits for keys, access cards and garage door openers.
- **Rent fairness:** These will be set by regulation and will be limited to a small annual increase, initially in the range of three to four per cent, plus a consumer price index adjustment. Changes also give landlords more flexibility in the timing of rent increases and the ability to carry forward rent increases. Tenant groups, however, have voiced concern that this change will encourage some landlords to raise rents up to 20 per cent in one shot.
- **Inspections:** The new law will require landlords and tenants to conduct joint inspections before tenants move in and out, and require a signed report that describes the condition of the rental unit. This is meant to reduce disputes.
- **Grow-ops:** Landlords will be able to evict tenants for illegal activities, such as marijuana grow operations, that have caused or are likely to cause damage or affect the safety and well-being of the landlord or other tenants.
- **Pets:** Under the new law, landlords will have the right to decide whether to allow pets and will be permitted to collect an added damage deposit to cover damage that might be caused by pets.