



You are here: [Home](#) > [Pensions](#) > [Financial Hardship](#) > Financial Hardship announcement June 2013

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FSRA is actively reviewing all FSCO regulatory direction, including but not limited to forms, guidelines and FAQs.

Until FSRA issues new regulatory direction, all existing regulatory direction remains in force.

Rules for Financial Hardship Unlocking

The content on this web page has moved to www.fsrao.ca. Visit <https://www.fsrao.ca/withdrawing-locked-accounts-because-financial-hardship> to update your bookmarks.

Generally speaking, any money transferred from a registered pension plan into a locked-in account (locked-in retirement account (LIRA), life income fund (LIF) or locked-in retirement income fund (LRIF)) must remain "locked-in" and can only be used to provide retirement income.

In certain situations, however, it is possible to apply for special access to money in an Ontario LIRA, LIF or LRIF. One of these situations is financial hardship.

Effective January 1, 2014, the rules for financial hardship unlocking have changed.

It is the responsibility of the financial institution which holds and administers their clients' locked-in accounts, to review each financial hardship unlocking application to determine if it meets the requirements set out in the Regulation for the particular category of financial hardship on which the application is based and, if it does, to approve the application and make the payment from the account in accordance with the Regulation. The financial institution will also determine if the application is to be refused because it does not meet the requirements of the law.

The financial institution is responsible for answering questions and providing information to owners of locked-in accounts, relating to their applications.

It will no longer be the responsibility of the Financial Services Commission of Ontario to review or process applications for financial hardship unlocking.

Under the new rules, there are four categories of financial hardship:

1. low expected income;
2. payment of first and last months' rent;
3. arrears of rent or debt secured on a principal residence (such as a mortgage); and

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Family Law	>

Asset Transfers >

Financial Hardship v

▶ **Rules Effective January 1, 2014**

▶ **Process effective January 1, 2014**

▶ **Forms**

▶ **Questions & Answers**

▶ **Financial Hardship Unlocking Resources**

Legislation: Act & Regulations >

Locked-In Accounts (LIFs and LIRAs) >

Enforcement Actions >

Other Pension Information >

Pension Policies >

Plan Administrators >

Publications & Resources >

Archived >

Careers >

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4. medical expenses.

Each application for financial hardship unlocking must be made based on one of these categories.

All applications must be made on **Forms** issued by FSCO that are available along with accompanying Guides. An individual can make applications under different categories but must use the form that applies.

The following resources provide additional information on access to locked-in accounts:

- [Questions & Answers](#)
- [Webcast on Financial Hardship Unlocking](#) 
- **Financial Hardship Unlocking**
User Guide (Financial Institutions):  [PDF](#) |  [Accessible document](#)
- [Pension Forms - Pension Unlocking](#)

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[Back to top](#)

Page: **2,880** | [Find Page:](#)