



PRESS RELEASE



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New Multicultural Seniors Housing Opens in Surrey

SURREY, British Columbia, December 6, 2002 — Low-income seniors in Surrey have more housing and better care options with the official opening today of Guru Nanak Niwas, a 54-unit supportive seniors development at 7566 - 120A Ave. Guru Nanak Niwas is funded by the provincial and federal governments, through the Canada-British Columbia Affordable Housing Program.

"The Government of Canada is working in partnership with the provincial government and other groups to bring quality affordable housing to people in B.C.", said the Honourable Herb Dhaliwal, Minister of Natural Resources, on behalf of the Honourable David Collenette, Minister of Transport and responsible for Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. "Through the Affordable Housing Program, we are contributing \$88.7 million in B.C to improve the supply of affordable housing throughout the province, including supportive seniors housing projects like Guru Nanak Niwas."

"The provincial government is committed to meeting the housing needs of vulnerable British Columbians through partnerships with various levels of government, the private sector and non-profit organizations", said Gulzar Cheema, MLA for Surrey-Panorama Ridge, on behalf of Katherine Whittred, Minister of State for Intermediate, Long Term and Home Care. "Since June 2001, seniors have moved into 417 new units of supportive housing across B.C. This is part of the government's New Era commitment to add 5,000 new intermediate and long-term care beds by 2006."

Supportive housing combines affordable apartments and services to help seniors with low to moderate incomes maintain their independence, bridging the gap between home care and residential care.

This development, managed by the Progressive Intercultural Community Services Society, includes 54 one-bedroom units, five of which are wheelchair accessible. The Rainbow Community Health Co-operative, developed to help South Asian people overcome health-care barriers will have an office in the development and will offer a dental program, counselling, podiatry, health advice, preventive health-care education and transportation to health-care services in the community.

The Progressive Intercultural Community Services Society has raised \$350,000 -including a contribution by the Real Estate Foundation of B.C. - and is currently fundraising for the remaining \$400,000 to acquire title to the land. The society also funds the Rainbow Health Co-op services. The federal government contributed \$810,000 to the development through Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. The provincial government will provide \$10.6 million in operating subsidies to the society, through BC Housing, over 35 years.

"With more than 1,000 mainly Indo-Canadian and Chinese farm workers over the age of 60 in Surrey, this development meets a well-documented need for seniors housing in the community", said Charan Gill, executive director of the Progressive Intercultural Community Services Society. "Guru Nanak Niwas allows seniors to remain in the community where their families live."

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"The Real Estate Foundation of B.C. supports projects that enable non-profit organizations to provide a range of affordable housing options in their communities", said executive director Tim Pringle. "We recognized the need for seniors housing in Surrey, so we donated \$175,000 to the project."

The Progressive Intercultural Community Services Society was formed in 1987 by a group of community volunteers and offers a range of social services in the Lower Mainland, such as assistance to agricultural workers, ESL classes, health and employment programs, social activities, and human rights and anti-racism programs. This is the society's first housing development.

Under the Canada-British Columbia Affordable Housing Program, the Government of Canada, through Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, will contribute \$88.7 million over the next five years towards affordable housing in this province. The provincial government, through BC Housing, will provide \$29.7 million annually to subsidize the costs of units built under this agreement as part of a larger strategy to provide a range of housing options for vulnerable British Columbians.

This news release is available at www.bchousing.org online.

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