



PRESS RELEASE



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New Affordable Housing in Downtown South Area

VANCOUVER, British Columbia, December 8, 2002 — A new 63 unit housing development which will provide affordable housing for low-income singles and people with mental illness was officially opened in the downtown south area of Vancouver today.

Candela Place at 1267 Granville St. is managed by MCC Housing. It is funded by the provincial and federal governments, through the Canada-British Columbia Affordable Housing Program, with additional funding from the City of Vancouver and the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority.

"The Government of Canada is committed to providing quality affordable housing to British Columbians and it is working in partnership with the provincial government and other groups to achieve that end", said Hedy Fry, M.P. for Vancouver Centre, on behalf of the Honourable David Collenette, Minister of Transport and responsible for Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. "Through the Affordable Housing Program, the federal government will contribute \$88.7 million in B.C. to increase the supply of affordable housing, including support for innovative projects like Candela Place."

"Candela Place supports some of the most vulnerable residents in Vancouver's downtown south area with safe, affordable housing and support services", said Gulzar Cheema, Minister of State for Mental Health, on behalf of George Abbott, Minister of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services. "Through partnerships with various levels of government and non-profit organizations, the provincial government is committed to meeting the housing needs of British Columbia's most vulnerable citizens through partnerships with various levels of government and the non-profit and for-profit sectors. Since June 2001, the government has opened 2,300 new units of housing across the B.C. as part of its New Era commitment to add 5,000 new housing units by 2006."

Candela Place includes 62 studio units, six of which are wheelchair accessible and a one-bedroom unit with den. Twenty units are reserved for residents with mental illness. An on-site community mental health worker helps these residents with medications, life skills and counselling.

MCC Housing, an affiliate of the Mennonite Central Committee of B.C., will manage the development. The federal government contributed \$945,000 to the development through the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. The provincial government, through BC Housing, will provide \$6.9 million in operating subsidies to the society over 35 years. The City of Vancouver bought the land for \$1 million and has leased it to the society for \$1. The city also owns the non-residential part of the building on the ground floor and contributed \$305,000 to build this area.

The Vancouver Coastal Health Authority is funding the mental health support services, which are provided by the Coast Foundation. Coast Foundation also runs a nearby resource centre where people with mental illness can access meal and work programs.

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"Several old hotels in the downtown south have been demolished or renovated in recent years, leaving some low-income people struggling to find accommodation", said Vancouver Mayor Larry Campbell. "This development creates new affordable housing in the area and is an excellent example of how different organizations can work together to address community needs."

"We believe safe, affordable housing is a key factor in bringing stability, security and a better quality of life to people living in vulnerable circumstances", said Lorne Epp, executive director of MCC Housing. "Our dream is that Candela Place will create new beginnings for residents and encourage people to contribute to a community that is supportive, respectful and caring."

MCC Housing was founded in 1984 to develop housing-based solutions for people struggling with poverty, poor health and other difficult circumstances. The society's "More Than a Roof" philosophy aims to build supportive communities where people can heal and create positive change. Tenants have access to programs offered by Mennonite Central Committee organizations including life skills training, support groups and workshops on budgeting, conflict resolution and vocational options. The name Candela means candle in Spanish and represents the society's belief that a small spark of light can lead residents to a personal comeback. The society provides housing for almost 600 people in six communities.

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.

Contact:

Dana Gallagher
Corporate Communications
BC Housing
604 439-4755

Lorne Epp
Executive Director
MCC (BC) Housing Society
604 599-6438