



PRESS RELEASE



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New Affordable Housing Benefits People with Mental Illness

VICTORIA, British Columbia, December 19, 2002 — People with mental illness in Victoria have more housing options with the opening of Medewiwin Apartments at 360 Gorge Rd. East. The project combines contributions from the federal and provincial governments, through the Canada-British Columbia Affordable Housing Program.

"The Government of Canada is working closely with the provincial government and other partners to bring quality, affordable housing to people in Victoria", said the Honourable David Anderson, Minister of Environment, on behalf of the Honourable David Collette, Minister of Transport, responsible for Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC). "Successes like the Medewiwin Apartments are key to developing strong communities, here in British Columbia and throughout Canada."

"The provincial government is committed to meeting the housing needs of British Columbia's most vulnerable residents through partnerships with various levels of government and non-profit organizations", said Victoria-Hillside MLA Sheila Orr, on behalf of George Abbott, Minister for Children, Aboriginal and Women's Services. "The Medewiwin Apartments provide permanent affordable housing for individuals with mental illness who had previously experienced chronic homelessness. We are pleased to support this project, as part of our New Era commitment to improve mental health services for British Columbians."

This new development at Medewiwin Apartments adds 10 studio units to the original 16 units, converted from a motel eight years ago. A common lounge, used by residents use for house meetings, shared meals and holiday gatherings was also expanded. Residents will also have access to a new second floor balcony. The building is close to transit and community services.

A full-time community support worker will assist residents with life skills, medications, shopping and counselling.

Pacifica Housing Advisory Association will manage the development, with help through a tenant management model. The Government of Canada, through Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, contributed \$150,000 toward the capital costs of this project. Through BC Housing the Province contributed a capital grant of \$133,700 and will provide Pacifica more than \$1.6 million in annual operating subsidies over 35 years. The Province also donated the land, valued at \$265,000. The Vancouver Island Health Authority is providing a grant of \$95,000 and funding the community support worker.

"Residents feel this is their home, so we have a tenant management model to involve them in maintenance and decision making", said Pacifica executive director Jill Savage. "Residents garden, landscape and clean common areas and we give them grocery vouchers for this work. Residents are also invited to interview new applicants to ensure everyone will feel comfortable living together."

"Pacifica staff and volunteers should be recognized for their excellent work in filling an important housing need in Victoria", said Dennis Suwala, manager of special needs housing with the Vancouver Island Health Authority. "We are

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pleased to participate with them and other partners in providing affordable housing options for people with special health needs."

Pacifica is a non-profit organization formed in 1988 to provide affordable housing for families with modest incomes and people with mental illness or physical disabilities. The organization offers outreach services such as relocation, emergency shelter assistance and support for people who are chronically homeless and those with disabilities. In addition to this development, the association manages almost 500 units in more than 20 developments.

This development was made possible by 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.

The development name means "a place of healing", and comes from a First Nations group of healers known as Medewiwin or Grand Medicine Society.

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

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