



PRESS RELEASE



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Victoria's Homeless to Benefit from Federal Funds Helping Convert Motel to Affordable Housing

VICTORIA, British Columbia, September 16, 2003 - The Cedar Grove Apartments, formerly the Chestnut Grove Motel on Gorge Road, will be converted and upgraded to 21 self contained units, including four units accessible for persons with disabilities, thanks to \$366,800 in Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP) funding through Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC).

The Motel, purchased last year by the Victoria Community Housing Trust, a subsidiary of CEDCO Victoria, has been used as interim housing for homeless people. Today, the Cedar Grove Apartments provides 21 units of temporary housing for those making the transition from the streets to safe, affordable housing.

"The Government of Canada, through CMHC is committed to sustaining vital, healthy communities," said the Honourable David Anderson, Minister of the Environment on behalf of the Honourable Steven Mahoney, Secretary of State responsible for CMHC. "This conversion project is a fine example of federal funds being used to help those most in need."

Together with a \$10,000 grant from the Vancouver Foundation, improvements will be made to upgrade the units, to provide amenities for the residents and to provide landscaping and fencing to improve the overall appearance of the project. Work will begin shortly and is expected to be completed in October.

"I am sure that the neighbours as well as the residents will be happy to see an improvement in the appearance of the Cedar Grove", said Bill McElroy, Executive Director of CEDCO Victoria and the Housing Trust.

The Cedar Grove Apartments result from an innovative partnership between Coast Capital Savings Credit Union, the Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA) and the Victoria Community Housing Trust.

"Without the creative financing arranged by Coast Capital Savings Credit Union, and the support services provided to the residents by VIHA, we would not have been able to undertake this project to help some of our least fortunate residents", added McElroy.

The Federal Government, through CMHC, also recently implemented the renewed suite of CMHC's RRAP Programs for another three years. Funding for these popular programs, targeted at low-income households was extended by \$384 million nationally and forms part of the Government of Canada's national housing strategy.

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Fact Sheet - RRAP Programs

Improvements to the federal renovation programs including the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP), Emergency Repair Program (ERP), Home Adaptations for Seniors Independence (HASI) and the Shelter Enhancement Program (SEP) were implemented recently to ensure the program is more effective in serving those most in need, including low income Canadians living in substandard housing, Aboriginal people, persons with disabilities and victims of family violence.

The changes to RRAP were made following consultations and an extensive evaluation of the renovation programs. The consultation revealed strong support for continued targeting to those in core need, who occupy housing below a minimum level of health and safety standards. The evaluation indicated the program is well-targetted and effective in preserving the existing housing stock. However, it also indicated that levels of assistance were inadequate for some applicants and had not kept up with the rate of inflation.

The changes include the elimination of the repayable loan and an increased maximum limit for forgivable loans. In addition, the sliding scale of forgiveness, based on household income, has been eliminated.

RRAP offers financial assistance to low-income households to enable them to repair their dwellings to a minimum level of health and safety, and enables modifications for persons with disabilities. SEP assists in the repair, rehabilitation, purchase or construction of shelters for victims of family violence. ERP offers assistance to low-income households to undertake emergency repairs required for the continued safe occupancy of their home. The HASI program assists low-income seniors to make minor home adaptations to extend the time they live in their own homes independently.

In addition, the Shelter Enhancement Program will now be available to repair, rehabilitate or improve existing shelters for men who are victims of family violence.

Improvements to RRAP for Persons with Disabilities include a change in the calculation of total household income in recognition of the additional costs faced by persons with disabilities.

RRAP has been in existence for 30 years and is a cornerstone of Canada's national housing policy. The extension of funding for three more years is part of the Government of Canada's national housing strategy which includes a \$1 billion investment in affordable housing by 2007-08.

In B.C. and Yukon, over \$17 million is available for the suite of renovation programs in 2003-2004.