



PRESS RELEASE



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Canada's First Transition House for Senior Women Opened by Federal Government and Atira

WHITE ROCK, British Columbia, November 21, 2003 — The first transition house for women over 65 seeking refuge from abusive relationships was officially opened today. The announcement was made by the Honourable Steven Mahoney, Secretary of State responsible for Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, and the Atira Women's Resource Society.

The Government of Canada, through CMHC provided funding of \$174,688 through its Shelter Enhancement Program (SEP) to the four-unit project. SEP assists in the repair, rehabilitation, purchase or construction of shelters for victims of family violence.

"This innovative housing initiative will assist a particularly vulnerable segment of our society - abused elderly women," said Secretary of State Mahoney. "The Senior Women's Transition House demonstrates what can be achieved when governments work together with the local community to address an identified need."

"This is the first transition house of its kind in Canada. A typical transition house's maximum stay of 30 days is not sufficient to respond to the myriad of issues confronting senior women who want to leave an abusive relationship," said program co-ordinator Suzi Kram. "It will allow for a stay of up to six months in a serene environment, with a limited number of residents and no children," she said.

The number of seniors per capita in the South Surrey/White Rock area is twice the national average, emphasizing the demand for this kind of facility. "It has taken a real community effort to bring this project to fruition," said Kram. "With the support of funders, and a group of volunteers, Atira is pleased to finally be able to offer a service to women in the community who have asked for our help."

Thanks to financial support from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, The Real Estate Foundation of B.C., the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services, the Vancouver Foundation and the Lohn Foundation, the house opened its doors to women in November. The B.C. Housing Management Commission is providing operating funding to assist with maintenance, heat, hydro and municipal services. Volunteers, who will support the residents of the house, are currently taking a training program funded by the United Way of the Lower Mainland and The Baxter International Foundation. Other community support has been provided by The White Rock Chapter of Soroptimists International, the White Rock Lioness Club and a number of individual donors.

For more information on CMHC's Assisted Housing programs, call 1-800-668-2642

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