



PRESS RELEASE



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Federal Government Funding Helps to Convert Historical Hospital into Affordable Housing

VANCOUVER, British Columbia, November 24, 2003 — The Honourable Steven Mahoney, Secretary of State responsible for Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), along with developers Geoff and Tanya Hughes, today opened the Residence at St. Joseph's, in the former St. Joseph's Hospital in Victoria. CMHC provided funding of \$1.26 million through its Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP) to convert this historical building into 70 units of affordable rental accommodation. Each unit received electrical, plumbing and seismic upgrades, as well as a private three-piece bathroom and kitchenette.

"This partnership between the Government of Canada and local organizations exemplifies what can be accomplished when we work together," said Secretary of State Mahoney. "This is an innovative approach to using existing buildings to address housing needs in B.C."

Geoff and Tanya Hughes have a combined 40 years' experience working in the real estate industry. The couple previously worked on the renovation and repair of The Ritz Hotel in downtown Victoria. With the help of a \$1.2 million CMHC RRAP grant, the Hughes' managed all of the renovations and repairs to the Single Resident Occupancy property and achieved their goal, "to provide clean, safe, affordable housing for those in need."

The Government of Canada, through CMHC, spends over \$200 million in British Columbia annually to assist some 77,000 low and moderate-income households, including ongoing financial support for the many non-profit and cooperative housing projects. This includes \$13.8 million to repair and improve housing occupied by low-income people through RRAP programs. RRAP Conversion provides funding to assist in the conversion of non-residential property into affordable rental housing for low-income tenants.

As part of Canada's national housing strategy, the Federal Government recently extended funding for CMHC's RRAP and other renovation programs geared towards low-income Canadians for another three years. A total of \$384 million will be available through CMHC for these popular programs nationally.

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

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Fact Sheet - Renovation 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-targeted 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.