



## PRESS RELEASE



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### **Downtown Eastside Benefits from New Affordable Housing**

**VANCOUVER, British Columbia, November 25, 2003** — The Honourable Steven Mahoney, Secretary of State responsible for Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) and the Central City Mission Foundation opened "The Cosmopolitan", a formerly derelict building that has undergone major renovations to help address the issue of homelessness, poverty and affordable accommodation. CMHC provided funding of \$504,000 through its Rooming House Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP) to assist in renovating 42 bed units for Vancouver's most vulnerable citizens.

"CMHC's RRAP is helping address the housing needs of British Columbians by renovating saveable buildings to increase the city's housing stock," said the Honourable Steven Mahoney, Secretary of State responsible for CMHC. "Partnerships, such as this one for the Cosmopolitan, with the private sector and other levels of government show what can be done, for those less privileged in our society, when we work together."

"The Central City Mission Foundation is very grateful to the Government of Canada and to CMHC for the opportunity to work together to help low-income Canadians, people with special needs and those less fortunate, to live in decent housing," said Phil Bouvier, Executive Director, CCMF. The CCMF supports safe, affordable housing and programs that enhance the lives of men and women in need. Since 1991, the Foundation has created over 115 housing units and has gifted over \$3 million to programs and societies working to better Vancouver's Downtown Eastside.

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. Rooming house RRAP provides landlords with financial assistance to repair or rehabilitate rooming house properties to a minimum level of health and safety 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.

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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-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.