



## PRESS RELEASE



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### **Housing Integrated with Programs for Homeless People**

**VANCOUVER, British Columbia, September 10, 2004** — A new 216-bed development with emergency shelter, transitional housing and resource programs officially opened in downtown Vancouver today. The Salvation Army Belkin House is the first facility in Canada to provide such a wide range of services to help homeless people, those at risk of homelessness and low-income families become self-sufficient.

The Salvation Army Belkin House, located at 555 Homer Street, replaces the existing Dunsmuir House. The new development accommodates more clients at risk of homelessness. It is wheelchair accessible, has more classroom and communal space and has the space to provide both housing and special needs programs for women. The segregated co-ed facility allows secured access to designated living areas. It also offers life skills training to tenants and non-residents who are on income assistance and job skills training programs for tenants.

"Belkin House is a wonderful example of the Government of Canada's commitment to working with community groups, the private sector and all levels of government in order to find effective solutions to address homelessness in Vancouver," said the Honourable Hedy Fry, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, on behalf of the Honourable Joe Fontana, Minister of Labour and Housing. "Through the Vancouver Agreement, the three-levels of government have begun to better co-ordinate initiatives and focus funds."

"The Salvation Army Belkin House is an excellent example of what can be achieved when the three levels of government and the private and not-for-profit sectors work together," said Vancouver-Burrard MLA Lorne Mayencourt. "The unique combination of an emergency shelter, transitional housing and special programs, all in one location, will help break the cycle of homelessness."

"In 1950, Dunsmuir House first opened its doors to those who had no where else to go. Today, there are even more people in need of shelter and assistance," said Commissioner M. Christine MacMillan, Territorial Commander, The Salvation Army. "Belkin House will provide more beds and services. In addition, this development will be The Salvation Army's first major inner-city housing program for women in British Columbia."

"The official opening of The Salvation Army Belkin House should be celebrated," said Vancouver Mayor Larry Campbell. "The development is the result of all levels of government and many community partners' hard work, and will provide the transition housing and shelter plus services essential in addressing the needs of the 500 to 1,200 people sleeping on Vancouver's streets each night. The City of Vancouver is pleased to be a partner in this project and hopes to be a partner in many more."

The Government of Canada launched the National Homelessness Initiative (NHI) in December 1999 to support communities' efforts to help Canadians out of homelessness. Over \$1 billion is being spent towards the federal government's commitment to addressing homelessness in Canada. Since the NHI was launched, the Government of Canada has supported 301 projects, with a total of almost \$76.7 million to alleviate homelessness in British Columbia and the Yukon.

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Under the Canada-British Columbia Affordable Housing Agreement, the Government of Canada, through Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), will contribute \$88.7 million 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 British Columbians in the greatest need.

The provincial government has committed funding for the construction of about 6,900 housing units across BC since June 2001. To date, about 3,500 of these units have been completed and 2,200 are under development. In addition, another 898 affordable housing units have been created through partnership funding to community groups in order to increase housing options for British Columbians in need.

This news release is available at [www.homelessness.gc.ca](http://www.homelessness.gc.ca), [www.bchousing.org](http://www.bchousing.org), and [www.bc.salvationarmy.ca](http://www.bc.salvationarmy.ca)

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## **Backgrounder**

### **The Salvation Army**

The Salvation Army is the largest non-governmental social service provider in British Columbia. The not-for profit charitable organization is devoted to helping people in need, including families in crisis, single parents, children, seniors and those experiencing hunger, homelessness, addiction and abuse. The Salvation Army has vast experience in developing and operating social service programs. The Salvation Army BC Division's annual operating budget is \$58 million. The Salvation Army has been a vital part of Vancouver since the city's birth. The first ministry opened on the edge of Chinatown in 1887. In 1950, the British Columbia headquarters was opened in downtown Vancouver. Today, the Army estimates that almost one-third of British Columbians have been touched in some way by its work.

### **Belkin House**

The Salvation Army Belkin House, located at 555 Homer Street, Vancouver, provides emergency shelter, transitional housing, and resource programs to help men and women at risk of homelessness and low-income families become self-sufficient. Each client group will have secured access to their respective designated living areas.

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This development is The Salvation Army's first major inner-city housing program for women in British Columbia. The women's component (approximately 22 per cent of the facility) will include housing and shared program space. Special services such as cleaning and meals will be provided for those who require additional assistance due to illness or incapacity.

This new 216-bed development (which can be increased to 230 in the cold wet weather season to respond to greater demands for emergency shelter) will offer:

Transitional housing:

- Five units (with 20 beds).
- 112 single occupancy units for Ministry of Human Resources clients.
- Four units (with up to 16 beds) for low-income families.

Emergency shelter beds

- 32 emergency shelter beds for women.
- 36 emergency shelter beds.

Programs including:

- Life skills training for tenants and non-residents who are on income assistance, including Anger Management, Time Management, Stress Management, Goal Setting and Basic Communication.
- Job skills training to help clients develop the skills necessary to find employment. Courses planned include Building Services Worker Training and Food Services Training.

The Salvation Army Belkin House replaces Dunsmuir House, which opened its doors in 1950. The new facility will increase bed capacity by 12 per cent, have rooms available for those with impaired mobility, offer communal living areas (e.g. access to kitchen facilities; a single person on social assistance is left with \$185 each month after rent — now they can avoid food lines), expanded programs for residents and non-residents and modern living standards (e.g. private bathrooms for each resident). The Salvation Army Belkin House will be more cost effective due to lower maintenance costs and, because of increased capacity for low-income tenants and more payments from independent residents.

### **Partnership contributions**

The capital cost of this development is \$23.3 million. The federal government contributions include:

- \$900,000 CMHC grant through the Canada-British Columbia Affordable Housing Agreement.
- \$1-million grant through Human Resources and Skills Development Canada

The provincial government contributions include:

- \$2.9 million in operating subsidies over 35 years provided through BC Housing for 30 of the units.
- \$193,000 annual support services, funding and programs for residents is provided by the Ministry of Human Resources.

The City of Vancouver provided a \$1-million capital grant.

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The Salvation Army contributions include:

- \$18.1 million in equity including: - \$1.8 million — Morris & Helen Belkin Foundation - \$250,000 — Real Estate Foundation of British Columbia