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New Women's Shelter and Supportive Housing Opens

PRINCE GEORGE, British Columbia, October 18, 2004 — The opening of 28 shelter beds and eight units of supportive housing for women was celebrated today in Prince George. Located at 144 George Street, the shelter will provide safe, short-term emergency shelter and supportive transitional housing for women and female youth who have been victims of abuse. The facility will also feature a drop-in centre.

"The AWAC shelter is an innovative supportive housing project that assists a particularly vulnerable segment of our society - women and children who are disadvantaged by issues of poverty and abuse," noted The Honourable David L. Emerson, Minister of Industry on behalf of The Honourable Joe Fontana, Minister of Labour and Housing. "The Government of Canada is proud to support this shelter, which is meeting the needs of its community and making a positive difference."

"This new development demonstrates the importance of successful partnerships," said Shirley Bond, MLA for Prince George-Mount Robson. "Here, the two levels of government and the private and non-profit sectors have worked together to integrate affordable housing with programs and services so that women and their children in this community have the support they need to improve their lives."

"This shelter provides much-needed services to some of our more unfortunate citizens," said Dr. Michalos. "It took a lot of work to get us to today's opening. On behalf of Community Partners Addressing Homelessness, I would like to congratulate AWAC on their success."

Capital costs for this multi-partnership project were approximately \$1.2 million. The Government of Canada, through Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRDSC) provided a total of \$1,059,000. The provincial government through BC Housing provided \$67,000 and the Northern Health Authority provided approximately \$78,000. The Real Estate Foundation provided \$100,000 and AWAC contributed \$21,262.

AWAC is a non-profit organization offering shelter, support and outreach programs to marginalized women and female youth in the Prince George community since 1994.

"Our success in achieving the goal of a continuum of shelter and housing supports for vulnerable women and female youth can be attributed to the strength and diversity of the partnerships involved in the project. AWAC is delighted to have taken this important step forward, in our role as a key resource for women in Prince George," said Marianne Sorensen, Executive Director of AWAC.

The Government of Canada, through CMHC, spends over \$200 million in British Columbia annually to assist some 75,300 low and moderate-income households, including ongoing financial support for the many non-profit and cooperative housing projects. In addition to providing funds to improve emergency shelters and transitional housing for victims of family violence, the programs also help low-income households including seniors, persons with disabilities

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and Aboriginal people repair their dwellings to minimum health and safety levels.

Funding for the George Street Shelter meets priorities laid out in the Prince George Community Plan on Homelessness and is supported by the Government of Canada's NHI. Since the NHI was launched in December 1999, over \$1 billion is being spent to support communities' efforts to help Canadians out of homelessness. In British Columbia and the Yukon, the NHI has supported 329 projects, with a total of almost \$74.1 million to alleviate homelessness.

The provincial government has committed funding for the construction of about 6,900 housing units across B.C. 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.

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