



PRESS RELEASE



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Extreme Makeover: Witness Canada's Largest Youth Shelter Transform

TORONTO, Ontario, October 29, 2004 — Canada's largest shelter for homeless youth held an event to mark the start of renovations. The shelter is undergoing extensive repairs to ensure the buildings are safe and meet building codes.

Comprised of two buildings located in downtown Toronto near Yonge and Gerrard Streets, the two adjacent structures that make up Covenant House are in desperate need of repair. The buildings will be renovated thanks to a total of \$874,100 in funding from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's (CMHC) Shelter Enhancement Program (SEP).

In addition, \$75,000.00 has been provided by the Government of Canada's Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (SCPI), administered by the City of Toronto. Ongoing operating funds are provided annually by the Government of Ontario and the City of Toronto.

"For more than 20 years Covenant House has offered support and shelter to thousands of young people in the Toronto area," said the Honourable Bill Graham, Minister of National Defence and Toronto Centre Member of Parliament on behalf of the Honourable Joseph Fontana, Minister of Labour and Housing. "The renovation of the two facilities will not only bring the buildings up to health and safety standards, but the improvements to the interior spaces will help those youth accessing services feel much more secure."

"We are grateful to the Government of Canada for their generous grant that will help us with much-needed renovations to our shelter, where some 5,000 homeless youth come for safe refuge and services each year," Ruth daCosta, Covenant House Toronto Executive Director said. "Since we rely on donations for most of our funding, these additional funds will enable us to direct more money to taking care of our kids while we repair our buildings."

"Covenant House provides a safe haven for young people who need our support," said Councillor Kyle Raye, Ward 27 Toronto Centre-Rosedale. "The City of Toronto is pleased that government and private sector partners are helping homeless youth in the community."

Covenant House's McGill Street building will undergo \$672,000 in renovations and repairs, including the replacement of heating boilers, windows and sills, and more than 6,500 square feet of rotted roof. Security is also on the repair list, as the building will be fitted with new doors, locks and security cameras.

An additional \$202,100 allotted for the Gerrard Street facility will replace rotted windows, sills, brickwork, eaves troughs, and an emergency generator. The building's front entrance will also undergo a facelift as the cracked marble steps and flooring will be replaced, and the 1,800 square foot worn carpet in the great hall will be substituted with vinyl tile.

The \$75,000.00 from the Government of Canada's National homeless Initiative through the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative, will help Covenant House make small capital improvements.

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Established in 1982, Covenant House offers young people safe shelter and support services annually. Much more than a shelter, Covenant House gives young people the tools they need to build independent lives including counselling, health care, educational and employment assistance. At night, staff are on the streets to reach kids most at risk. Longer-term housing is also available.

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's Shelter Enhancement Program offers financial assistance for the repair, rehabilitation and improvement of existing shelters for women and their children, youth, and men who are victims of family violence, as well as the acquisition or construction of new shelters and second stage housing where needed.

CMHC is Canada's national housing agency with a mandate to help Canadians gain access to safe, quality and affordable housing. CMHC supports the Canadian housing industry and improves the living conditions of Canadians through mortgage loan insurance and securitization, assisted housing, research and information transfer and the promotion of Canadian housing exports.

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Please visit:

www.homelessness.gc.ca
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www.covenanthouse.org



Top: left to right Ruth daCosta, David (past resident of Covenant House), Jennifer Arp, Assistant to Minister Bill Graham, Minister Kyle Rae, Leila (past resident of Covenant House), Paul Aloff, Covenant House Board Chair, Brian Smith, HRSDC Front: left to right, Andrea Delgado, HRSDC, Nicole Baptiste HRSDC, Christina Haddad, Manager Operations, Assisted Housing, CMHC, Lindsay MacNeil, CMHC Special Initiatives Officer, Assisted Housing