



PRESS RELEASE



Canadian Mortgage News - National Archive 2005

New Affordable Seniors' Housing Breaks Ground in Westbank

KELOWNA, British Columbia, February 4, 2005 — Groundbreaking for the construction of a 40-unit assisted living development to benefit lower income seniors in need of affordable housing took place today. Operated by the Westbank Lions Seniors Housing Society, the new development will provide affordable apartments and support services for seniors.

"Today's announcement is about helping more seniors to live independently," said Senator Ross Fitzpatrick on behalf of the Honourable Joe Fontana, Minister of Labour and Housing. "This project marks a new start in their lives, and contributes to the success and sustainability of the community."

The Westbank Senior's Lions Society's development is funded under Independent Living BC (ILBC), an innovative housing-for-health program that provides affordable help for low-income seniors. It is also an alternative option between home support and residential care.

Assisted living adds to the current range of housing and care options currently available to seniors who are living longer, healthier lives.

"Seniors are asking for assistance to stay independent and to remain in their own communities," said Rick Thorpe, MLA for Okanagan — Westside. "The provincial government launched the Independent Living BC program because it recognized that seniors need a range of housing and care options even as their health care needs change."

"Many seniors in the Okanagan have spent a large part of their lives in this region," said Aaron Dinwoodie, Regional Director, Westbank. "This development meets a critical need in our community for those who need assistance and affordable housing, but want to remain in their own communities."

"Seniors have been asking for safe housing options that will allow them to live as independently as possible for as long as possible," said Alan Dolman, Board Chair, Interior Health. "In addition to assistance with medications and mobility, the social and recreational opportunities for residents, improves their overall health."

"This new development is an extension of our commitment to providing affordable housing to financially challenged seniors," said Stan Freier, Chair of the Westbank Lions Seniors Housing Society. "These assisted living apartments will allow low-income seniors in Westbank to still live independently with a little extra help when they need it."

The ILBC program is facilitated by BC Housing in partnership with the Government of Canada, through Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), and the regional health authorities. The Regional District of the Central Okanagan also contributed to this ILBC development, making it a collaborative venture between all three levels of government.

Canadian Mortgage News - New Affordable Seniors' Housing Breaks Ground in Westbank

The Province, through BC Housing and the ILBC program, is committed to providing 3,500 affordable apartments with support services across the province by 2006. To date, over 2,600 ILBC units have been allocated or over 76 per cent of the program, in communities across the province.

The Government of Canada, through CMHC, will contribute \$130 million by 2008 towards affordable housing in this province. The provincial government, through BC Housing, will provide a minimum of \$34 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 greatest need.

For further information, please contact:

Naomi Brunemeyer
Communications Specialist
BC Housing
(604) 439-4758

Shari McDowell
Communications Officer
Interior Health
(250) 878-3936

Christina Wensley
Events Coordinator
Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation
(604) 737-4032

Esther Thompson
Administrative Manager
Westbank Lions Seniors Housing Society
(250) 768-3178

Backgrounder

Westbank Lions Seniors Housing Society

The Westbank Lions Seniors Housing Society was formed in 1988 to provide the seniors of Westbank with affordable housing options.

The Society also manages a 40-unit development providing subsidized seniors housing in partnership with the provincial and federal government on the adjacent land.

Development Facts

The building will be a three storey complex with 40 one-bedroom subsidized assisted living units. All assisted living units in the development are wheelchair accessible and have balconies. The current development of the Westbank Lions Seniors Housing Society will be linked to the new ILBC development via a corridor. This will allow current residents to also access support services on an as-needed basis.

Construction is expected to be completed by Fall 2005 with residents moving in during the same month.

Canadian Mortgage News - New Affordable Seniors' Housing Breaks Ground in Westbank

Tenants receive two meals a day, weekly housekeeping and linen services, 24-hour emergency response, personal care services and social and recreational opportunities. Tenants pay 70 per cent of their after-tax income for their units.

Partnership Contributions

Capital cost of this project is \$6.45 million.

Partners and Funding:

- The federal government, through Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, is providing a \$1 million capital grant.
- The provincial government, through BC Housing, will provide housing subsidy of \$4.5 million over 35 years.
- Interior Health is providing funding for the personal care services.
- The Regional District of the Central Okanagan is providing reductions on various development costs. The value of the contribution is approximately \$114,400.

Independent Living BC

In 2002 the province, through BC Housing, implemented the Independent Living BC program in partnership with the federal government, regional health authorities, and the private and non-profit sectors.

The program will create 3,500 affordable independent living units with support services across the province by 2006.

Seniors are referred to ILBC units by their local health authorities. Case managers work with individual seniors to determine whether independent living is the best option to meet their needs.