



PRESS RELEASE



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Province Announces More Supports for the Homeless

SURREY, British Columbia, March 30, 2005 — Six B.C. communities will benefit from eight new transitional housing developments to help people break free from the cycle of homelessness, Senator Jack Austin, on behalf of the Honourable Joe Fontana, Minister of State for Labour and Housing, and Murray Coell, Minister of Community Aboriginal and Women's Services and announced today.

The announcements are the result of the work done by the Premier's Task Force on Homelessness, Mental Illness and Addictions. The federal and provincial governments will provide a total of approximately \$20.8 million for projects in Victoria, Kelowna, New Westminster, Prince George, Terrace and Fort St. John. The new developments will provide support services such as counselling, treatment for mental health and addictions and services that link people to job training and stable employment.

"Housing is the fundamental building block of inclusive, prosperous and healthy families and communities," said Senator Austin on behalf of the Honourable Joe Fontana, Minister of Labour and Housing. "Transitional housing developments are essential and vital components to our national well-being as education, health care and employment."

"These projects are about more than just providing a bed to sleep in - they are about helping people move beyond temporary shelter to more secure housing, to greater self-reliance, and to a job and independence," said Coell, on behalf of Premier Gordon Campbell. "The task force and the partnership between all levels of government and community organizations reflect our shared commitment and our shared responsibility to ensure everyone in B.C. benefits from and shares in the opportunities created by the prosperity of a stronger British Columbia."

The new developments are:

- The expansion and redevelopment of the Upper Room Society/Victoria Open Door Inner City Mission in Victoria, which will also provide a range of health services and life skills training.
- The relocation of the Union Gospel Mission in Kelowna, and a new development to provide transitional housing and services for people with addictions and mental illnesses.
- The redevelopment of the Garfield Hotel in New Westminster into a shelter with transitional housing units.
- A new transitional housing development on the site of the former BackPackers Motel in Prince George, as well as the renovation of the Spruce Capital hotel to provide youth shelter beds and transitional housing.
- A new housing development in Terrace operated by the Ksan House Society for women and children fleeing abuse.
- The relocation of the Salvation Army shelter in Fort St. John, to increase the number of year-round beds.

The funding for the new projects is from the second phase of the Canada- British Columbia Affordable Housing Program Agreement signed last year. Through the agreement, each level of government is contributing about \$42 million for developments that will provide a continuum of affordable housing with support services for those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

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Coell and Austin made the announcement today at a groundbreaking ceremony in Surrey for The Phoenix Centre, an addiction treatment centre that will provide transitional housing, employment and education services to clients. The Phoenix Centre is one of four housing developments announced last December as part of the Premier's Task Force.

Last December, the federal and provincial governments announced 281 housing and support services units for four new developments in Vancouver, Surrey and Nanaimo, under the second phase of the housing agreement. Today's announcement brings the total number of new units and shelter beds to 533. Approximately \$31 million of the \$84 million in funding under the second phase of the agreement remains for allocation.

The Government of Canada, through Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 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 cost 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.

Backgrounder follows.

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Backgrounder

Premier's Task Force on Homelessness, Mental Health and Addictions

The task force announced today the following developments in six communities:

Victoria

The redevelopment of the existing centre operated by the Upper Room Society/Victoria Open Door Inner City Mission, with an expansion of the transitional housing from 22 to 45 units. The housing would be targeted to single adults. Funding estimates include:

- Federal capital funding of approximately \$3.65 million.
- Federal contribution of \$370,000 through Supportive Communities Partnerships Initiative.
- Provincial capital funding of approximately \$3.65 million.
- City contribution of property tax exemptions and adult outreach program funding equal to approximately \$500,000 over 15 years.
- Society has raised \$500,000 in capital funding and received commitment for an additional \$500,000.
- Operating costs of approximately \$1,000,000, with about \$650,000 from the society and \$350,000 from Vancouver Island Health.

Support services would include a range of health services and life skills training.

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Kelowna

1. Relocation of the 76-bed shelter operated by the Union Gospel Mission (UGM). The housing would be targeted to single adults. Funding estimates include:
 - ◆ Federal capital funding of approximately \$250,000.
 - ◆ Provincial capital funding of approximately \$250,000.
 - ◆ City will lease the land to UGM at a nominal cost.
 - ◆ Other capital contributions will come from UGM equity and fundraising efforts.
 - ◆ Annual operating funding of \$277,000 will continue to be provided by Ministry of Human Resources.
2. A new development with 30 transitional housing units targeted to single adults. Funding estimates include:
 - ◆ Federal capital funding of approximately \$2.25 million.
 - ◆ Provincial capital funding of approximately \$2.25 million.
 - ◆ City will lease the land to the society at a nominal cost.
 - ◆ Annual operating costs of about \$500,000 from Interior Health.

Support services would include a range of services for people with addictions and mental illnesses.

New Westminster

The redevelopment of the Garfield Hotel, currently operated by the Salvation Army as a shelter. Funding estimates include:

- Federal capital funding of approximately \$1.65 million.
- Provincial capital funding of approximately \$1.65 million.
- City will provide a contribution equal to \$500,000.
- Annual operating costs of about \$ 370,000 from Ministry of Human Resources.

Support services would include a range of services for people with addictions and mental illnesses.

Prince George

1. A new 30-unit transitional housing development on the site of the former BackPackers Motel. Funding estimates include:
 - ◆ Federal capital funding of approximately \$2 million.
 - ◆ Provincial capital funding of approximately \$2 million.
 - ◆ City property tax exemption equal to \$225,000.
 - ◆ Annual operating costs of about \$380,000 from Northern Health

Support services would include a range of services for the homeless or those at risk of homelessness.

2. Renovation of an existing SRO hotel to provide eight shelter beds and 13 transitional housing units to be operated by the Prince George Native Friendship Centre. Funding estimates include:
 - ◆ Federal capital funding of approximately \$150,000.
 - ◆ Provincial capital funding of approximately \$150,000.
 - ◆ City will provide an annual property tax exemption estimated at \$13,000.
 - ◆ Annual operating costs of about \$950,000 from Ministry of Children and Family Development.

Support services would include a range of culturally-appropriate social services to assist aboriginal homeless youth aged 15 - 18 with life skills, employment opportunities, mental health, substance abuse and sexual exploitation issues.

Terrace

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New eight-unit housing development for women and children fleeing abuse. Funding estimates include:

- Federal capital funding of approximately \$220,000
- Provincial capital funding of approximately \$220,000
- Capital contributions of just under \$400,000 from the Ksan House Society, Real Estate Foundation, Terrace Rotary Club, and Skeena Valley Rotary Club.
- Operating funding of about \$400,000 from Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services.

Support services include counselling, outreach, children's play area, and communal kitchen and dining area.

Fort St. John

Relocation and expansion of the Salvation Army shelter, to provide a total of 20 short-stay units. Funding estimates include:

- Federal capital funding of approximately \$250,000.
- Provincial capital funding of approximately \$250,000.
- Annual operating funding of about \$185,000 from Ministry of Human Resources.

Support services include meals and a range of services for single adults with addictions and/or mental illnesses.