



PRESS RELEASE



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Surrey Seniors to Gain Affordable Housing

SURREY, British Columbia, April 17, 2005 — Lower-income seniors will soon have more housing options, with the construction of 72 assisted-living units in Surrey. The new units are funded under Independent Living BC (ILBC), a housing-for-health program managed by BC Housing and Fraser Health in partnership with the Government of Canada through Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC).

Today's official groundbreaking ceremony for the Progressive Intercultural Community Services Society (PICS) development was attended by the Honourable Ujjal Dosanjh, Minister of Health, on behalf of the Honourable Joe Fontana, Minister of Labour and Housing; Tony Bhullar, MLA for Surrey-Newton; Keith Anderson, interim CEO for Fraser Health; and Stan Smith, president of PICS. The project will provide affordable, one-bedroom apartments for seniors and people with disabilities.

"The development of this project will allow 72 households from the Surrey area to live in a quality environment at an affordable cost," said Minister Dosanjh. "Shelter is one of the foundations upon which healthy communities and individual dignity are built. We are pleased to work with our partners in British Columbia to provide more seniors with better housing in their community."

"We've made great progress in our commitment to improve housing and health options for all British Columbians, and we couldn't have done it without innovative partnerships with other levels of government and the private sector," said Mr. Bhullar. "The power of a strong economy is that it has given us the tools to work together to offer seniors more choices for independent, affordable housing with ready access to support services when needed."

Assisted living homes are self-contained apartments where residents receive hospitality and personal care services, such as meals, housekeeping and laundry services, recreational opportunities, assistance with medications, mobility and other care needs, as well as a 24-hour response system. Fraser Health will provide funding for these personal care services.

"Regardless of culture, seniors say they do not want to live in an institutional setting with 24-hour nursing care if they have the option of living independently with some support and continued involvement with their family and community," said Mr. Anderson. "Frail seniors whose families are challenged by circumstance and by cultural expectations around elder care will find this culturally sensitive project particularly attractive."

PICS, a strong advocate for the multicultural and immigrant community in the Lower Mainland is the first South Asian immigrant society to partner with the provincial government to build an assisted living development.

"Surrey is a community that embraces many cultures," said Mr. Smith. "This new development will provide opportunities for lower-income seniors from diverse backgrounds to maintain their independence in a supportive environment."

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Admissions to publicly funded assisted living developments are managed solely through the home health department of Fraser Health. Surrey residents seeking admission and who are not currently receiving home support services can call 604 953-4965 to request information or an assessment.

The Province, through BC Housing's ILBC program, is committed to providing 3,500 affordable apartments with support services across the province by 2006/07. To date, more than 2,900 ILBC units have been allocated - 84 per cent of the program - in communities across the province. By summer, more than 1,000 new ILBC units will have been opened or be under construction in the Fraser Health region, including 192 units in Surrey and 126 units in South Surrey/White Rock.

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 cost 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.

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This news release is available online at www.bchousing.org.

Visit the Province's website at www.gov.bc.ca for online information and services.

Backgrounder

Progressive Intercultural Community Services Society (PICS)

The Progressive Intercultural Community Services Society (PICS) was formed in 1987 to promote harmony and intercultural understanding and support the building of a more inclusive and respectful society; to ensure equal access to jobs and services, and to work with other agencies and institutions.

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PICS provides employment services, job mentoring, immigration/settlement services, health education, dental programs, youth programs, volunteer programs, English-language training, drug/alcohol counselling, agricultural workers' programs, a dance academy, an organic farming institute and training, and seniors' housing. They also work in collaboration with Kwantlen College to provide courses in masonry, carpentry skills, sheet metal, welding and training in many more trades needed by the business community.

Currently, PICS manages a 54-unit supportive living development for seniors, Guru Nanak.

PICS is a strong advocate for the multicultural and immigrant community, particularly the South Asian community.

Development Facts

The new building will be a four-storey, wood-frame apartment complex with 72 one-bedroom assisted-living units. The development will connect and share services with the existing 54-unit supportive seniors' housing complex located on the same site.

Tenants will pay 70 per cent of their after-tax income for their units and receive hospitality and personal care services, such as meals, housekeeping and laundry, recreational programs, assistance with medications, mobility and other care needs, and a 24-hour response system.

Construction is expected to be completed by June 2006.

Partners and Funding

- The federal government, through Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, is providing a \$1.8 million capital grant.
- The provincial government, through BC Housing, will provide housing subsidies of \$13.7 million over 35 years.
- Fraser Health will fund the personal care services to tenants in the amount of \$ 1.1 million annually.
- The society is providing \$1.2 million in land equity.