



PRESS RELEASE



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Increased Services for Hazelton's Seniors

HAZELTON, British Columbia, September 24, 2005 — Today marked the start of construction for a new \$1.9 million housing development that will provide six assisted living units for seniors at the Wrinch Memorial Foundation's Skeena Place.

"The Government of Canada is committed to supporting affordable housing for Canadians who need it most," said the Honourable David L. Emerson, Minister of Industry, and MP for Vancouver–Kingsway, on behalf of the Honourable Joe Fontana, Ministry of Labour and Housing. "We are pleased to be making this investment to create affordable housing units for seniors in Hazelton. Together with our partners, we are helping more people access new units and start new lives."

Skeena Place's new assisted living units will complement the existing 15-bed facility, rental housing, physician's clinic and on-site pharmacy. This project is one of many new assisted living homes developed under the Independent Living BC (ILBC) program, providing a middle option for seniors who can no longer live independently, but who do not want or need 24-hour residential care. These six new assisted living homes in Hazelton will provide affordable alternatives for low-to-moderate income seniors.

"Assisted living is a new way to meet the health and housing needs of our seniors in the North," said Bulkley Valley–Stikine MLA Dennis MacKay. "Assisted living provides choice, independence and dignity for our seniors and peace of mind for families, knowing their loved ones are receiving the right level of care in their home communities. Skeena Place will provide this for Hazelton seniors."

The assisted living units are self-contained apartments with a 24-hour response system. Residents receive personal care services, such as recreational opportunities and assistance with medications, housekeeping, meals, and laundry services. Northern Health will provide ongoing funding for personal care services and a portion of the hospitality services to ensure that tenants have access to the healthcare services they need to remain independent.

"Part of our strategy at Northern Health is to provide a wide variety of health supports to seniors across Northern British Columbia, especially given the growth we expect to see in the seniors' population," said Judy Wass, Northern Health board member. "We believe these new units will offer new options for Hazelton seniors who can remain independent with specialized housing and health services."

The new assisted living development will be owned and operated by the recently developed Wrinch Memorial Foundation, at the request of the Wrinch Memorial Hospital board. The hospital provides acute care and a variety of community services to the Hazelton and surrounding First Nation villages.

"With the addition of assisted living to the continuum of services we already offer in Hazelton, we provide more choices for our seniors as they age to allow them to remain as independent for as long as possible," said Neal Erickson of the Wrinch Memorial Foundation. "Affordable assisted living will be welcomed by our seniors."

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The success of the assisted living development relies on the commitment of the Hazelton and surrounding communities. Donors include the Village of Hazelton, the District of New Hazelton and the Gitskan Health Society.

The Province of British Columbia, through BC Housing and Independent Living BC, is committed to providing 3,500 affordable assisted living apartments across the province. To date over 3,200 ILBC units, or 92 per cent, have been allocated.

The Government of Canada, through Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, will contribute \$130 million towards affordable housing in this province by 2008. The provincial government, through BC Housing, will provide a minimum of \$34 million annually to subsidize the cost of units built under the Canada–British Columbia Affordable Housing Agreement, as part of its strategy to provide a range of housing options for British Columbians in greatest need.

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

BACKGROUNDER

Wrinch Memorial Foundation

The Wrinch Memorial Hospital, founded over 100 years ago, is one of three hospitals in B.C. owned by the United Church of Canada and receives operating funding through Northern Health. Wrinch Memorial provides acute care and a variety of community services to the Hazelton and surrounding First Nations villages. The hospital presently operates 15 beds, which are flexible in use depending on the type of need, such as acute, extended or respite care. Additional services include the community's only pharmacy, physician clinic, dental clinic, podiatrist, private physiotherapy clinic, operating room and obstetrics services. The hospital also has rental units through the converted nurses' residence, a 10-unit development known as Wrinch Residence. The foundation was created to raise funds for the hospital and will oversee the Skeena Place development.

Skeena Place

The building is a one-storey development with six one-bedroom suites. It will be situated beside the Wrinch Memorial Hospital, close to complementary health care services. Tenants will receive hospitality and personal care services, such

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as meals, housekeeping and laundry, recreational programs, assistance with medications, and a 24-hour response system. Construction is expected to be completed by spring 2006.

Partners and Funding

Capital cost of this project is \$1.9 million.

- The federal government, through CMHC, is providing a capital grant of \$300,000 and \$10,000 in seed funding for project development.
- The Province, through BC Housing, will provide a housing subsidy of \$1.49 million over 35 years.
- Northern Health will provide funding for the personal care and part of the hospitality services to tenants.
- The Village of Hazelton is providing a reduction on various development costs, valued at approximately \$20,060.
- The District of New Hazelton is providing landscaping, valued at approximately \$10,000.
- The Wrinch Memorial Foundation is providing \$28,000 in land equity and \$56,000 in cash and community donations.
- The Gitskan Health Society is providing a \$15,000 contribution.