



PRESS RELEASE



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New Affordable Housing for Seniors in DTES

VANCOUVER, British Columbia, December 2, 2005 — Seniors in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (DTES) will benefit from more housing options with the new Katherine Sanford Housing Society development at 475 East Hastings, which celebrated its official opening today.

The new development, called the Smith-Yuen apartments, is a partnership between several levels of government. It will provide 52 self-contained one-bedroom apartments for seniors with lower incomes and serious, persistent mental illnesses. The building was named in honour of the co-chairs of the Katherine Sanford Housing Society at its inception, Nobel Laureate, Michael Smith and Architect, Ronald Yuen.

"This development will allow seniors most in need in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside to live in a quality environment at an affordable cost," said Nelson Merizzi, CMHC's General Manager for the B.C. region. "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."

"The province is continuing to meet its commitment to increase housing options for seniors," said Rich Coleman, Minister Responsible for Housing. "With this particular development we are able to provide support services for seniors with persistent mental illness and lower income. Our commitment to providing the best system of support in Canada for seniors includes an added \$242 million over three years for renewing the Seniors' Supplement, to provide a monthly benefit for approximately 40,000 low income seniors; for doubling annual funding to the Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters (SAFER) program; and updating existing seniors' health facilities."

"One in five seniors' lives with a serious mental illness, which in turn takes a toll on their physical well being," said Linda Thomas, Director of Housing, Vancouver Coastal Health. "The Smith-Yuen apartments will provide residents with easy access to home care, meal services, and the other supports they need to stay healthy and be an active member of their community."

"Our citizens all need to feel that they can go home to a place they feel welcome and safe at the end of the day," said Larry Campbell, Mayor of Vancouver. "The City has worked hard with our partners, the federal and provincial governments, to ensure our most vulnerable citizens have access to housing."

The Katherine Sanford Housing Society has a long-standing reputation for property management and development of community housing for the mentally ill in the Greater Vancouver region. The new Smith-Yuen apartments — situated in the downtown eastside — are one of several housing developments managed by the Society, including several community care homes and a short-term emergency care facility.

"Several years ago the Strathcona Mental Health Team identified a group of seniors with a history of mental illness who were living in the downtown eastside but in very inadequate accommodation," said Bonnie Rice, Executive Director of the Katherine Sanford Housing Society. "Many of the individuals had issues associated with aging, which meant they

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needed some form of supported housing to continue to live independently. These new apartments were designed specifically for this population group. In addition to a range of support services, such as home support provided by the health authority, the building design incorporates many specialized features geared to an aging population."

Under the Canada – British Columbia Affordable Housing Agreement, the Government of Canada, through Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, will contribute \$1.53 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.

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

Backgrounder

Katherine Sanford Housing Society

The Katherine Sanford Housing Society believes that all individuals with a mental illness have a right to decent, affordable housing that gives them dignity and independence.

The mandate of the Society is to provide quality supported housing to persons with a mental illness.

Since its start in 1989, Katherine Sanford Housing Society has developed 16 licensed community residences and three supported apartment projects accommodating more than 200 people in typical residential neighbourhoods in Vancouver and Richmond.

Development Information

Location: 475 Hastings Street

52 supported apartments for seniors with serious, persistent mental illnesses.

Partners and funding information

Total capital cost for this project is \$8,460,911.

- The Government of Canada, through CMHC, provided a \$1.53 million capital grant.
- The province of British Columbia, through BC Housing, provided interim financing to develop the building and will provide an ongoing subsidy of \$10.9 million over 35 years.

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- The City of Vancouver provided reduction of levies in the amount of \$81,000, plus a lease write down in the amount of \$208,750.
- Vancouver Coastal Health provided a capital grant of \$698,361 and will fund personal care services above the amount tenants are able to afford.