



**PRESS RELEASE**



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## **Heritage Home for Young Adult Mental Health Clients Opens**

**VANCOUVER, British Columbia, July 12, 2006** — Watson House, an eight-bedroom restored heritage home, opened its doors today to young adults who are living with a mental illness.

"Canada's new Government is proud to be a funding partner in this project," said James Moore, Member of Parliament for Port Moody – Westwood – Port Coquitlam, on behalf of the Honourable Diane Finley, Minister of Human Resources and Social Development. "Watson House is an excellent example of how all levels of government and community groups can work together to help vulnerable young Canadians get the support they need."

The Watson House project is a partnership between the federal, provincial, municipal governments, the Mole Hill Community Housing Society and Coast Foundation Society, to provide housing and support to young people as they establish themselves within the community.

"The Province is committed to ensuring our most vulnerable citizens have opportunities to access stable housing and health services," said Lorne Mayencourt MLA for Vancouver-Burrard, adding that the Watson House renovation is a unique partnership between several levels of government and two non-profit organizations.

"Supported housing combined with early intervention and treatment fosters a better prognosis and reduced likelihood of relapse or hospitalization for people living with mental illness," said Linda Thomas, director of housing for Vancouver Coastal Health. "Watson House is especially important as it supports young people to move on with their lives, for example continuing with their studies or pursuing job opportunities."

With a total capital funding cost of \$1.5 million, Watson House will provide stable housing with support services for young adults with mental illness. Vancouver Coastal Health is providing operating funding in the amount of \$175,000 annually.

"The City of Vancouver welcomes this innovative partnership with the provincial government, federal government and community organizations to provide supported housing," said Vancouver Mayor Sam Sullivan. "With recognized leaders like the Mole Hill Community Housing Society and Coast Foundation, we are creating opportunities for at-risk young people to reintegrate into society."

"We have an established relationship with the Coast Foundation Society in Vancouver to provide housing and care services for people living with mental illness," said Don Allison, Board Chair, Mole Hill Community Housing Society. "Watson House takes a piece of Vancouver's history and ensures that it will be part of Vancouver's future."

"Housing is a fundamental component to recovery and Coast Foundation is pleased to participate in making Watson House an important addition to the range of housing options for people with mental illness," said Coast Foundation Executive Director, Darrell Burnham.

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The Government of Canada, through Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, provided a grant towards the funding of Watson House through Canada – BC Affordable Housing Agreement. The provincial government, through BC Housing, also provided funding under the Community Partnerships Initiatives. The City of Vancouver has contributed the building and the site, plus grants towards the renovations from its Affordable Housing Fund.

For more information on Community Partnership Initiatives, please visit [www.bchousing.org](http://www.bchousing.org).

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### Backgrounder

#### **\$1.5 Million Watson House Opens in Vancouver**

Watson House, a heritage house renovated to include eight-bedrooms, three bathrooms, kitchen, dining and amenity space on three floors, will house young adults with mental illness. Watson House serves clients who require support services to reintegrate into the community, allowing up to two years of stable housing.

The Mole Hill Community Housing Society owns Watson House, and the Coast Foundation Society will provide support services and programs with funding from Vancouver Coastal Health. The Mole Hill Society and Coast Foundation Society have a successful existing partnership providing housing and support services to people living with mental illness in Vancouver. Coast Foundation has been providing community mental health services in Vancouver since 1974.

The Mole Hill Community Housing Society was formed in 1999 to redevelop and manage the block of heritage homes in the west End known as Mole Hill. It was originally the sister organization of, and was formed by, the Mole Hill Living Heritage Society which advocated for many years the preservation of Mole Hill from demolition and gentrification.

The total value of this renovation project is \$1.5 million, funding partners include:

- \$250,000 grant from CMHC under the Canada – BC Affordable Housing Agreement.
- \$220,000 mortgage loan from BC Housing, through the Community Partnerships Initiative.
- \$700,000 from The City of Vancouver in leasing contributions and \$330,000 in capital grants.
- \$175,000 in annual operating funds by Vancouver Coastal Health.
- Coast Foundation Society has been contracted to provide on site support services and life skills training to assist all clients to achieve independent and appropriate community housing.

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- The Mole Hill Community Housing Society is credited with the foresight and idea behind the Watson House renovation.