



PRESS RELEASE



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Supportive Housing Breaks Ground on Salt Spring Island

SALT SPRING ISLAND, British Columbia, June 01, 2007 — Federal, provincial and community partners gathered today for the official groundbreaking of a new \$4.9 million housing development for individuals and families at risk of homelessness, and people with mental health issues.

"Canada's New Government is delivering on its commitment to help those who are homeless and those at risk of becoming homeless," said James Lunney, Member of Parliament for Nanaimo – Alberni, on behalf of the Honourable Monte Solberg, Minister of Human Resources and Social Development. "Murakami Gardens will help ensure that vulnerable families on Salt Spring Island can access the housing and services they need."

The 27 units are being built under the Provincial Homelessness Initiative, which aims to break the cycle of homelessness by integrating support services with housing.

"This project is the first housing for low-income families and individuals built on Salt Spring," said the Saanich North and the Islands MLA Murray Coell. "Murakami Gardens will provide homes, support and a stable and healthy future for many Islanders and an important history lesson for all Canadians."

Murakami Gardens is the result of partnerships between all three levels of government, the Capital Regional District, the Murakami family, the Real Estate Foundation of B.C. and Salt Spring Island Community Services.

"Homelessness and affordable housing are important issues facing our community," said Gary Holman, Director, Capital Regional Housing Trust Fund. "Murakami Gardens will be a good step towards building housing for people who need it most on Salt Spring Island."

Richard and Rose Murakami initiated the project as a tribute to their late parents, Katsuyori and Kimiko, who were forced to leave their Salt Spring Island home and farm in 1942, and were incarcerated in internment camps in the interior of B.C due to their Japanese ancestry. In 1954, the Murakamis were the only exiled family to return permanently to Salt Spring Island — but not to their original farm which had been confiscated and sold without their consent. They cleared a different patch of land and started a market garden of vegetables and berries, which Salt Spring Islanders, including regular summer visitors, eagerly bought. Richard and Rose view their donation of land to the project as a way of giving back to the Salt Spring community.

"We know what it's like to live in degrading and dehumanizing situations. We lived in some terrible, terrible places, you wouldn't even call them houses," said Rose Murakami. "We know what these individuals and families are going through. It is only through the support of the community that we can attempt to house and care for individuals in our community."

The Province is also providing funding to incorporate energy-efficient features. Murakami Gardens will be operated by Salt Spring Island Community Services, and will also link residents to appropriate community, social and health

Canadian Mortgage News - Supportive Housing Breaks Ground on Salt Spring Island

services.

“Murakami Gardens is a milestone in improving the housing options on our Island for families, working poor and those at risk of being homeless,” said Rob Grant, Executive Director of Salt Spring Island Community Services. “It is a great experience to be part of so many different partners working together towards this goal. Affordable housing will continue to be a community challenge and this project is a great example of what can be done if we pull together.”

The Province has committed to creating 2,287 new housing units under the Provincial Homelessness Initiative. This year, the provincial budget for housing is \$328 million, nearly triple the amount spent in 2001.

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation renovation programs provide financial assistance to ensure that housing occupied by low-income households meets basic health and safety standards. These programs assist with home modifications and adaptations to enable seniors and persons with disabilities live independently in their own home, near family and friends. They also help with funding to improve or create shelters for victims of family violence and preserve housing for people who are at risk of homelessness.

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[See related speech.](#)

Backgrounder

Murakami Gardens

Murakami Gardens, located at 167 Rainbow Road on Salt Spring Island, will provide 27 units for individuals and families at risk of homelessness and people with mental health issues. The development is scheduled to open to residents in May 2008. It will be operated by Salt Spring Island Community Services.

The new development will be a two-storey concrete and wood-frame building. It will include six bachelor, 14 one-bedroom, five two-bedroom and two three-bedroom units. Residents will have access to community supports, such as family support and mental health services, through Salt Spring Island Community Services off-site.

Partners and Funding

Capital cost of this project is approximately \$4.9 million.

- The federal government, through the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, will provide \$648,000 in RRAP funding.
- The Province, through BC Housing, is providing interim construction financing in the amount of \$1.9 million and a one-time grant of \$250,000.

Canadian Mortgage News - Supportive Housing Breaks Ground on Salt Spring Island

- The provincial Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance is providing a one-time grant of \$1.06 million.
- The provincial Ministry of Children and Family Development will provide ongoing family services to residents.
- The provincial Ministry of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources, through Community Action on Energy Efficiency, will provide \$15,000 for energy upgrading.
- The Murakami family is providing land for the project.
- The Capital Regional District is providing \$324,000 in Regional Housing Trust funding.
- Salt Spring Island Community Services is providing in-kind support and fundraising for an additional \$70,000.
- The Real Estate Foundation is providing a one-time grant of \$50,000.
- The Islands Trust is providing bonus density.

Salt Spring Island Community Services

Salt Spring and Gulf Islands Community Services Society is a non-profit society that supports and strengthens individuals, families and communities of the Southern Gulf Islands. This is accomplished through the provision of a broad range of counselling and support services, and through community development activities such as homelessness and housing initiatives.