



## PRESS RELEASE



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### **Government of Canada Helps to Improve Housing Affordability and Choice**

**OTTAWA, Ontario, January 22, 2009** — The Honourable Diane Finley, Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and Minister Responsible for Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), announced today eight new grants that will improve housing affordability for Canadians. The grants, totalling \$38,000, are being awarded under CMHC’s Affordability and Choice Today (ACT) initiative.

“The Government of Canada is committed to making housing more affordable for Canadians across our country,” said Minister Finley. “Through the ACT grants we are reducing red-tape and eliminating hurdles in planning and building regulations, so that families have better access to a range of affordable housing in their communities.”

Operating since 1990, ACT provides grants to local teams made up of municipalities, builders and housing stakeholders who promote the improvement of planning and building regulations in their communities to lower the cost of housing. ACT also offers a wealth of proven best practices and lessons learned so that communities can benefit from the innovations of others.

ACT is funded by CMHC and administered and delivered by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), with the participation of the Canadian Home Builders’ Association (CHBA), and the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association (CHRA).

In addition to providing grants, ACT experts promote best practices and lessons learned from the projects undertaken by grant recipients at workshops, conferences and other events attended by municipalities and housing stakeholders.

“Reforming regulations is key to increasing housing affordability and broadening choice. Municipalities across Canada can draw on ACT solutions to reduce costs and encourage innovation,” said CHBA President John Hrynkow.

“The grants will help address housing needs locally by encouraging options like secondary suites. Since 1990, ACT has been gathering a wealth of information on solutions like this, which are available to communities across Canada,” added CHRA President David Eddy.

“Municipalities of any size and region can benefit from developing new regulatory solutions or adopting ACT’s wide range of solutions leading to improved housing affordability and choice for residents,” stated FCM President Jean Perrault. “We look forward to ACT’s continuing contribution to helping Canadian cities and communities pursue innovation in residential development through regulatory reform.”

With 148 projects complete, ACT has a rich database of information that local partners can benefit from in their future housing projects. These best practices and lessons learned are available on the ACT website [www.actprogram.com](http://www.actprogram.com). By sharing these results with other municipalities, ACT extends the benefits of the program beyond those receiving project grants. ACT’s knowledgeable staff can also help local stakeholders in addressing regulatory issues.

As Canada's national housing agency, CMHC draws on more than 60 years of experience to help Canadians access a variety of quality, environmentally sustainable, and affordable homes — homes that will continue to create vibrant, healthy communities and cities across the country.

**For further information please contact:**

Julie Vaux	Julie Girard
Director of Communications	Media Relations
Office of the Honourable Diane Finley	CMHC
Tel.: 819-994-2482	Tel.: 613-748-4684

## **ACT Grant Recipients January 2009**

### **A Housing First Policy Report: Affordable Housing Action Committee of Stratford/United Way, Stratford, Ontario**

A \$5,000 grant to examine potential municipal policies in order to identify and make available municipal lands for affordable housing projects. The project will involve reviewing what other municipalities have done, holding an open house with local stakeholders and developing recommendations for a streamlined process.

### **Creating Universally Designed Communities, Visitable Housing Conference: North Central Municipal Association, Prince George, British Columbia**

A \$5,000 grant to organize and hold a conference on building code and regulatory options in building a greater number of accessible and affordable homes for older adults and persons with disabilities, as well as to enhance access to neighbours' homes.

### **Newmarket Eco-Logic Homes: Corporation of Newmarket, Ontario**

A \$5,000 grant to develop a field inspection manual with new inspection guidelines to assist building inspectors in the review process of a 34-unit subdivision using harvested rainwater for flushing toilets and irrigation, as well as innovative energy efficient features. The manual will help streamline the inspection process and will be shared with other municipalities.

### **Secondary Suite Information Workshops: City of Terrace, British Columbia**

A \$5,000 grant to review secondary suite regulations in similar sized B.C. municipalities and to hold two workshops to seek public input in expanding secondary suite development across the city's residential zones.

### **District of Sicamous Affordable Housing Zone: District of Sicamous, British Columbia**

A \$5,000 grant for a community workshop on the development of regulations and strategies to meet requirements for lands to be removed from the Agricultural Land Reserve for housing that is affordable to year-round residents and the local workforce of this resort community.

### **A Made-in-Peterborough Approach to Secondary Suites in New and Existing Developments: City of Peterborough, Ontario**

A \$5,000 grant for a facilitated day-long workshop with invited experts to consider regulatory options, barriers, solutions, visual examples of secondary suite conversions and new developments. The project will result in proposals for secondary suites bylaws that address the unique needs of the city, township and county.

### **Affordable Housing Strategy for Small Resort Municipality: Municipality of the County of Rossland, British Columbia**

A \$5,000 grant for a workshop to explore with local developers and community representatives the opportunities offered by a variety of regulatory options that could provide housing that is affordable to permanent residents and the local workforce.

### **Town of Lacombe Secondary Suite Initiative: Town of Lacombe, Alberta**

A \$3,000 grant to hold two open houses, and undertake a survey to educate the community on the positive impacts of secondary suites. The project will also involve developing a program to support upgrades to existing suites and create new suites as an affordable housing option.

## **Backgrounders**

### **Affordability and Choice Today (ACT)**

It is a challenge to keep housing regulations and municipal approval procedures current and in line with the changing needs of today's communities.

Out-of-date rules can limit the development of housing that is affordable, and that offers a range of options for Canadians. This makes regulatory reform a major concern to home builders and non-profit organizations looking for new ways to make housing more affordable. Municipalities also want to modify their regulations and update their procedures to make service delivery more efficient, while enhancing their community's quality of life.

The Affordability and Choice Today (ACT) initiative was created in 1990 to address these concerns by funding and promoting practical solutions at the local level that overcome regulatory barriers to the development of affordable housing. ACT has documented these ideas in case studies and information sheets that can be downloaded from ACT's website. This information is promoted at workshops, conferences and other events.

ACT provides grants of up to \$5,000 to local teams made up of municipalities, private and non-profit home builders and other housing stakeholders. These teams use the grants to promote or initiate regulatory reform in their communities, aimed at increasing housing affordability and offering housing options that meet the community's needs. Eligible projects must include a specific activity or product, such as a stakeholder consultation, survey, background research, workshop, open house or promotional material.

The initiative is funded by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) and administered and delivered by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) with the participation of the Canadian Home Builders' Association (CHBA), and the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association (CHRA)

Grant applications are selected by ACT's National Management Committee, which represents the four partners. Applications can be submitted at any time.

With 148 projects complete, ACT has a rich database of solutions that local partners can benefit from in their future housing projects. Solution sheets and case studies from previously completed ACT grants are available on the website [www.actprogram.com](http://www.actprogram.com). Recently completed projects include:

- New Plan Reflects Northern City's Unique Character: City of Iqaluit, Nunavut Territory
- A Plan to Regulate Residential Construction and Renovation: Atlantic Home Building and Renovation Sector Council, Nova Scotia
- Developing Laneway Housing: Terence Van Elslander and Jeffery Stinson, Architects, Toronto, ON
- Flex-Plex Housing: Industry-Municipal Partnership for Innovation: CHBA, Victoria, BC
- Task Force Charts New Path to Affordable Housing: City of Kelowna, BC
- Financing Conversion of an Institutional Building to Affordable, Accessible Apartments: Regional Municipality of York, Ontario
- Sustainable Aboriginal Demonstration Project Challenges Traditional Practices: Julia Bourke Architecture Inc., Montreal, Quebec
- Neighbourhood Infill Housing for Whistler's Resident Workforce: Resort Municipality of Whistler, BC

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- Building Code Options Reduce Renovation Costs for Inner-City Housing: New Life Ministries, Winnipeg, Manitoba

ACT's knowledgeable staff can also help find solutions and assist local stakeholders in addressing regulatory issues. For more information about the ACT grant application process and about ACT solutions call 613-907-6242, email [info@actprogram.com](mailto:info@actprogram.com).