



PRESS RELEASE



Canadian Mortgage News - National Archive 2009

Government of Canada and Province of British Columbia Open a Housing Project for the Homeless in Prince George

PRINCE GEORGE, British Columbia, October 16, 2009 — Friendship Lodge, an \$8.1-million, 30-unit apartment building, officially opened today to provide housing and support services for adults who are homeless or at risk of homelessness with mental health and addiction issues in Prince George.

“The Government of Canada is helping make affordable housing available in British Columbia and across Canada for those who need it the most,” said the Honourable Jay Hill, Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and MP for Prince George – Peace River, on behalf of the Honourable Diane Finley, Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada and Minister Responsible for Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC). “These new units in Prince George improve the housing conditions for those at risk of homelessness with access to suitable, affordable housing that meets their specific needs.”

The Government of Canada provided a Canada – BC grant of \$2 million, through Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. The Province provided \$5.9 million in mortgage financing through the Provincial Homelessness Initiative, which integrates support services with housing to help people move beyond temporary shelter to more secure housing, greater self-reliance and appropriate employment. In addition, the Province is providing operational funding of \$529,292 for administration including full-time onsite staffing and support services.

“Our government is working towards creating housing opportunities for our most vulnerable citizens so they can live in safe environments providing support services to ensure they get the help and guidance they need,” said Shirley Bond, Minister of Transportation and MLA for Prince George – Valemount. “Friendship Lodge has already made a positive impact on the Prince George community and I look forward to seeing and hearing more about the positive stories that will come from its residents.”

“Homelessness and affordable housing are important issues facing our community and surrounding regions,” said Mayor Dan Rogers, City of Prince George. “The opening of Friendship Lodge and Nutesne Yoh is a good step towards meeting the needs of our most vulnerable.”

Friendship Lodge will be managed and operated by Prince George Native Friendship Centre Society (PGNFCS). The society also manages and operates Nutesne Yoh (the former Astoria Hotel), a 17-unit supportive housing development for women who are homeless or at risk of homelessness with mental health and addiction issues. The Province provided approximately \$1-million for the purchase and renovations of Nutesne Yoh and is providing \$288,553 annually in operational funding.

“Our partnerships with the federal and provincial governments have allowed the Prince George Friendship Centre Society to officially open a total of 47 units of supportive housing to help struggling men and women find the housing and supports they so desperately need,” said Barbara Ward-Burkitt, M.Ed., executive director, PGNFCS. “I am confident that our newly expanded housing programs and support services will provide path ways for the residents to

move toward long-term independence and greater self-reliance.”

In 2008, the Government of Canada committed more than \$1.9 billion over five years to improve and build new affordable housing and to help the homeless. Canada's Economic Action Plan builds on this with an additional one-time investment of more than \$2 billion over two years in new and existing social housing and lending of up to another \$2 billion to municipalities for housing-related infrastructure.

Increasing affordable housing, reducing homelessness and helping B.C.'s most vulnerable citizens is a key agenda for the Province of British Columbia. In 2009/10, the Province's budget for affordable housing and shelters is \$469 million, more than four times as much as in 2001.

'Breaking the Cycle of Homelessness' is a website providing a comprehensive and detailed look at provincial programs and services to address homelessness. Visit: www.bchousing.org/breakingthecycle for more information.

CMHC has been Canada's national housing agency for more than 60 years. CMHC is committed to helping Canadians access a wide choice of quality, affordable homes, while making vibrant, healthy communities and cities a reality across the country. The Government of Canada, through CMHC, will contribute more than \$130 million towards affordable housing in B.C.

More information on this and other measures in Canada's Economic Action Plan, the federal government's plan to stimulate the economy and protect those hit hardest by the global recession, can be found at: www.actionplan.gc.ca.

To find out more about how the Government of Canada and CMHC are working to build stronger homes and communities for all Canadians, call CMHC at 1-800-668-2642 or visit: www.cmhc.ca/housingactionplan.

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