
NEWS RELEASE

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Office of the Premier
Ministry of Forests and Range and Minister Responsible for Housing
Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance

PROVINCE TO PROTECT 996 AFFORDABLE HOUSING UNITS

VANCOUVER – The Province is funding 996 more units of supportive housing to reduce homelessness, Premier Gordon Campbell announced today.

The \$80-million investment includes the purchase of 15 buildings in Vancouver, Victoria and Burnaby to protect affordable housing. The Province launched a major housing initiative last fall, Housing Matters BC, and committed additional new funding in Budget 2007. Today's announcement secures important affordable housing, will help reduce homelessness, and gives the Province and local governments more tools to help those who cannot help themselves.

“We have an obligation to give people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness the opportunity to live in safe, clean and affordable housing,” said Campbell. “With today's funding, the provincial government is making the largest single investment in this critical type of housing stock ever. We are trying to ensure important services are available to people who want to make a better future for themselves.”

Housing is the cornerstone of strong social policy. The purchases include 10 Single Room Occupancy (SRO) hotels in Vancouver, primarily in and around Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, and one SRO hotel in Victoria. In addition, four buildings purchased in Burnaby and Victoria will be converted into supportive housing, which integrates support services with housing so people can move beyond temporary shelter to more secure housing, gain greater self-reliance, and achieve appropriate employment. In total, 709 supportive housing units will result from these purchases.

The Province is also funding 287 additional new supportive housing units in Vancouver on three city-owned sites, identified as priorities by the City of Vancouver. It is anticipated that one of the sites will be a pilot project for small suites of approximately 180 to 200 square feet to be used as an initial form of stable housing for people wanting to get off the street. Services such as mental health and addiction programs, life skills counselling and employment training will be incorporated into the building so they are readily available to occupants. The project is currently being considered by the city.

“Supportive housing helps people break the cycle of homelessness and makes our communities stronger,” said Minister Responsible for Housing Rich Coleman. “We are providing people the tools they need to regain their independence.”

“Providing financial help and skills training will make a big difference in a person's life,” said Minister of Employment and Income Assistance Claude Richmond. “The Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance will be a strong partner to make sure these housing units help as many vulnerable income assistance clients as possible.”

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All of today's commitments are being made through the Provincial Homelessness Initiative, arising from the work of the Premier's Task Force on Homelessness, Mental Illness and Addictions. With today's announcement, the Province has funded 2,287 housing units under Initiative since 2004 and will allocate \$328 million this year to social housing - nearly triple 2001 spending.

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1 backgrounder(s) attached.

Media Mike Morton
contact: Press Secretary
 Office of the Premier
 250 213-8218

Susan Thom
BC Housing
604 230-1301

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