



**PRESS RELEASE**



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## **Our Place Breaks Ground in Victoria**

**VICTORIA, British Columbia, June 12, 2006** — Construction is underway for Our Place, a new \$14 million development aimed at helping Victoria's homeless and adults in crisis. Representatives from all three levels of government and local partners were on site today in Victoria to celebrate the progress.

The new five-storey complex will provide 45 transitional housing units, meal service for residents and homeless individuals, a drop-in centre as well as life skills coaching, literacy, and employment skills training.

"Our Place is a good example of the commitment of Canada's new government to provide shelter to those in need in Victoria, and ensuring they are safe and comfortable during a difficult time in their lives," said the Honourable Chuck Strahl, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister Responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, on behalf of the Honourable Diane Finley, Minister of Human Resources and Social Development.

The development is one of 12 housing developments being built across the province as a result of the Premier's Task Force on Homelessness, Mental Illness and Addictions. Other major partners in this project include the Government of Canada, the Province of BC, the Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA), and the Our Place Society and other private local donors.

"This development is a showcase for the province's commitment to housing solutions for British Columbians," said Ida Chong, Minister of Community Services and MLA for Oak Bay – Gordon Head. "Victoria needs a facility that offers these services and the Province is pleased to be part of this important local solution."

The Vancouver Island Health Authority will be providing operating funding for day and residential programs, as well as outreach services. This will include a 24/7 support worker and a part-time nursing position.

"The integration and enhancement of mental health and addictions services is a key priority outlined in VIHA's Five Year Strategic Plan, and we are committed to ensuring clients have timely and appropriate access to a whole range of addictions and mental health services," said Michael Costello, VIHA Board Member. "As part of the Premier's task force on homelessness, VIHA will be funding residential and day programs as well as outreach services through Our Place when it opens next year."

When complete, the building will be managed by the Our Place Society, a consolidation of the Open Door Inner City Ministry and the Upper Room Society, two faith-based non-profit societies.

"We are excited to be able to offer something brand new to people, many of whom have had only hand-me-downs," said Rev. David Steward of Our Place Society.

"The Victoria Steering Committee on Homelessness is delighted to have been involved in advancing the Our Place project, where many people turn each day," said Andrew Lane, Co-chair of the Victoria Steering Committee on

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Homelessness. "We look forward to being involved with all segments of our community, as we continue to address the issues of homelessness."

The Government of Canada, through Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, will contribute more than \$130 million towards affordable housing in this province. The provincial government, through BC Housing, will provide a minimum of \$34 million annually to subsidize the costs of units under the Canada – BC Affordable Housing Agreement, as part of a larger strategy to provide a range of housing options for British Columbians in greatest need.

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### Backgrounder

#### Our Place Society

Our Place will be a 5 storey concrete building. It will provide 45 transitional bed-sitting room units, meal service for residents and the homeless, drop-in centre and transitional services.

In 2005, the Victoria Open Door Inner City Ministry and Upper Room Society consolidated to provide a continuum of supports and services for Victoria's homeless. The amalgamated societies have been renamed the "Our Place Society."

#### Partners and Funding

Capital cost of the development was \$14,055,169. Funding partners include:

- \$3.375 million capital grant from the Government of Canada through CMHC and \$420,000 grant from the Supporting Communities Partnerships Initiatives (SCPI) through Service Canada and the National Homelessness Initiative
- \$7.410 million capital grant from the province through BC Housing
- \$745,000 grant from the BC Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance (MEIA)
- \$1.4 million land value donated by The Our Place Society and other donations from a number of private donors and the Real Estate Foundation worth \$666,098
- \$400,000 in annual operating funding from the Vancouver Island Health Authority for residential programs, outreach services and a part-time nursing position.

The City of Victoria will provide a property tax exemption that will total upwards of \$150,000.