



PRESS RELEASE



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Supportive Housing for Abused Women Opens in Victoria

VICTORIA, British Columbia, May 25, 2007 — Mature women who have left abusive relationships now have more options for safe and affordable supportive housing with the opening of the Victoria Women's Transition House Society's 23 unit Harrison Place.

"Canada's New Government is proud to help provide safe and supportive housing to women in Victoria," said the Honourable Gary Lunn, Minister of Natural Resources and Member of Parliament for Saanich – Gulf Islands, on behalf of the Honourable Monte Solberg, Minister of Human Resources and Social Development. "This funding is helping the Victoria Women's Transition House Society give women hope, dignity and a path to a safer, better and stronger future."

The \$4.95 million development will provide supportive housing with tenancy of up to three years for women aged 45 to 65 who have left abusive relationships and are working towards the goal of living independently in the community. The development is unique in that the support services have been guided by the experiences and knowledge of older women who have been abused. These services include staffing five days a week, group and individual counselling.

"We know that stable housing is a key factor in women being able to leave abusive relationships," said Ida Chong, Minister of Community Services and Minister Responsible for Seniors' and Women's Issues. "Harrison Place will provide older women who have limited options and income, an opportunity to rebuild their lives in the community in a safe and healthy way."

"The CRD is excited to be involved in this initiative that provides affordable, stable housing for women forging a new life free from abuse. It is an innovative partnership with the federal and provincial governments, the Real Estate Foundation of BC and the Victoria Women's Transition House Society," said Dean Fortin, chair of the Regional Housing Trust Fund Commission. "We are looking forward to more such opportunities to partner for affordable housing in our communities."

Added Barry Brown-John, chair of the Real Estate Foundation of B.C., "Harrison Place will offer a brighter future for women in need of secure and affordable housing. We are pleased to be a partner in this initiative."

The Victoria Women's Transition House Society has provided safe, welcoming shelter, respectful counselling, support and advocacy since 1975. Harrison Place is their first housing development specifically for older women and complements existing services provided to them.

"Most of the subsidized housing in Victoria for women who have left abusive situations is for women with children," said Victoria Women's Transition House Society executive director Carolyn Fast. "Harrison Place will provide hope and opportunity for older women to reach their goals of living independently, free from abuse. I am so pleased to see both the federal and provincial governments working together with the community to support this."

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Today's announcement reflects the federal and B.C. government's commitment towards providing affordable housing options for British Columbians in greatest need. This year the provincial budget for housing is \$328 million, nearly triple the amount spent in 2001.

In addition, the Government of Canada, through Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, will contribute more than \$130 million by 2010 towards affordable housing in this province. The provincial government, through BC Housing, will provide a minimum of \$34 million annually to subsidize the cost of units built 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.

Canada's New Government recently introduced the Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS), which will provide \$269.6 million over two years to help communities across Canada combat homelessness more effectively. The HPS focuses on a housing-first approach to homelessness because the federal government recognizes that housing stability is essential to self sufficiency and full participation in Canadian society.

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Backgrounder

Harrison Place

Harrison Place is a residential apartment building with 23 one-bedroom units, a common room and office.

Older women who were part of the Victoria Women's Transition House Society's programs provided feedback on the design and made suggestions that would enhance the security and safety for future residents. The design, location, architecture and landscaping were geared towards maximizing the comfort for women starting a new life.

The programming component of the project includes: staffing five days per week; providing individual and group support; educational activities and creating a liaison with appropriate community services; and links to housing supports following residency at Harrison Place. Tenancy will be for up to three years, providing an opportunity for residents to rebuild their lives, establish volunteer or work opportunities and search for stable, long-term housing.

Partners and Funding

Capital cost of this project is \$4.95 million.

- The Government of Canada, through Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation contributed 1.25 million towards the capital costs, \$20,000 in repayable Project Development funds and up to \$807,000 in Shelter Enhancement Program funding.
- The Government of Canada contributed \$292,000 in federal homelessness funding towards the capital costs.
- The provincial government contributed \$1.25 million towards the capital costs of the development and is providing annual operating funding of \$80,000 for support programs.
- The developer, Searidge Management Inc., made a \$468,500 donation toward the project.

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- The Capital Regional District's Regional Housing Trust Fund provided \$300,000 towards the capital costs.
- The Real Estate Foundation of BC contributed a \$100,000 grant towards the project.
- The Society provided cash equity of \$421,000 through an estate donation by Edward Harrison and donations of \$270,000 from the Stewart fund.

Victoria Women's Transition House Society

Incorporated in 1975, the Victoria Women's Transition House Society is a non-profit society in the Greater Victoria area that responds to abuse of women in relationships. The Society responds by providing:

- shelter, support and counselling for women with or without children;
- community programs to increase awareness of family violence issues.

The Society's programs and services encourage and assist women and children to live free from abuse and promote community responsibility for the elimination of family violence.