



## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release  
2010HSD0012-000061  
Jan. 22, 2010

Ministry of Housing and Social Development

### **NEWLY RENOVATED SOCIAL HOUSING OPENS IN NEW WESTMINSTER**

NEW WESTMINSTER – The Governments of Canada and British Columbia officially opened the Russell Housing Centre (formerly College Place Hotel), which will provide emergency shelter and supportive housing for adults at risk of homelessness in New Westminister.

“Canada’s Economic Action Plan is stimulating the economy and creating jobs during the global recession here in British Columbia and across Canada,” said Senator Yonah Martin on behalf of the Honourable Diane Finley, Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and Minister Responsible for Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC). “This is a good way to get the local economy moving and put construction workers and tradespeople to work quickly, as well as improving the quality of existing social housing, giving a hand-up to those families who need it most.”

“The Province is committed to providing increased access to safe, affordable, supportive housing for our most vulnerable people and that is why we’ve provided \$10.4 million for the purchase and renovation of the Russell Housing Centre,” said Harry Bloy, MLA for Burnaby-Lougheed. “Combining emergency shelter with transitional housing under one roof is an effective method to help break the cycle of homelessness here in New Westminister and across British Columbia.”

The Russell Housing Centre is a designated heritage building that has been renovated to provide 40 single room occupancy (SRO) housing units and 15 shelter beds with support services for adults at risk of homelessness in New Westminister. Through the amended Canada-British Columbia Affordable Housing Agreement, the Government of Canada and the Province of British Columbia are contributing \$1.1 million for repairs and renovations to the 40 SRO units.

This development makes a significant contribution to the City’s continuum of housing; enabling our locally homeless population to access quality shelter and support services. It also preserves an important piece of the City’s heritage,” said New Westminister Mayor Wayne Wright.



BC Housing

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Lookout Emergency Aid Society manages and operates the Russell Housing Centre. The centre will be open 24 hours, 365 days a year and will provide such basics as shelter, food and laundry, but also support and assistance to men who are without a home. Tenants will receive life skills training, programs on cooking and nutrition, budgeting, and basic hygiene, gaining the necessary skills to move towards living independently.

“Helping people identify and plan around their challenges, linking them to needed services will help prevent them from becoming homeless again.” said Karen O’Shannacery, executive director of Lookout Emergency Aid Society. “Our long-standing partnership with the Province and BC Housing has played a pivotal role in the creation of many of Lookout’s supportive housing developments.”

The Housing Renovation Partnership is a result of a \$365-million joint investment under an amendment to the Canada-British Columbia Affordable Housing Agreement, which includes funding through Canada’s Economic Action Plan and by the Government of British Columbia. The Housing Renovation Partnership will provide \$177 million for renovation and retrofit of social housing. Under terms of the agreement, the provincial and federal governments will provide matching contributions of \$88.82 million. Overall, the Economic Action Plan includes \$2 billion for the construction of new and the repair of existing social housing, plus up to \$2 billion in loans to municipalities for housing-related infrastructure.

Canada’s Economic Action Plan builds on the Government of Canada’s commitment in 2008 of more than \$1.9 billion, over the next five years, to improve and build new affordable housing and help the homeless. It provides \$850 million under the Affordable Housing Initiative to provinces and territories for the renovation and retrofit of existing social housing, to improve the quality of existing social housing for low-income seniors, single parent families, recent immigrants and Aboriginal households.

The Province of British Columbia’s \$14-billion capital infrastructure program is creating up to 88,000 jobs, helping to build vital public infrastructure in every region of the province and stimulating local economies across B.C.

For more information on this and other measures in Canada’s Economic Action Plan, visit [www.actionplan.gc.ca](http://www.actionplan.gc.ca).

To find out how CMHC is working to build stronger homes and communities for all Canadians, call CMHC at 1-800-668-2642 or visit [www.cmhc.ca/housingactionplan](http://www.cmhc.ca/housingactionplan).

Through Housing Matters BC, the Province is addressing a range of housing needs, from homelessness to affordable rental housing and homeownership. In 2009, the provincial housing budget is \$450 million, more than three times as much as in 2001.

To find out more about affordable housing in B.C., visit [www.bchousing.org](http://www.bchousing.org).

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## BACKGROUND

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### **RUSSELL HOUSING CENTRE**

Lookout Emergency Aid Society's Russell Housing Centre (formerly College Place Hotel) is located at 740 Carnarvon Street in New Westminster. It provides 40 Single Room Occupancy (SRO) units with support services for men and women and 15 shelter beds for men at risk of homelessness.

The Russell is a three-storey, brick-clad, heritage building. The ground floor includes a commercial/retail space as well as office space for Lookout and amenity space for residents. The redevelopment of this building includes heritage preservation.

Of the 40 SRO hotel units, 15 are self-contained and two are wheelchair-accessible. These SRO hotel units provide tenants with transitional housing for approximately two to three years. Staff are available daily to provide support and assistance to tenants so that they can eventually transition to more permanent, independent housing.

Support services offered include:

- On-site life skills programs such as community kitchens (e.g. planning nutritious meals, learning shopping and cooking skills), managing and budgeting money, assistance with medications and health treatment regimes.
- Well-being skills including self-care skills such as exercise, diet, and housekeeping skills.
- Supporting development of good social skills, such as communication skills and anger management.
- Linking people to community resources such as financial and health services, housing supports (e.g. homemakers or Meals on Wheels), education and training, and volunteer programs.

The 15-bed shelter is a 24-hours-a-day, 365-days-a-year, minimal-barrier shelter for men aged 19 and older, which offers meals and information and referrals. Shower and laundry facilities are available as well as storage.

Support services in the shelter include:

- Assessing people's needs and developing a case plan to address the issues that caused their homelessness.
- Assistance with money management (if needed).
- Assistance with medications and following health treatment regimes.
- Linking people to community resources such as financial or health services, housing supports, education and training, and volunteer programs.

- Provision of three tasty, nutritious meals per day plus snacks.
- Free laundry service and free gently-worn clothing as available.
- Access to telephones, computers (with Internet) and newspapers.

### **Partners and Funding:**

The total capital cost of this development is approximately \$11.5 million.

- The Government of Canada, through Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), provided a \$554,400 Economic Retrofit grant, through the amended Canada-British Columbia Affordable Housing Agreement.
- The Province of British Columbia provided a \$560,000 retrofit grant and \$10.4 million for the purchase and renovations funded through the Provincial Homelessness Initiative (PHI).
- In addition, the Province will provide \$322,744 in annual operating funding.

### **Lookout Emergency Aid Society:**

Established in 1971, Lookout Emergency Aid Society is a non-profit, charitable organization, providing services to adult men and women. Their clients may be homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, and may also face a wide variety of challenges, including mental-health issues, physical disabilities, social dysfunctions and substance abuse.

Lookout Emergency Aid Society provides services through their emergency shelters, transitional and supportive housing and community services. The society operates 22 programs at 14 sites located in three municipalities: Vancouver, New Westminster and the North Shore.

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