
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2020MAH0056-000905
May 20, 2020

Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing

New homes for Kelowna's most vulnerable

KELOWNA – The Government of B.C., the City of Kelowna and Canadian Mental Health Association Kelowna are working in partnership to build close to 40 new urgently needed supportive homes for people experiencing homelessness in Kelowna.

“The need for safe and secure housing has never been clearer, and these new homes will give more people a place to call their own,” said Selina Robinson, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. “We are working quickly and urgently with our partners to protect all British Columbians during the COVID-19 crisis, including our province’s most vulnerable – because when people have housing, it’s good for everyone in the community.”

Located at 1055 and 1063 Ellis St., the three-storey modular apartment building will include 38 self-contained studio units with private washrooms, showers and kitchens. The building will also include a commercial kitchen, dining and lounge areas, storage and amenity space, laundry and a medical room.

To help people move from the streets and shelters into this safe and secure housing, the city and the Province are working together to expedite the building process and removing the requirement of municipal rezoning. The current lease is for 10 years, and the property will go through the municipal rezoning process if the lease is extended beyond that.

“Homelessness is an evolving, dynamic crisis in our community, and these kinds of partnerships go a long way towards creating solutions,” said Colin Basran, mayor, City of Kelowna. “This is a strategic land investment that will not only create much needed solutions in the short term, but also has long-term potential with a future land use designation for multi-storey residential housing. In addition to being close to downtown, this property is ideally located adjacent to existing municipal park space and could fulfil many different civic objectives after expiry of the lease.”

BC Housing supports the city in its commitment to the Journey Home Strategy, focusing on ending chronic and episodic homelessness, introducing measures to prevent homelessness in the first place and implementing a co-ordinated systems approach to homelessness.

“To provide people with the support and services they need to begin their recovery journey, they first need a place to call home,” said Stephanie Ball, executive director, Central Okanagan Journey Home Society. “This is a welcome addition to the over 100 units of housing with supports already planned to come on stream over the next two years as we work to meet the goals of Kelowna’s five-year plan to address homelessness.”

The Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) Kelowna will operate the new housing. It will provide residents with 24/7 on-site staff and support services, including meal programs, life

and employment skills training, health and wellness support services and opportunities for volunteer work.

“Access to safe and stable housing is a crucial first step needed for anyone who experiences homelessness so they can begin to get their feet back under them,” says Shelagh Turner, executive director, CMHA Kelowna. “We are proud to be the operators of this building and our other supportive housing in Kelowna so we can be there to help end the cycle of homelessness.”

Site preparation work will start in June, with construction expected to be complete in fall 2020.

Quick Facts:

- The Province will provide \$9.5 million to the project through the Supportive Housing Fund, as well as an annual operating subsidy of \$1.3 million.
- In addition to these homes, the Province has worked with partners to open 136 supportive homes for people experiencing homelessness in Kelowna over the last two years. This includes 50 homes at Samuel Place, 40 at Heath House and 46 at Hearthstone. An additional 138 supportive homes are currently underway.
- More than 2,700 spaces in hotels, motels and community centres across B.C. have been secured to help vulnerable people during the COVID-19 pandemic. In Kelowna, BC Housing has secured 80 spaces to date for vulnerable people in the community.

Learn More:

Community members can learn more about this project and ask questions at:

<https://letstalkhousingbc.ca/kelowna-ellis>

For more information on how BC Housing is supporting British Columbians during the COVID-19 outbreak, visit: <https://www.bchousing.org/COVID-19/>

A map showing the location of all announced provincially funded housing projects in B.C. is available online: <https://www.bchousing.org/homes-for-BC>

To learn about the steps the Province is taking to tackle the housing crisis and deliver affordable homes for British Columbians, visit: <https://workingforyou.gov.bc.ca/>

Two backgrounders follow.

Contacts:

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BACKGROUND

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Services and supports provided for modular housing

All new modular housing buildings in the province have around-the-clock staffing to help young people, people with disabilities, seniors and others in critical need of housing.

The Province is providing annual operating funding to help those with the highest housing needs to build new beginnings. Experienced staff provide support to tenants based on their assessed needs.

Services and supports provided to young people, seniors, people with disabilities and others who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness, include:

- both-on site supports and connection to additional specialized supports in their community;
- supports that are tailored to the needs of the residents, including education and employment opportunities, and health and wellness services, including mental health and addiction treatment programs;
- individual or group support services, such as life skills, community information and social and recreational programs;
- meals;
- case planning and needs assessment;
- other supports designed to assist residents in meeting their personal and housing goals, including culturally specific programs;
- help accessing income assistance, pension benefits, disability benefits, obtaining a B.C. identification card or establishing a bank account;
- support for residents to learn how to operate and maintain a home; and
- no-cost laundry services, either on site or off site.

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Province building new homes to meet full spectrum of housing needs

The B.C. government is working in partnership with non-profits, municipalities, First Nations, Indigenous housing organizations and the private sector to build 114,000 affordable homes that cover the full spectrum of housing needs for British Columbians by 2028.

Budget 2018 included a \$7 billion investment in the homes people need. As a result of that investment, more than 23,000 new homes are complete, under construction or in the approvals process for a range of people who are struggling to find a place to live, from people who are experiencing homelessness and seniors on fixed incomes, to middle-income families, students and individuals. As of Dec. 31, 2019, this includes:

Housing for people with middle incomes

The average annual household income qualifying for homes underway is under \$99,000 per year:

- HousingHub: 2,802 homes

Housing for people with low to moderate incomes

This includes people residing in social housing (household incomes less than \$65,000) as well as those living in affordable market rentals (households with annual incomes up to \$74,000) – 9,837 homes:

Affordable market:

- Building BC: Community Housing Fund (30% of units in each project): 1,565 rental homes for people with low to moderate incomes
- Affordable Rental Housing Program: 1,615 homes for people with low to moderate incomes
- Deepening Affordability Fund: 1,976 homes for people with low to moderate incomes
- Regional Housing First Program: 907 homes for people with low to moderate incomes

Social housing or subsidized rents:

- Building BC: Community Housing Fund (50% of units in each project): 2,609 rental homes for people with low incomes
- Building BC: Indigenous Housing Fund: 1,165 homes for Indigenous peoples, on- and off-reserve

Housing for people with very low incomes

Rental housing for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, or for people with very low incomes (includes supportive housing and shelter-rate housing) – 4,795 homes:

- Rapid Response to Homelessness: 2,012 homes with 24/7 support
- Building BC: Supportive Housing Fund: 1,060 homes with 24/7 support
- Building BC: Women’s Transition Housing Fund: 679 spaces of transition, second-stage and affordable rental housing for women and children leaving violence
- Building BC: Community Housing Fund (20% of units in each project): 1,044 homes

Housing for students – 5,584 homes:

- BC Student Housing Loan Program: 2,699 on-campus student housing units are under construction, in development or in the approvals process
- 2,885 student housing units are also complete, under construction or in development through partnerships with post-secondary institutions

Total: 23,018 homes

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