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## NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Housing

### **New second-stage homes open for women, children leaving violence**

PORT ALBERNI – More than 20 new safe and secure second-stage homes are open in Port Alberni for women and their children leaving violence.

“These new homes will provide safety, security and peace of mind for people leaving traumatic situations in the Port Alberni area,” said Ravi Kahlon, Minister of Housing. “We are proud to be working in partnership to build thousands of homes like this across the province that create new opportunities for women and children to thrive.”

The two-storey wood-frame *wikšahiqu?ił* has 22 second-stage homes for women and gender-diverse people leaving violence, including transgender women, Two-Spirit and non-binary people, and their dependent children in Port Alberni and surrounding areas. The building has a mix of studio, one-, two- and three-bedroom units.

“We’re grateful to have community partners like the Sage Haven Society, who are committed to making a meaningful difference for vulnerable women and children seeking a new start,” said Josie Osborne, MLA for Mid Island-Pacific Rim. “Everyone deserves a safe place to call home and to be able to live a life free from violence, and I know these 22 homes will change the lives of their residents.”

Sage Haven Society (formerly Alberni Community and Women’s Services Society) operates *wikšahiqu?ił*. The society will provide residents with a variety of supports, including safety planning, crisis intervention, parenting supports, financial literacy and tenancy resources.

“For the last seven years, I have followed in the footsteps of others who called for second-stage housing for women and children of the Alberni Valley,” said Ellen Flood, executive director, Sage Haven Society. “Advocating for this project has been a huge part of my daily life for so long, and it has been an honour to work with others dedicated to making this project a reality.”

Second-stage housing provides safe, short-term housing and supports for women and their dependent children leaving violence. Residents typically move into second-stage housing after a stay in a transition house and can stay for six to 18 months while they prepare for independent living. Once ready for independent living, Sage Haven Society will assist residents in applying for social and private-market housing, as well as provide rent subsidies.

“For women and gender-diverse people leaving violence, having support to rebuild their lives and a safe space is critical,” said Kelli Paddon, Parliamentary Secretary for Gender Equity. “These new homes will offer care and compassion to survivors and their children. I extend my gratitude to each of the partners who have come together to make this project happen.”

Sage Haven Society is accepting applications for residents. People are expected to move into

their new homes in December 2023. Residents will pay either 30% of their income for rent or, for those receiving income or disability assistance, the provincial shelter rate.

“Today marks a momentous occasion for Port Alberni as we express our heartfelt gratitude to the Province for their substantial investment in our community,” said Sharie Minions, mayor of Port Alberni. “I want to extend my sincere appreciation to our dedicated project partners, the Sage Haven Society and BC Housing, for their unwavering commitment to establishing a sanctuary for women and children escaping domestic violence.”

These homes are part of a \$19-billion housing investment by the B.C. government. Since 2017, the Province has nearly 77,000 homes that have been delivered or are underway for people in B.C., including more than 475 homes in Port Alberni.

#### **Quick Facts:**

- The Province, through BC Housing, provided \$8.6 million through the Building BC: Women’s Transition Housing Fund and will provide an annual operating subsidy of approximately \$300,000.
- The City of Port Alberni provided land for development.
- Through the Building BC: Women’s Transition Housing Fund, the Province is working in partnership with multiple organizations such as Sage Haven Society to build and operate 3,000 new transition housing, second-stage housing and long-term affordable housing spaces for women and children.
- As is generally the case for projects that support women and children leaving violence, the address of this project has not been disclosed for safety reasons.

#### **Learn More:**

To learn about government’s Homes for People action plan, visit:

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2023HOUS0019-000436>

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

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