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## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release  
2025HMA0038-000436  
May 9, 2025

Ministry of Housing and Municipal Affairs

### **B.C. supports people experiencing homelessness in Nanaimo**

NANAIMO – People experiencing homelessness in Nanaimo will soon have access to nearly 190 more indoor housing spaces.

“Bringing people indoors is the first step toward stability for people who need it, and is key to strengthening our communities,” said Ravi Kahlon, Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs. “That’s why we’re providing more temporary housing units with vital supports for people in Nanaimo. Homelessness is a tough challenge, but we’ve been doing the work and we’re starting to make real progress helping people move indoors.”

The Province, through BC Housing, is providing approximately \$32 million to deliver the spaces across three sites:

- 50 new units at 1300 Island Hwy. South, operated by Connective Support Society;
- 59 new units at 1030 Old Victoria Rd., operated by Vancouver Island Mental Health Society; and
- 78 renovated units at the Sparrow, 1298 Nelson St., operated by Pacifica Housing.

People who have been staying in overnight shelters will have priority access to the spaces and are expected to move into 1300 Island Hwy. this spring. Move-ins at the other sites will begin in summer 2025. All sites will have individual units, shared amenity spaces, meals and laundry services, on-site staff 24/7, one entrance, and referrals to community programs essential to the health and wellness of residents.

“Before, I was living in a shelter and really struggling with depression,” said Harold Wilson, a resident at Newcastle Place, one of the temporary sites open in Nanaimo. “My favourite thing about living here is being able to visit with my granddaughter. I also love being a part of the gardening club and growing vegetables.”

In addition, the Province is committed to providing new, permanent, purpose-built supportive housing to help support people after the eventual closure of temporary sites. A rezoning application has been submitted for approximately 60 units at McKenzie Avenue, adjacent to the 1030 Old Victoria Rd. temporary housing site.

These sites, including the reopened 50-unit Newcastle Place at 250 Terminal Ave. are part of a January 2024 agreement between the Province and the City of Nanaimo to prioritize the health and safety of people sheltering outdoors and to create new temporary and permanent housing options to move people indoors.

“Without housing, no person can have a healthy life,” said Leonard Krog, mayor of Nanaimo. “The partnership with the city set out in the HEART and HEARTH MOU means that over 200

people are going to have a safe secure place to live where they can better their own lives and move beyond the misery of living in the streets.”

This work is part of the Province’s homeless and encampment-response temporary housing solutions program under the Belonging in BC plan to help prevent homelessness and bring more people indoors quickly. Since 2017, the Province has nearly 92,000 homes delivered or underway, including more than 1,800 homes in Nanaimo.

**Learn More:**

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/>

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

To learn how BC Housing is helping to build strong, inclusive housing communities, visit: <https://www.bchousing.org/podcast>

Two backgrounders follow.

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## BACKGROUND 1

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### **What people are saying about Nanaimo housing units**

#### **Sheila Malcolmson, MLA for Nanaimo –**

“The additional 187 housing units and supports are about helping people who’ve been struggling with homelessness get back on their feet. We’re working together to make sure no one in our community is left behind. When people are supported, they can start to re-establish stability in their lives and build a better future.”

#### **George Anderson, MLA for Nanaimo-Lantzville —**

“When people experiencing homelessness have a safe and supportive place to call home, everything changes. These 187 new homes aren’t just units, they are new beginnings. These units will offer people the chance to rebuild their lives and help create a stronger, healthier community for everyone.”

#### **Mark Miller, CEO, Connective Support Society –**

“We’re honoured to respond to the urgent need for safe housing through operation of these 50 new units in Nanaimo. Building on our 35 years of local experience, we look forward to working with residents to support long-term housing stability and with neighbours to ensure this program positively impacts the community.”

#### **Taryn O’Flanagan, executive director, Vancouver Island Mental Health Society (VIMHS) –**

“VIMHS is pleased to partner with BC Housing and community partners to provide 59 units of housing to people in Nanaimo. These needed housing units will create a safe and supportive access point in a continuum of housing, which we believe is an important step in ensuring the well-being of people in this community.”

#### **Carolina Ibarra, CEO, Pacifica Housing Society –**

“Pacifica Housing is heartened to know that a program like Sparrow will be soon coming online. Through Sparrow, we will have the opportunity to support individuals who are seeking to reduce substance use and move forward on their journeys to wellness and independence. This is a desperately needed model and we are honoured and humbled to operate it.”

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## BACKGROUND 2

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### **What to know about the housing units**

#### **1300 Island Hwy. South, 50 housing units:**

- The Province, through BC Housing, provided approximately \$5.5 million through the Homeless Encampment Action Response Temporary Housing (HEARTH) program to build the units.
- The Province, through BC Housing, will also provide annual operating funding of approximately \$2.3 million, as well as \$167,000 in one-time startup funding.
- The site is meant to be temporary and will be in place for a minimum of three years.
- The site will be operated by Connective Support Society, which has more than 90 years of experience offering a range of housing and community-based services to people.

#### **1030 Old Victoria Rd., 59 housing units:**

- The Province, through BC Housing, provided approximately \$5.2 million through HEARTH to build the homes and will provide \$2.7 million in annual operating funding.
- The City of Nanaimo owns the land and is leasing it to BC Housing for a nominal fee.
- The site is meant to be temporary and will be in place for a minimum of three years.
- The site will be operated by Vancouver Island Mental Health Society, which provides housing and psychosocial rehabilitation programs for adults with mental-health, addiction and cognitive challenges.

#### **1298 Nelson St. (Sparrow), 78 housing units:**

- BC Housing leased the former Travellers Lodge to provide 78 units of temporary transitional housing for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.
- The housing is considered recovery-oriented supportive housing. Individuals who wish to minimize their exposure to substance use will be prioritized for these homes.
- The Province, through BC Housing, invested \$13.3 million through HEARTH to lease, renovate and operate the site for three years.
- The City of Nanaimo is contributing approximately \$395,000 in support of the project.
- The site will be operated by Pacifica Housing, a major provider of affordable and supportive housing on Vancouver Island serving people through more than 1,500 units and outreach programs.

#### **McKenzie Avenue, permanent supportive housing:**

- BC Housing is proposing to build approximately 60 permanent supportive homes at McKenzie Avenue, a lot adjacent to 1030 Old Victoria Rd.
- The homes would be for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness and people staying in temporary sites in Nanaimo slated for closure would be prioritized.

- This site is pending a rezoning application. If the site is successfully rezoned, the Province will purchase the McKenzie Avenue site from the city.
- Construction and operating costs for the project will be determined later, pending successful rezoning and provincial funding approvals.

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