
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2011ENER0085-001280
Oct. 8, 2011

Ministry of Energy and Mines
and Minister Responsible for Housing

Province proclaims Homelessness Action Week

VICTORIA – The sixth annual Homelessness Action Week takes place from October 10-16 this year – a week to raise awareness, take action and acknowledge the collective effort being made in our communities to reach a day when homelessness will no longer exist.

Over the last five years the provincial housing strategy, Housing Matters BC, has held a strong focus on helping those who are the most vulnerable. Through investments in outreach services, emergency shelters, community supports and housing to help people stabilize, regain their independence and rebuild their lives, the Province is working with a network of community partners and local governments to help break the cycle of homelessness.

Quotes:

Rich Coleman, Minister Responsible for Housing –

“Homelessness Action Week is a good time to reflect on the progress being made. Every day we are seeing lives changed, communities coming together and that continues to fuel our hope for the future.

“It takes sound partnerships to meet the pressing needs in our communities and that is the biggest reason for our success. No one group is in this alone. There is still work to be done but it is encouraging to see that our efforts are making a difference.”

Karen O Shannacery, executive director, Lookout Society

“For 40 years Lookout Society has been working on the challenge of homelessness. Helping people help themselves is essential in addressing homelessness and all the issues that surround it.

“It is not something we can do alone and that is why we support the Province’s declaration of Homelessness Action Week and the opportunities to create awareness that it fosters. Securing appropriate housing is the first and most essential step in achieving stability and responsible independence for individuals and Lookout is proud of our relationship in making that happen with the Province and our communities.”

Quick Facts:

- Over the last decade, the Province has invested \$2.8 billion to provide affordable housing for low-income individuals, seniors and families. This year, more than 95,000 B.C. households will benefit from provincial social housing programs and services.

- Last year, nearly 3,000 individuals who were homeless or at-risk were provided with stable housing through provincially funded programs. Approximately 700 people have been housed since April 1, 2011.

Homeless Outreach

- The Homeless Outreach Program has expanded from a \$2-million budget and 30 communities in 2006, to a \$7-million annual budget and 49 communities today.
- More than 800 Aboriginal people who were homeless have been provided with housing and supports through the Aboriginal Homeless Outreach Program, the Homeless Outreach Program, and the Emergency Shelter Program.

Emergency Shelters

- More funding for Emergency Shelters means that there are now more than 1,600 permanent, year-round beds in 62 shelters, compared to approximately 880 year-round beds and 390 seasonal beds in 2006.
- The Extreme Weather Response program provides up to 1,450 shelter spaces in communities across British Columbia during the winter months.

New Social Housing

- The Province is creating nearly 6,200 new and upgraded supportive housing units and shelter beds.
- This includes partnerships with eight municipalities where the Province is investing \$520 million to develop over 2,300 new supportive housing units in Vancouver, Victoria, Surrey, Kelowna, Abbotsford, Campbell River, Maple Ridge and Nanaimo.
- Through the Aboriginal Housing Initiative launched in 2007, more than 200 units of off-reserve housing are being built to create safe, secure and culturally appropriate housing for youth, women, elders and those struggling with addictions.

Rent Supplements

- The Rental Assistance Program helps nearly 9,400 low-income, working families to help make their rent in the private market more affordable.
- The Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters (SAFER) program provides approximately 15,800 low-income seniors who rent in the private market with cash assistance to make their rent more affordable.

Regional Information, videos and other Fact Sheets are available at:

<http://www.housing.gov.bc.ca/info/haw/index.htm>

Learn More:

To learn more about provincial housing programs: <http://www.bchousing.org/Initiatives>

To read how the provincial housing strategy is helping British Columbians, visit:
<http://www.bchousing.org/Media/Stories>

Media contact:

Communications

Minister Responsible for Housing

250 952-0617

Connect with the Province of B.C. at www.gov.bc.ca/connect