

3 Victoria Sites Questions and Answers

What is happening?

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Province and the City of Victoria proposes to build over 170 units of new and upgraded social and supportive housing in Victoria.

Why is this MoU necessary?

Homelessness has become a major issue in Victoria and the community is demanding help for those in greatest need. The provincial government's housing strategy, Housing Matters BC, and the Mayor's Task Force on Breaking the Cycle of Mental Illness, Addictions and Homelessness, have both made it clear that sheltering the homeless and providing support services is a priority.

The Province and the City of Victoria are partnering to develop supportive housing to address homelessness.

What is the role of the Province?

As part of the Provincial Homelessness Initiative, the Province will pay all costs to design the housing through to the issuance of development and building permits, including consultant fees and disbursements for the three sites.

The Province will arrange all capital and operating funding.

What is the role of the City?

The city will identify ways in which local processes such as re-zonings can be simplified and fast-tracked. This will allow properties to be ready for non-profit and municipal partners to begin building supportive housing as quickly as possible.

The City will designate a staff member to ensure the municipal approval process is expedited on a fast-track basis.

The City will exempt these sites from property taxes as long as they continue to provide housing and services for people who would otherwise be homeless.

What is the Provincial Homelessness Initiative?

The Province has committed to creating more than 2,300 new housing units under the Provincial Homelessness Initiative (PHI). The initiative aims to break the cycle of homelessness by integrating support services with housing so people may move beyond temporary shelter to more secure housing, gain greater self-reliance, and achieve appropriate employment.

PHI is an important element of the provincial housing strategy, Housing Matters BC. The Province's budget for shelters and affordable housing this year is \$360 million – triple what it was in 2001.

Where are the developments located?

Two of the three new housing developments will be created at 950 Humboldt Street and 525 Ellice Street. Renovations will be undertaken at Streetlink/Swift House at 1634 Store Street.

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When will development occur?

We are all committed to creating this much-needed housing as soon as possible. It is very early in the process, but the plan is to begin construction at the Humboldt Street and Ellice Street sites by the end of 2008.

I live in the neighbourhood. How will I know what is happening?

Neighbours of all three sites will be kept fully informed and involved as plans develop. It is very early in the process and this announcement is just the start.

How much will this cost and where is the money coming from?

The Province has budgeted \$10 million to fund pre-development costs for housing that helps break the cycle of homelessness in a number of municipalities across the province as announced in October 2007.

The cost of building the new housing units is approximately \$40 million. As part of the MoU, the Province will arrange for capital and operating funding.

What other housing developments has the Province funded to break the cycle of homelessness in Victoria?

Since the creation of the Premier's Task Force on Homelessness, Mental Illness and Addictions in 2004, the Province has provided \$19 million for nearly 200 units of housing. These include:

- 45 units at Our Place (\$7.4 million);
- Six units at Beacon of Hope, a transition home for young male addicts (\$87,000);
- The purchase of the 28-unit Pandora Hotel (\$1.2 million);
- The purchase of two apartment buildings with 48 units (\$4.8 million);
- 45 units at Mike Gidora Place, supportive housing for people with mental illness or addictions (\$4.3 million);
- 23 units at Harrison Place, supportive housing for older women leaving abusive relationships (\$1.25 million).

In addition, the City is working with its housing partners to follow through on the Mayor's task force recommendations.

What is a Good Neighbour Agreement?

Good Neighbour Agreements are documents outlining the relationship between a housing development and the local neighbourhood, and could include business groups, neighbourhood associations, and the police, for example. These agreements address issues such as support service operations, security and staffing, rules and regulations, property maintenance, and who to contact in the event of an emergency. These will be developed by the non-profit housing provider in consultation with the local community, and are usually signed by representatives of all the participating groups.