

Construction set to begin on new supportive housing building in Nanaimo

New building getting underway next week will provide secure homes with wraparound services for people in need

April 7, 2021

NANAIMO – Construction will get underway next week on a new 59-unit supportive housing building at 702 Nicol St. in South Nanaimo.

The four-storey building features 52 studio suites for people experiencing homelessness in the community. In addition to the studio units, one floor will feature seven units with two beds each that will be available exclusively to vulnerable women — a service previously provided by Samaritan House at 355 Nicol St., which has been demolished in preparation for another supportive housing building.

Island Crisis Care Society (ICCS) will manage the building. Staff will provide residents with 24/7 wraparound support services including meals, laundry services and access to mental health and wellness supports through Island Health. A teaching kitchen, dining room, and a separate community amenity space are all part of the design.

“I am delighted to see this incredible advance towards providing much needed alternative housing for the most vulnerable women and men in our community,” said Violet Hayes, Executive Director of ICCS. “ICCS is proud to be at the forefront of this collaboration, which will help many people on their road to recovery and independence.”

The Government of B.C., through BC Housing, is providing approximately \$13.6 million in capital funding through the Building BC: Supportive Housing Fund for the building and will provide \$1.4 million in annual operating funding. These homes are part of the commitment between the Government of B.C. and the City of Nanaimo to build over 300 new supportive and affordable homes in the community.

“We’ve seen the success of our supportive housing approach across the province, and that will continue in Nanaimo, giving people the supports and safe housing they desperately need,” said Doug Routley, MLA for Nanaimo-North Cowichan. “These supportive homes will help break the cycle of homelessness for people in need of stable and secure housing. By helping people move on from homelessness, we are creating positive impacts that extend to neighbours, first responders and the community.”

“When our community’s most vulnerable can move inside and access the services they need, our neighbourhoods are healthier and safer,” said Sheila Malcolmson, MLA for Nanaimo. “This building will have wraparound supports to help those in need stabilize on their journey to permanent housing. With the City of Nanaimo’s support, we are delivering a mix of homes for hundreds of people in the community, and I’m glad to see this project get underway.”

ICCS has offered low-barrier services for those in need at Samaritan House for more than 30 years, until services were temporarily moved to Prideaux St. in 2020. The *More Room for Hope* campaign raised significant support and brought attention and awareness to the lack of adequate shelter for women who find themselves homeless in Nanaimo. The campaign was followed by an agreement between BC Housing and ICCS for the new building and accompanying support services.

The need in the community for supportive housing is great. The [2020 Point in Time Homeless Count](#) found that there at least 433 people experiencing homelessness in Nanaimo. Due to the COVID-19 restrictions that were in place when the count was taken, it’s likely that the number of people facing homelessness was underrepresented and is closer to 600.

“Construction on this project, the first of the four new supportive housing projects announced last summer for Nanaimo, is an important milestone for our City,” said City of Nanaimo Mayor Leonard Krog. “The construction of this and the other supportive housing developments will support the City and BC Housing’s commitment towards building new supportive homes for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness in the community. The supportive housing and bridge to housing women’s shelter will also help advance the goals of the recently adopted Health and Housing Action Plan.”

Plans for construction of the facility will proceed quickly. Following the ground-breaking, the prefabricated building will be erected as quickly as possible, with design features focused on safety, security and integration with the surrounding community.

Construction will begin Wednesday, April 14. The project is expected to be completed by the end of summer 2021.

City of Nanaimo Mayor Leonard Krog, Councillors Don Bonner and Erin Hemmens joined Island Crisis Care’s Executive Director Violet Hayes, Samaritan House Program Manager Ronell Bosman, ICCS Board Chair Suzanne Lee and Snuneymuxw Elder Lolly Good today for a ceremonial blessing of the land. Images are attached, along with a rendering of the proposed new building.

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