

Attachment 1

HEART &

HEARTH

Provincial

News

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NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Housing and Municipal Affairs

Opening new housing options for people experiencing homelessness

Seven B.C. communities collaborating with Province for safer, stronger responses to encampments

VICTORIA –

Summary

- *Cranbrook, New Westminster, Powell River, Smithers and Squamish are signing on to become Phase 2 HEART and HEARTH partners to help end homelessness*
- *Campbell River and Cheam First Nation are expanding capacity to support more people to move indoors from encampments to safe shelter spaces*

New housing options for people at risk of or experiencing homelessness will soon be available as the Province partners with seven additional communities through B.C.'s encampment response initiatives.

“Communities are stronger and safer for everyone when we bring people indoors to safe housing, so they have better opportunities to connect to the supports and services they need to bring stability to their lives,” said Christine Boyle, Minister of Housing and Municipal Affairs. “The Province is encouraged by the increasing number of local governments that are stepping up to collaborate to support vulnerable residents in their communities and end homelessness. The only path forward is to work together and I applaud these community leaders for acting on their vision.”

Addressing urgent issues by taking action with B.C.'s encampment response

The Province, through BC Housing, is working with local governments and community partners through homeless and encampment response teams (HEART) helping people sheltering outdoors to move indoors. HEART works to quickly assess the needs of people in encampments and to provide rapid access to the support services they need to exit homelessness. In addition, the homeless and encampment response temporary housing solutions (HEARTH) program provides emergency housing and sheltering options and immediate co-ordinated supports.

Seven B.C. communities advance local encampment response

A number of B.C. communities are expanding their shelter and supportive housing capacity and joining the growing number of HEART and HEARTH partners with the Province.

- The City of Campbell River is building on its HEARTH partnership and will add eight new

- temporary supportive housing units at the Homewood site for a total of 48 spaces.
- Cheam First Nation has built on its HEARTH partnership by expanding an existing supportive housing building from eight to 20 beds.
 - The City of Cranbrook is joining the Province as a new HEART and HEARTH community. BC Housing and the city will explore opportunities for a HEARTH site.
 - The City of New Westminster is joining the Province as a new HEART and HEARTH community. Its 50-bed shelter is being renovated and has expanded operations to 24/7. BC Housing and the city continue to explore additional partnership opportunities under the HEARTH program.
 - The City of Powell River has joined the Province as a HEART and HEARTH community. A new 40-bed temporary shelter, opening in March 2026, will double the city's available shelter capacity.
 - The Town of Smithers is joining the Province as a new HEART and HEARTH community. BC Housing and Smithers will explore opportunities for a HEARTH site.
 - The District of Squamish is joining the Province as a new HEART and HEARTH community. Squamish is working on a downtown temporary housing site near drop-in services offered at Under One Roof.

HEART and HEARTH partnerships throughout B.C.

These agreements put into action the Province's commitment to expand the HEART and HEARTH programs as part of the 2025 Co-operation and Responsible Government Accord (CARGA) with the B.C. Green Party caucus.

- There are now 15 local governments partnering with the Province to put in place HEART and/or HEARTH.
- Phase 1 communities include Abbotsford, Campbell River, Chilliwack and Cheam First Nation (HEARTH only), Duncan (HEARTH only), Kamloops, Kelowna, Nanaimo, Prince George, Victoria and Vancouver.
- Phase 2 communities with new partnerships include Cranbrook, New Westminster, Powell River, Smithers and Squamish.

This work is part of the Province's Belonging in B.C. plan to help prevent homelessness and bring more people indoors quickly. Since 2017, the Province has more than 95,000 homes delivered or underway in communities throughout B.C. This includes almost 1,050 spaces of temporary housing and shelter in these communities with more underway.

Quotes:

Kermit Dahl, mayor of Campbell River –

“By providing safe housing options with supports for people experiencing homelessness, the Homewood temporary housing initiative demonstrates what can be achieved through partnerships and strategic investment. The additional eight new units mean that 48 Campbell River residents now have access to shelter, meals and supports. Every new unit is significant, has a meaningful impact and is a testament to the city and BC Housing's work to address homelessness and foster a healthier, safer community.”

Wayne Price, mayor of Cranbrook –

“The City of Cranbrook is grateful that Minister Boyle recognizes the homelessness challenges facing regional service communities like ours. Being considered for this opportunity reflects that understanding and offers renewed hope for those experiencing homelessness and for the overall well-being of our community.”

Patrick Johnstone, mayor of New Westminster –

“The City of New Westminster is grateful for the funding support provided through the Province’s HEART and HEARTH program, which will support the renovation of the city’s 50-bed shelter and its transition to 24/7 operations, helping ensure people have access to safe, dignified spaces and essential supports when they need them. The city looks forward to continuing to work with BC Housing to explore future partnership opportunities through the HEART and HEARTH program.”

Ron Woznow, mayor of Powell River –

“The City of Powell River is pleased to have played our part in offering the land on which the new temporary shelter will be located. We are thankful for the opportunity to collaborate with BC Housing and for BC Housing's investment in our community to create a safe and dignified space for our vulnerable residents.”

Gladys Atrill, mayor of Smithers –

“We are grateful to the Ministry of Housing and Municipal Affairs and BC Housing for investing in Smithers through the HEART and HEARTH program. Our community has long advocated for support that reflects the realities of our small northern town, and it’s encouraging to see that commitment recognized. We are hopeful this ongoing partnership will help bring relief and stability to the vulnerable in our community. That, in turn, will drive toward a healthier community overall.”

Armand Hurford, mayor, District of Squamish –

“We are most grateful to be included in the HEART and HEARTH program to meet the urgent need of Squamish residents experiencing homelessness. Housing is a fundamental right, and this program offers a chance for our unhoused residents to experience a sense of dignity, safety and belonging as an important step to stabilize their lives. Our sincere thanks to the Province of BC for its partnership and support.”

Learn More:

- To read the Belonging in B.C. plan, visit: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/files/BelongingStrategy.pdf>
- For information about the Homeless Encampment Action Response Teams (HEART) and the Homeless Encampment Action Response Temporary Housing (HEARTH) programs, visit: <https://www.bchousing.org/housing-assistance/homelessness-services/HEART-HEARTH>
- To learn about the steps the Province is taking to address the housing crisis and deliver affordable homes for people in B.C., visit: <https://strongerbc.gov.bc.ca/housing/>
- To see a map showing the location of all announced provincially funded housing projects in B.C., visit: <https://www.bchousing.org/homes-for-BC>

- Learn more about household supports for you, and for those who build and provide homes here: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/housing-tenancy/more-homes-for-people>

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