

Media Release



For Immediate Release:

Coalition Welcomes Federal Investments in Housing and Homelessness Announced in Budget 2017

VICTORIA, BC, March 22, 2017 - The Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness (Coalition) welcomes the significant social and affordable housing investment announced by Finance Minister Bill Morneau in the 2017 federal budget, but wishes to also highlight the urgency and scale of the current housing crisis, particularly in the Capital Region.

“Today’s budget is a significant step in a very positive direction for individuals struggling through experiences of homelessness or are at-risk of homelessness due to a lack of affordable housing”, commented Ian Batey, Co-Chair of the Coalition. “The government should be applauded for committing to a National Housing Strategy and for dedicating long-term funding to the Homelessness Partnering Strategy, a particularly important community-based program”, he added.

Wednesday’s budget announced \$11.2 billion in funding over 11 years, which includes:

- \$2.1 billion over 11 years, including \$707 million over five years in the Homelessness Partnering Strategy;
- \$5 billion National Housing Fund administered through the Canada Housing and Mortgage Corporation;
- \$3.2 billion over 11 years in support of a renewed federal-provincial-territorial partnership in housing, including both supply-side and demand-side initiatives related to affordable housing priorities;
- \$202 million over 11 years for use of surplus government land and buildings at low/no cost for affordable housing;
- \$225 million in funding to support indigenous peoples not living on reserve; and,
- \$241 million for housing research and the development of a new Housing Statistics Framework.

In addition, the Budget committed to “preserve baseline funding related to Operating Agreements, with use and renewal of these funds to be determined over the next year.” This will be in addition to the \$11.2 billion announced today.

More details regarding these investments will be announced as a part of the National Housing Strategy, to be released later in 2017.

While Budget 2017 makes significant investments in housing, it is important to consider this investment within the context of the level of need across the country. The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness and the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness estimate it would cost approximately \$43.8 billion over 10 years (\$50 per Canadian per year – less than \$1 per Canadian per week) to end homelessness.

In the Capital Region, the February 2016 Point in Time Count identified a total of 1,387 individuals experiencing some form of homelessness. This includes 192 individuals experiencing absolute homelessness, 353 individuals emergency sheltered, and 842 individuals provisionally accommodated. On top of these figures, in the Capital Region approximately 47% of renter households are in core housing need (spending more than 30% of before-tax income on housing) with 24% of renter households facing extreme affordability pressures and are spending more than 50% of before-tax income on housing.

“This budget offers a welcome commitment from the federal government on beginning to address the housing crisis impacting communities across the country, but there is still a great deal of work to be done”, said Don Elliott, Executive Director of the Coalition. “The Coalition looks forward to working with all stakeholders in the Capital Region, including all levels of government to ensure efforts related to addressing homelessness are coordinated, integrated, effective, monitored and reported as well as focussed on areas where the needs are the most acute and the impact will be greatest”, Don continued.

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