



New Affordable Housing for Seniors in DTES

Seniors in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (DTES) will benefit from more housing options with the new Katherine Sanford Housing Society development at 475 East Hastings, which celebrated its official opening on December 2, 2005.



The new development, called the Smith-Yuen Apartments, is a partnership between several levels of government. It will provide 52 self-contained one-bedroom apartments for seniors with low incomes and serious, persistent mental illnesses.

The building was designed with three main objectives in mind - to create a community environment, to provide safety and security for the vulnerable seniors' population and to promote independent living for as long as possible by providing the necessary ageing-in-place and other support services. Features in the building include an advanced security system, an emergency response system, an enclosed courtyard, wheelchair access and many aging in place features and a commercial kitchen to provide meal service and on site support staff.

"One in five seniors lives with a serious mental illness, which in turn takes a toll on their physical well-being," said Linda Thomas, director of housing for Vancouver Coastal Health. "The Smith-Yuen Apartments will provide residents with easy access to home care, meal services and other supports they need to stay healthy and be an active member of their community."

"Several years ago the Strathcona Mental Health team identified a group of seniors with a history of mental illness who were living in the Downtown Eastside in very inadequate accommodation," said Bonnie Rice, executive director of Katherine Sanford Housing Society. "Many of the individuals had issues associated with ageing which meant they needed some form of supported housing to continue to live independently. These new apartments were designed specifically for this population group and incorporates many specialized features geared to an ageing population."

The Katherine Sanford Housing Society believes that all individuals with a mental illness have a right to decent, affordable housing that gives them dignity and independence.