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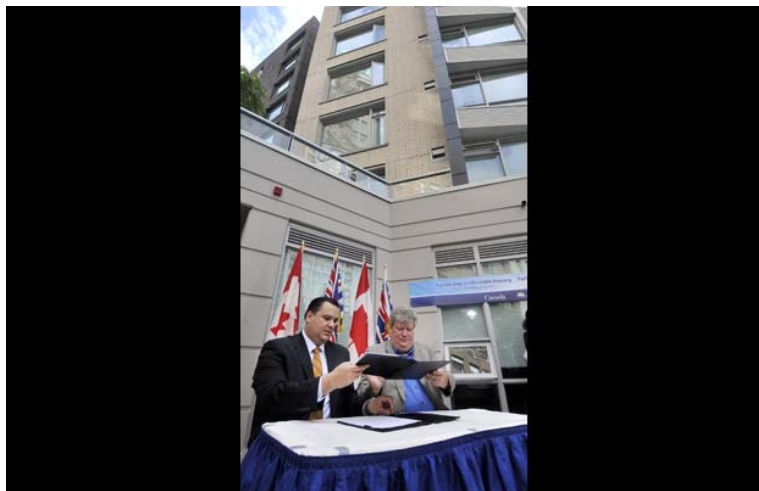
## Doors open at new supportive housing site in Vancouver

### Federal, B.C. governments announce \$180-million for affordable housing

BY SARAH DOUZIECH, THE PROVINCE JULY 25, 2011

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James Moore (L) and Rich Coleman sign a federal-provincial agreement at the official opening of the Sorella housing project on Vancouver's Abbott Street on July 25, 2011.

Photograph by: Ian Lindsay, PNG

For the first time in over 15 years, Debbie Lincoln has a place to call home.

"It's really nice," the soft-spoken 54-year-old said, referring to the stability provided by her new affordable housing unit in Sorella — a housing complex opened Monday in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside.

The 108-unit, 10-storey complex on the corner of Abbott and Pender Streets is the first of 14 supportive housing sites to open in Vancouver since they were promised in 2007.

Six other of the 14 projects are slated for completion this year and are

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being built and funded through joint agreements worth about \$400 million between the city and the province, with federal government contributions.

"Before I moved in here, I didn't know where I was going to go," Lincoln said, who has alternatively slept on friends' couches, shelter beds and even the street since 1993.

Now that Lincoln has a stable place to stay and protection from a boyfriend who almost killed her, she said her future looks bright.

Provincial housing minister Rich Coleman said Sorella fills a deep need in the city for housing specifically for vulnerable women.

The \$27 million-complex is run by Atira Women's Resource Society, a non-profit that runs dozens of other women-focused housing and shelter projects in the DTES.

"It's more than just housing," Coleman said. "It will help women regain confidence and independence."

Sorella resident Tara Rintoul said the chance to live in a stable and safe environment has done just that.

"I see me changing; having goals, going to school, finally getting to know my native culture," the 39-year-old said. "It has really changed my life.

"When I found out I finally got housing, I could have done 20,000 cartwheels."

Alongside Sorella's opening Monday, federal heritage minister James Moore announced a funding agreement between Canada and B.C.

Moore said it allows the province independence in deciding how best to allocate the dollars, earmarked for housing programs, over the next three years.

In 2008, the federal government committed \$1.9 billion over five years to help the province address the needs of low-income and homeless British Columbians.

The \$180 million announced Monday — \$90 million from each government — is part of that previous promise.

Vancouver city Coun. Ellen Woodsworth said she was "shocked" and "disappointed" that Moore didn't promise any new money to deal with what she called a housing crisis in Vancouver.

"I have no idea why the federal government thinks they can get away with making re-announcements," Woodsworth said. "This money was announced in 2008."

She said Sorella was "an outstanding" example of what can be accomplished when the three levels of government work together, but more needs to be done.

"There's national money for homelessness, but it's a plan that gets rolled over every year," she said. "We need a housing plan."

City council will consider a housing and homeless plan of its own Tuesday, which could see about 38,000 new units created in Vancouver

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