

COVID-19 Response: Comfort Inn Purchase



COVID-19 Response in Victoria

The Province is taking necessary steps in light of the COVID-19 public health crisis to support people's transition from unsafe, dense encampments on Pandora Avenue and in Topaz Park into more secure housing.

This step will help with physical distancing measures and allow people improved access to hygiene facilities and healthcare and social supports.

BC Housing believes that the best model is a distributed model. Working with our partners, we have secured multiple sites providing hundreds of spaces across Victoria, including:

- Emergency Response Centre at the Save-On Foods Memorial Arena;
- Temporary shelter spaces, including ones with culturally supportive services for Indigenous peoples who are experiencing homelessness;
- Designated spaces for women fleeing violence; and,
- Temporary spaces in hotels, with on-site health and social services.

One of the temporary accommodation sites includes Comfort Inn, located at 3020 Blanshard Street.

These sites are part of an interim solution to reduce homelessness until more permanent housing solutions can be made available.

Plans for the Comfort Inn

The Province has purchased the Comfort Inn hotel to provide temporary housing with supports for people experiencing homelessness, including those who are living in the encampments at Pandora Avenue and Topaz Park.

The former Comfort Inn will provide supportive housing as an interim step until a long-term permanent supportive housing solution is in place. BC Housing is committed to engaging with the community on long-term plans for the site. Any future redevelopment would also be subject to the municipal approvals process.

Our Place Society, a non-profit operator with extensive experience working with vulnerable populations, will oversee the day-to-day management. We are also providing employment opportunities for hotel staff who haven't been able to work due to the pandemic.

Staff will be onsite 24/7 and will provide daily meals and cleaning services. Island Health staff will provide healthcare services, including assessments, primary care and in-reach support for mental health and substance use services.

How will residents be selected?

BC Housing and Island Health will collaborate with local services providers in a thoughtful and thorough assessment process to ensure the appropriate mix of residents with the right supports in each building.

Every person will be considered on a case by case basis to ensure that the housing and support services are appropriate for that individual's needs.

What is being done to ensure the safety of staff, residents and neighbours?

We are committed to working with the community and our partners, including Victoria Police, Island Health, and our non-profit operators to foster a safe and inclusive community for everyone.

STAFFING: A minimum of two staff will be on-site 24/7 to support residents, manage building operations and be available to respond to concerns in a timely manner. During daytime hours several staff will be on hand, including an on-site supervisor, janitor, security staff and supports from other partners providing specialized services.

SECURITY: There will be non-profit staff will be onsite to respond to any concerns that may arise, working both inside the hotel and patrolling the exterior to ensure everyone's safety and security. The hotel has security camera's throughout the building.

CLEAN TEAM: The non-profit operator will coordinate a clean team to conduct regular sweeps of property and immediate area will ensure cleanliness.

COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CAC): A CAC will be established to mitigate and address any related concerns. Representatives would include BC Housing, Island Health, Victoria Police, City of Victoria, community organizations and neighbourhood representatives.

SAFE CONSUMPTION SPACE: We take a harm reduction approach, which means staff are available to support any residents who are in various phases of substance use.

PUBLIC HEALTH: These sites also follow the Public Health guidelines and every effort is made to protect the safety of the people experiencing homelessness, support staff who are assisting them, and members of the surrounding community.

Why purchase this site?

The Province, through BC Housing, is purchasing the Comfort Inn at 3020 Blanshard Street in Victoria to be used temporarily as supportive housing.

When we were presented with the option of purchasing the land, we recognized that this site provides a quick and secure housing solution for those who need a safe place to stay in the immediate future.

The large plot of land also provides a range of redevelopment options. We were able to negotiate the purchase for a fair deal and are now able to meet immediate housing needs.



Who to Contact?



Our Place Society:

Grant McKenzie

Email: grantm@ourplacesociety.com

Phone: **(250) 388-7112 Ext: 225**

is your contact for questions or concerns about the designated hotel and its residents.

Call Victoria Police non-emergency line

Phone: **250-995-7654**

for non-emergency issues related to personal safety or property.

Call 9-1-1 for police, fire, or medical emergencies when immediate action is required -- someone's health, safety or property is in jeopardy or a crime is in progress.

Email communityrelations@bchousing.org

for questions related to BC Housing and supportive housing.