



**For Immediate Release
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AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROJECT BEGINS CONSTRUCTION

ST. CATHARINES – The Government of Canada, the Government of Ontario, and Niagara Region held a ceremony today to mark the start of construction on a project that will create 40 units of affordable housing in St. Catharines under the Canada-Ontario Affordable Housing Program.

Rick Dykstra, Member of Parliament for St. Catharines, on behalf of the Honourable Diane Finley, Minister of Human Resources and Social Development; the Honourable Jim Bradley, Ontario Minister of Tourism, Minister Responsible for Seniors and MPP for St. Catharines, on behalf of the Honourable John Gerretsen, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing; Niagara Regional Chairman Peter Partington; and St. Catharines Mayor Timothy Rigby, attended the ceremony.

“Quality, affordable housing is a vision the Government of Canada shares with our provincial and not-for-profit partners for the people of Ontario,” said Dykstra. “Projects such as Bethlehem Place will help ensure that those with lower incomes can access affordable housing in their own community.”

"Affordable housing is fundamental to the well-being, vitality and strength of families and the communities in which they live," said Bradley. "The Bethlehem's project in Niagara region is an excellent example of how different levels of government can work together, with their community partners, to provide more affordable housing for lower income residents."

The \$5 million project, including \$1.2 million from the Canada-Ontario Affordable Housing Program, will provide 40 apartments in St. Catharines. Sponsored by the Bethlehem Projects of Niagara, the units will be occupied by families and single people with lower incomes.

"Today's event is another symbol of the strength of what can be done through successful partnerships in the interest of addressing the affordable housing need here in Niagara region," said Peter Partington, Regional Chairman.

"This project is evidence of the hard work, compassion and commitment of our community," said Mayor Tim Rigby, Mayor of St. Catharines. "I salute the CAW for opening the door to this initiative and for drawing in the rest of the partners. Bethlehem Projects of Niagara should be commended for its dedication to assisting those in need of help, and for providing a place to house the hope of a better future."

"With more than 8,000 people waiting for affordable housing in Niagara, Bethlehem Projects is thankful for the opportunity to help address the need. Volunteers are working diligently on a Capital Campaign to raise \$1.2 million from the community to ensure the success of this project. As a result Bethlehem Projects will be able to provide much-needed housing with

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a support service provision," said Gail Richardson, Chair of Bethlehem's housing steering committee.

Today's federal and provincial allocation will be complemented by more than \$731,000 in municipal financial incentives.

The new federal-provincial agreement, signed on April 29, 2005, comprises a commitment of \$301 million from each of the two levels of government. With this commitment, the federal, provincial and municipal governments will invest at least \$734 million in affordable housing over the life of the Canada-Ontario Affordable Housing Program. In total, the program will help 20,000 Ontario households by 2010.

-30-

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